Chapter Four

'Letting the Ladies Know': Picturing Women as Customers of Holiday Travel

This chapter analyses gender segmentation, specifically the GWR's attempts to understand and appeal to women as an individual market segment. The gendered marketing of Britain's railways has received more attention in recent years.[1] We know, for example, much about how railways appealed to men thanks to Divall's recent research.[2] He demonstrates that, during the interwar years, railway marketers approached men using speed, safety and comfort, appropriately civilised and masculinised. In most cases the Big Four construed railway travel as masculine,[3] but scholars have identified a contrasting appeal to women. Harrington and Drummond argue that railways developed marketing for women in the 1920s and 1930s which recognised their greater capacity for individual consumption. However, these scholars disagree over the timing, adoption, quality, and effectiveness of this marketing. Also, whilst one school of thought argues that railways addressed women on an aspirational level,[4] the other holds that marketing output represented a male construction of feminine identity which ultimately appealed less to female consumers.[5] These conclusions have been reached predominantly by analysing pictorial posters. The lack of corresponding photographic analysis is surprising given that in the early-twentieth century, marketers, press-men, and advertising commentators widely believed that photographs appealed more directly

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[1] As well as the gendering of transport history more generally: see for example Margaret Walsh, 'Gendering Transport History: Retrospect and Prospect', *The Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser. 23:1 (2002), pp. 1-8. See also Roger Horowitz, *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology*, (London, 1998).
[2] Colin Divall, 'Civilising Velocity: Masculinity and the Marketing of Britain's Passenger trains, 1921-39', *Journal of Transport History* 3rd ser. 32:2 (2011), pp. 164-86.
[3] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', p. 167.
[4] Ralph Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle: Images Of Women In Interwar Railway Publicity', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser. 25:1 (2004), p. 22.
[5] Diane Drummond, '"For the Ladies?" Railway Company Advertising and the Woman Train Passenger in the UK and USA, 1890-1965', (Unpublished paper, T2M Conference York, 6-9th October 2005), p. 11.

to the feminine gaze.[6] This chapter therefore examines what photographic marketing can reveal about the GWR's perception of women's role in selecting and organising the holiday; when and indeed whether the company recognised women as a market in their own right; and what this reveals about the company's corporate 'picturing' of passengers. Although the female consumer was revealed in the previous chapter as a devoted and affectionate mother, this chapter questions whether this constituted the GWR's entire understanding of women's holiday aspirations.

Why should one look for differences in the ways railways sold to women? The answer, as this thesis has suggested, is that rail travel was marketed, and probably consumed, in a complex manner. From the earliest days of rail travel women, particularly lone female passengers, were seen to require special consideration. They were thought to possess gender-specific requirements, so some railways provided women-only carriages, on-board lavatories and more comfortable furnishings.[7] Although the latter two were ultimately beneficial for both sexes, they were marketed as improvements which particularly enhanced travel for females.[8] As well as the journey, gender also influenced consumption on holiday. Although wealthy women protected their leisure by taking servants to deal with everyday family demands, for many women a 'holiday' meant completing the same everyday tasks in a different locale.[9] It is likely that this issue was known to the railways; just as the gendered characteristics of the train had been debated in railway journals, plays, artworks and popular literature,[10] the beginning of the twentieth century saw social commentators and women's

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[6] F. Rowlinson, 'But Don't Women Dislike Diagrams?', *Advertiser's Weekly*, April 11th 1930, p. 53; Cheryl Buckley and Hilary Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine: Representation and Women's Fashion from the Fin de Siècle to the Present*, (London, 2002), pp. 110-12; Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London*, (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 28-30; *The Advertising World*, June 1907, p. 52.
[7] Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London, 1991), pp. 334-36.
[8] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', p. 177.
[9] Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, (Manchester, 2000), p. 2 and 36-38.
[10] Ralph Harrington, 'The Railway Journey and The Neuroses Of Modernity', in Richard Wrigley and George Revill (eds.), *Pathologies of Travel*, (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 236-39; Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity*, (Manchester, 2001), pp. 202-04; Julian Treuherz, 'The Human Drama of

periodicals call for husbands and fathers to remember that a holiday should be enjoyable for women too.[11] This chapter does not suggest that the GWR thought that women did not enjoy the marketing seen so far, but rather a gendered appeal was probably intended to tackle feminine preconceptions surrounding rail and holiday travel.

The lack of analysis beyond Drummond and Harrington's research however makes it difficult to contextualise the GWR's efforts. This chapter therefore utilises scholarship concerning advertisers' appeals to women from the late nineteenth century onwards. Between 1850 and 1940 numerous manufacturers, advertisers and department store owners sponsored feminine consumption using various promotions, gimmicks and design styles.[12] Marketers impersonated the voices appearing in women's periodicals to help structure product appeals.[13] This extended the long-held belief that traditionally feminine attributes, appearance and social standing for example, could be identified and used to sell to women.[14] Marketing to women thus developed to include a variety of idealised female 'types' or 'icons', from famous individuals to housewives, average consumers to 'seaside girls'.[15] They showed what women should strive for through their consumption. As the pervasiveness of visual culture advanced in the first three decades of the twentieth century, photography and cinema showed messages about consumption and ideal femininity to an even wider

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The Railway', in Ian Kennedy and Julian Treuherz, *The Railway: Art In The Age of Steam: Europe, America and the Railway 1830-1960*, (Liverpool, 2008), pp. 84-86.

[11] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, p. 2 and 36-38; Charles Musgrove, *Holidays and How to Use Them*, (Bristol, 1914), pp. 47-48; The Women's Library, London, 7TB6/2/6/4/01-02, 'Do Housewives Get Holidays?'

[12] Erika Rappaport, *Shopping For Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*, (Princeton, 2000), pp. 3-8; Lori-Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women*, (Oxford, 1994), pp. 5-6; D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 36.

[13] Penny Tinkler and Cheryl Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America: Corsets, Cars and Cigarettes,' *Journal of Women's History*, 20:3 (2008), pp. 14-16; Peter Scott, 'Marketing Mass Home Ownership and the Creation of the Modern Working-class Consumer in Interwar Britain', *Business History*, 50:1 (2008), p. 14.

[14] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture Of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914*, (London, 1991), p. 206.

[15] Richards, *The Commodity Culture Of Victorian England*, pp. 129-31 and 206; Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women*, pp. 57-59.

audience.[16] This mass media representation helped promote the idealised female body as the ultimate consumer item.[17]

Interwar marketers saw ever more value in conceiving the women as an individual market, one which had the capacity to influence the consumption decisions of others. Women demanded their own carefully gendered ploys; any suggestion that they might become less feminine by using a product was strictly omitted. Rather, the opposite was true: idealised femininity was available through consumption. Car manufacturers, for example, were quick to show how interwar cars were less likely to break-down and require women to diminish their femininity by attending to mechanical matters.[18] Instead companies showed that women drivers were 'modern', elegant and independent.[19] This thesis has demonstrated that railways periodically looked outwards to wider commodity culture, to established visual tropes and fashions, to inform their marketing. An awareness of wider visual marketing to women at the start of the twentieth century helps contextualise the GWR's efforts; by offering a frame for comparison it widens the scope of how railway companies understood image-based appeals to women.

This chapter analyses whether, when, and to what extent the GWR incorporated ideas about women in its marketing. It employs as a starting point Drummond's criteria concerning how far rail advertising, both in the UK and USA, was aimed at female interests and psychology.[20] Drummond argues that between 1890 and 1965 railway marketing to women centred around three areas: the appearance of the female traveller as a railway passenger and one who enjoyed the destination; images thought to attract women based on

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[16] Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', p. 113; LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 227-65.
[17] Mila Ganeva, 'Fashion Photography and Women's Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva', *NWSA Journal*, 15:3 (2003), pp. 1-25.
[18] Julie Wosk, *Women and The Machine: Representations From The Spinning Wheel To The Electronic Age*, (London, 2001), p. 130.
[19] Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', pp. 188-20.
[20] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 4.

their perceived interests such as families and animals; and the portrayal of the journey as comfortable, easy and safe.[21] Drummond's analysis is by no means the last word on this area, but by using these categories, suitably expanded, this chapter's first section examines how the GWR approached women as an individual market segment between 1906 and 1929. Such a time-frame covers a period of revolutionary change in women's place in British society,[22] yet GWR marketing in these years was apparently ignorant of the potential of individual appeals to women. This section also questions what the presence or absence of women in visual marketing reveals about the GWR's perceptions of the female passenger. Using further sources such as the company magazine and poster content, it assesses how the GWR understood women's versus their husband's consumption.

The second section analyses an apparent shift in strategy at the beginning of the 1930s. In this decade, an explosion of imagery depicted women and their consumption in new ways, suggesting that the GWR had begun to conceptualise female passengers differently. As well as questioning the corporate aims behind this upsurge, this section analyses imagery in the context of developments in interwar culture, particularly the appropriation of the 'modern body' and 'feminine ideal' used by advertisers and the mass media to sell a range of commodities.[23] Drummond's criteria are acknowledged once more but, as we shall see, a rigid division of appeals along these lines is less able to explain the converging narratives about feminine consumption which the GWR employed in these years. Whilst the images analysed in this chapter were essentially male constructs of female identity, this does not obscure the fact that the GWR thought harder about how to attract women. Although some images were meant to appeal to men, the GWR's photography was

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[21] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", pp. 3-4.
[22] See for example; Christine Collette, 'Women and Politics, 1900-1939', in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion To Early Twentieth-Century Britain,* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 118-31; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Introduction', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women In Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 1-15.
[23] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women In Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 186-87.

simultaneously constructed to appeal to women. This imagery, understood in the context of the female body's use by other businesses and marketers, reveals additional information regarding the GWR's use of 'lifestyles', and also how the company developed its understanding about segmentation and passenger desires to respond to women's changing ability to consume independently.

Section 1: Selling to Women? GWR Marketing 1906-1929

An understanding of women's physical and cultural experience of railway travel first alerts us to the idea, acknowledged amongst some railwaymen at least, that women required different marketing messages. Since its earliest days railway travel provided positive and negative experiences for women, and some of these lingered at the start of the twentieth century. Although it afforded women greater social, economic and spatial independence,[24] railway travel also exposed them to new dangers and discomforts.[25] Women's comfort was poorly provided for outside of first class, and the provision of 'women only' carriages, intended to make travel safer, also advertised potential targets to would-be criminals.[26] Although cases of sexual assault were never common, incidents featured regularly in sensationalist journalism and scandalous novels, contributing to pessimistic associations surrounding the female passenger.[27] Nonetheless, it is generally agreed that by the first years of the twentieth century the railways had wrought a beneficial impact on women's lives.

Although rail travel had had a liberating influence on women by 1900, the extent to which railway companies made use of this for economic gains is debateable. There were certainly individuals within the railway industry who championed the female market as one

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[24] Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives Twentieth Century Women's Travel Writing*, (Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 127-28; Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, pp. 332-36.
[25] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 335.
[26] Harrington, 'The Railway Journey and The Neuroses Of Modernity', pp. 236-39.
[27] Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain*, pp. 202-04.

of some potential; an article in the *Railway Times* argued '[women's] business, while, perhaps, not so urgent as that of the men, must be attended to quite as regularly'.[28] How far this call was heeded is more difficult to assess. Guided by a male-dominated management which reflected socially established norms regarding women and travel, Britain's railway companies were seemingly slow to recognise female consumption. This extended to limited opportunities for female staff. In the 1880s some railways began to use female booking clerks, although it took the GWR until 1908 to do so.[29] The most common position was that of 'attendant', completing a range of menial tasks such as opening and closing level crossing gates.[30] It is probable that these wider societal estimations of the capabilities of women outside of the wealthy elite similarly conditioned how railways appealed to women in fin de siècle marketing.

But what evidence is there in the company's photographic marketing to suggest the GWR's recognition, or otherwise, of women as a market segment by 1900? Taking Drummond's first category, imagery which pictured the female passenger or holidaymaker,[31] one finds that female consumers were not depicted in any meaningful manner in *Holiday Haunts* between 1906 and 1929. The same is also true of the GWR's other major holiday publication, *The Cornish Riviera*, which included even fewer images of people. When women did appear, in groups or individually, this was as local inhabitants of destinations. The existence of these 'local' images demonstrates the GWR's desire to record, photographically, individuals whose actions were meant to be interpreted, but also its decision not to acknowledge female consumers. Occasionally the 'local' representations of hoary old maidens were joined by attractive young women, but middle-class women from urban areas were probably not meant to identify with these. The images, such as Figures 4.1

[28] *The Railway Times*, 30th October 1909, pp. 442-43.
[29] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 335.
[30] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 335.
[31] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 3.

and 4.2, were primarily illustrations of the romantic characteristics of destinations outlined in Chapter Two. They used the female form to connote qualities such as the mysteriousness (the strange attire of Figure 4.1) and beauty (the open, conventionally attractive features on display in Figure 4.2) of the destination.

Figure 4.1: 'Bettws Y Coed –A Well Known Figure, 1908

Figure 4.2: 'Merry Maids of Marbiban', 1908

The question is whether this absence was peculiar to photography; was the female passenger represented elsewhere? It appears not; scholars find little evidence in, for instance, poster advertising.[32] Whilst the continental railways used attractive women, sparingly clothed, to advertise holiday lines before 1914, British companies shunned the practice until the late-1920s in fear that it would alienate the respectable family market.[33] Figure 4.3, a French Railway poster from around 1900 designed by Privat-Livemont, illustrates this risqué nature with bobbing male heads admiring the swimming siren.[34] On the rare occasions when women did appear in Edwardian British railway posters, these too were probably intended to appeal to the male gaze, albeit in a more veiled way. As in its photography, GWR posters pictured local girls. Appearing as rosy-cheeked young maidens, they were portrayed as holiday allurements alongside other 'natural beauties' rather than as aspirational characters (Figure 4.4). For example, reviewing the GWR's advertising for Ireland, in which the company pictured a young Irish 'colleen', the *Railway and Travel Monthly* wrote in 1915 that the poster should 'appeal to anyone who has an eye for the beauty of England's sister Isle, or a sympathy with its romantic figures'.[35] On occasion, some railways produced images which departed from alluring expressions and poses. In 1914 the Caledonian Railway pictured a 'golfing girl' who did more than just decorate the scenery. But it was the uniqueness of this appeal which led to it being singled out by the *Railway News*.[36] A small minority of pictorial posters depicted the independent woman, but otherwise they were used as evidence that one could see, for example, exotic beauties in Britain as in Italy, and that these 'natural beauties' were meant to be observed in a similar fashion to the land or seascapes. An appeal to male rather than female travellers was probably therefore desired.

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[32] Julia Wigg, *Bon Voyage! Travel Posters Of The Edwardian Era*, (London, 1998), pp. 5-6.
[33] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 31; Wigg, *Bon Voyage!*, pp. 5-6.
[34] *The Railway Magazine*, November 1900, p. 423.
[35] *The Railway and Travel Monthly*, August 1913, p. 177.
[36] *The Jubilee of the Railway News*, 1914, pp. 216-17.

Figure 4.3: French Railway Poster c.1900[37]

Figure 4.4: GWR Poster 'See Your Own Country First' c. 1907[38]

[37] *The Railway Magazine*, November 1900, p. 423.
[38] Image Courtesy of Science and Society Picture Library Collection.

Harrington identifies change in the 1920s, although he admits that there were still relatively few examples of publicity material directed *specifically* to women at this time.[39] Drummond also cites post-war improvement. For her, two posters mark the GWR as an enterprising company leading the way in picturing independent female consumers.[40] W. Russell Flint's 'Chester' and A. E. Martin's poster of Aberystwyth, both of the 1920s (Figures 4.5 and 4.6), showed small groups of women consuming the destination together. But this evidence is inconclusive. It is certainly evidence of women being represented, and perhaps might be read as women engaging in a 'typically' feminine activity, shopping, in Figure 4.5. Yet this appears as more evidence for Harrington's conclusions, that these were not intended *specifically* for a female audience and might simply have reflected the artists' preferences for drawing women.[41]

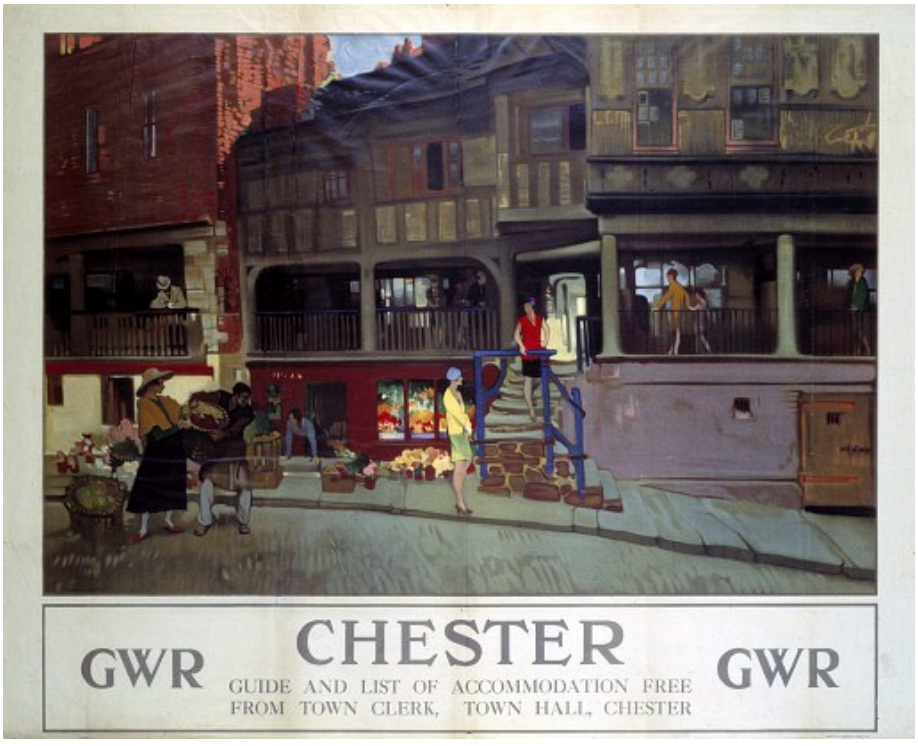

Figure 4.5: 'Chester' by W. Russell Flint c. 1920s[42]

[39] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 25.
[40] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 16.
[41] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 25 and 27.
[42] Image Courtesy of Science and Society Picture Library Collection.

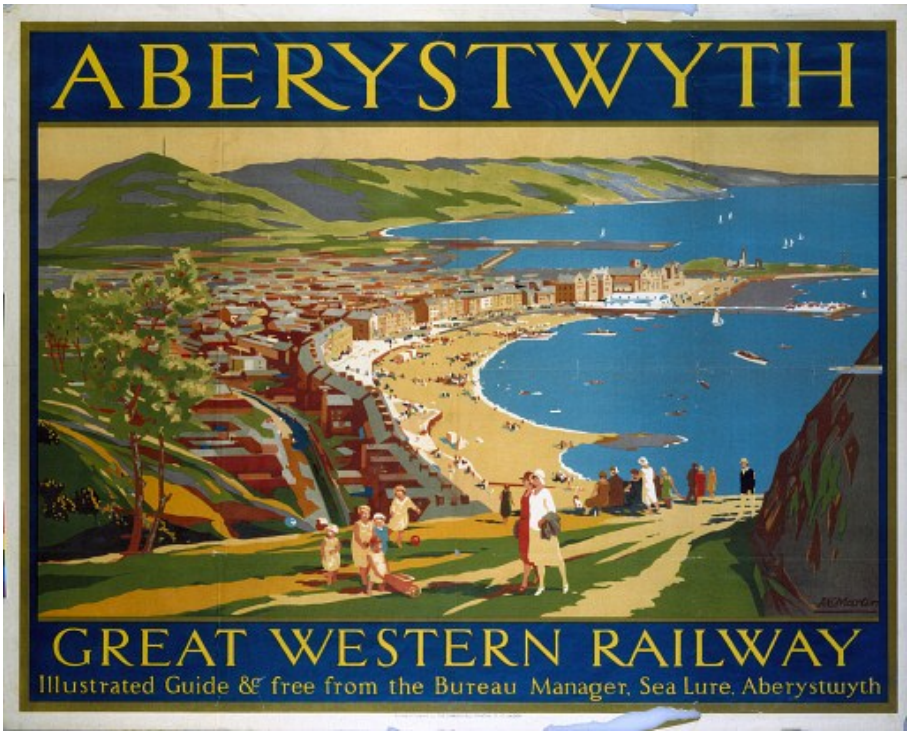

Figure 4.6: 'Aberystwyth' A. E. Martin c.1920s[43]

Taking photographs and posters together, the absence of close-up images of individual women travellers appears to support the thesis that the GWR neglected the feminine perspective. But this ignores the fact that neither were men pictured to any great extent. Indeed, the absence of both men and women might suggest that the GWR was more interested in picturing people's interests than the people themselves before 1929. This would certainly be consistent with the ploys identified in the previous two chapters. *Holiday Haunts*, and other major GWR guidebooks such as *Glorious Devon* and *The Cornish Riviera*, focussed on children and landscapes. In addition, Divall's research suggests that for men, images of speed, domesticity and safety were paramount, not images of male consumers.[44] The absence of people might also have more generally reflected contemporary attitudes to bathing and display, manifested in the segregated bathing zones and cumbersome changing

[43] Image Courtesy of Science and Society Picture Library Collection.
[44] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', pp. 164-86.

contraptions found on British beaches as late as the 1930s.[45] Imagery of women in bathing costumes was a rarity in Britain and the United States up until the 1920s, being largely confined to 'pin-up' and erotic postcards and therefore unsuitable for advertising to the mass market.[46] But this does not tell the whole story; bathing strictures were progressively relaxed from the mid-1920s onwards and as a result bathing attire became more revealing.[47] Yet the GWR remained distinctly behind the times in ignoring this significant development which had begun to shift the way in which its destinations were perceived and consumed.

The non-appearance of women in GWR marketing before 1929 does not alone, therefore, allow overarching conclusions on the GWR's attitude to this particular market segment. In this case we turn to Drummond's second category, images thought to attract female interests such as babies, children and animals. This was better catered for by the GWR. As seen in Chapter Three, between 1906 and 1929 the company included much family-oriented imagery. Although the previous chapter was careful to point out that these images may not have been solely directed at women, instead appealing to parents of both sexes, we cannot discount the idea that they would have been selected with some degree of maternal appeal in mind. Indeed, further evidence that the GWR thought of women in these terms came in the offer, on first class services, of 'uniformed maids' to help take the burden of children.[48] Other advertisers seemingly knew that mothers read *Holiday Haunts* because the earliest volumes carried advertising for a range of foodstuffs and children's' toys.[49] How effectively this would have attracted women is impossible to gauge. Yet from the contemporary comment assembled by scholars such as Langhamer, and also in Musgrove's

[45] Catherine Horwood, '"Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions": Women and Bathing, 1900-39', *Women's History Review*, 9:4 (2000), pp. 656-58.
[46] Horwood, 'Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions', p. 657; Patricia Holland, '"Sweet it is to scan..." Personal Photographs and Popular Photography', in Liz Wells (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, (London, 1997), pp. 113-15.
[47] Horwood, '"Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions", pp. 658-62.
[48] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1911).
[49] See for example advertisements for biscuits, 'healthy' bread, and Plasticine in *Holiday Haunts* (1906), (1908), (1911), (1912).

holiday handbook for instance, the image of a women who was mother on holiday as well as at home held less appeal for women as the twentieth century progressed.[50] Even if the GWR knew this, it was not apparent in its guides reinforcing the idea that, although the company was aware of a female market, it adopted a laissez-faire attitude to women's interests.

We need not dwell on family imagery as it was covered in depth in the previous chapter. But 'interests' should arguably be expanded to include other activities such as shopping, fashion and female pastimes which engaged women in, perhaps, more appealing ways. On the high street advertisers and department stores suggested how consumption could bring freedom, but was also valuable leisure time that one could spend with friends. Shopping was created as a leisure form in itself, a reason to travel into town.[51] But the GWR was sluggish in including such perspectives. This lack was true of the railways in general. As seen above, in 1909 the *Railway Times* argued that railways might profit from women's less 'urgent' activities, shopping, the theatre, 'and other avocations to which the modern woman must devote herself at intervals'.[52] This offered possibilities for regular repeat business for the railways as well as providing further amusement at holiday destinations.[53] Nevertheless, the writer's own estimations of feminine inferiority, 'less urgent activities', appears to have been taken to heart by the railway hierarchy in deciding against such offerings. Although shopping as an individual appeal to women was adopted in the advertising of suburban railways in the 1920s,[54] railway companies used this ploy irregularly between 1906 and 1929.

The same was true of fashion and other pastimes. Although the styles may have changed between the Edwardian years and the 1920s, fashion remained a chief means

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[50] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, p. 2 and 36-38; Musgrove, *Holidays and How to Use Them*, pp. 47-48.
[51] Rappaport, *Shopping For Pleasure*, pp. 3-8.
[52] *The Railway Times*, 30th October 1909, pp. 442-43.
[53] *The Railway Times*, 30th October 1909, p. 443.
[54] Harrington, 'Beyond the Bathing Belle', p. 27.

through which women conceived their identity.[55] New media technologies such as photography meant that high fashion was communicated with increasing regularity and fidelity to a wider audience. Poorer women might use the photographs as templates to replicate new styles in their own homes. But in the GWR's case, between 1906 and 1929 there was no recognition of the role that fashion could play on the holiday, other that stating that a destination was 'fashionable' as a spur to consume. This absence is worth bearing in mind for comparison to the second half of this chapter when, during the 1930s, holiday fashions became a mainstay of the GWR's appeal to women. This is also true of female activities in *Holiday Haunts* when apparently token gestures were made to female consumption. Denoted 'for the women' via its accompanying text, Figure 4.7 suggested that bathing on the beach at Rhyl might be an activity a lady would enjoy. This image, from 1914, was however the only one which referred to bathing as specifically for women, again, perhaps reflecting the uneasiness surrounding the practice even by the 1910s. Although women and men had greater freedom to bathe in the 1920s, no image of them enjoying this in the photographic marketing suggests partly the extension of reticence about the display of skin, but also partly ignorance at a time when other advertisers were beginning to sell more relaxed bathing attire.[56] By contrast, male interests, such as engineering, were comparatively well understood by the railways.[57]

[55] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 83-87.
[56] Horwood, '"Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions", pp. 656-62.
[57] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', pp. 164-86.

Figure 4.7: 'Rhyl – Ladies' Bathing Beach' 1914

Drummond's third category, the comfort of passengers, was represented in GWR photography, but hardly enough to suggest a considered campaign. Indeed, although Divall's conclusions refer to the interwar period, his research shows that visions of comfortable carriages, appropriately civilised and masculinised, were a durable appeal to male consumers. Seen at the beginning of this chapter, comfortable carriages were a concession to lessen the arduousness of rail travel. As companies competed for passengers they improved carriage heating and lighting, upholstery and sanitary facilities.[58] The best facilities were reserved for first class passengers, and it was the GWR's premier services that were advertised most regularly. The GWR released imagery which suggested that travelling on its carriages was a sumptuous experience. Photographic realism was employed to illustrate this but, as apparent in Figures 4.8 and 4.9 below, carriage imagery appeared much less exciting than the seaside locales. Perhaps for this reason such imagery was only included sparsely before the 1930s,

[58] Michael Harris, *Great Western Coaches: 1890-1954*, (Newton Abbot, 1966), pp. 18-19; David Jenkinson, *British Railway Carriages of the 20th Century* (Wellingborough, 1984), pp. 134-35.

despite the fact that the company still liberally described itself as the 'line de luxe'.[59] Again, it is difficult to infer gender segmentation from these images for, whilst the railways might have believed that women were more interested in this aspect than males, there is little to distinguish a gendered stance. The presence of such images suggests that the GWR was aware of passengers' concerns regarding comfort, but how far it saw these as a developed strand of the company's marketing to women, as opposed to a desirable attribute more generally, is more difficult to discern. What is clear is that, unlike American railroads,[60] the GWR did not picture passengers of either gender consuming the carriage environment until the 1930s, and it did so only once in its posters.[61] In the Edwardian years the Lackawana Railroad, for instance, showed an ingenious plea based on beliefs regarding a feminine sense of cleanliness and purity. Its female character's dress stayed white unlike when riding other, dirtier, railroads (Figure 4.10).[62] This confirmed the benefits of pen-and-brush illustrations however, and it appears that the photography across the Atlantic presented the carriage interior in a roughly similar way to the GWR.[63]

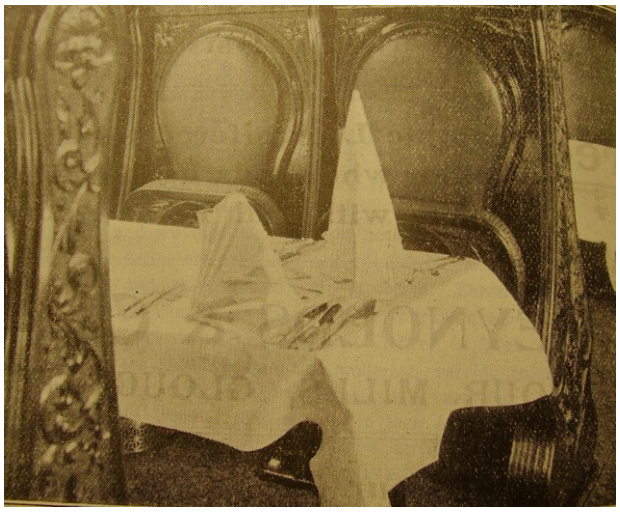

Figure 4.8: 'In the dining car', 1908

[59] See for example *Holiday Haunts* 1909, 1911, 1912 and again in 1924, 1927 and 1929.
[60] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", pp. 18-19.
[61] Roger Wilson, *Go Great Western: A History of GWR Publicity*, (Newton Abbott, 1987), p. 35.
[62] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", pp. 18-19.
[63] Keith Lovegrove, *Railway: Identity, Design and Culture*, (London, 2004), p. 96.

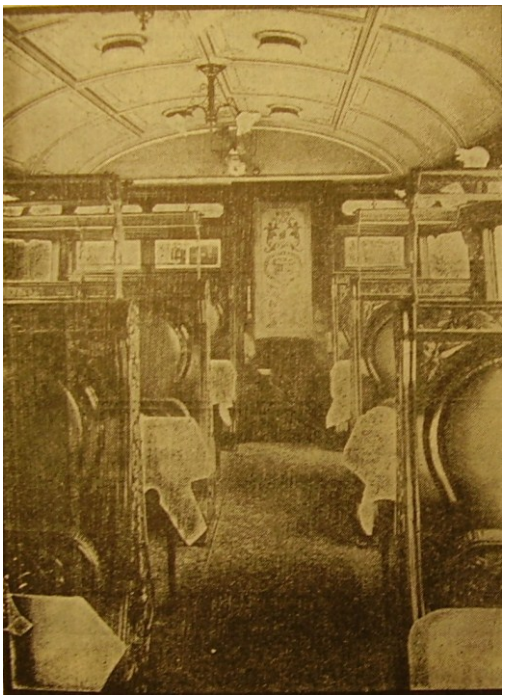

Figure 4.9: 'In the dining car', 1909

Figure 4.10: 'The Best Way' c. 1905[64]

Textual documents suggest further the GWR's indifference to feminine consumption up to about 1930. Women only began to be discussed seriously in the company magazine

[64] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 18.

during the 1920s. Beforehand, it viewed women with the same suspicions that male society in general afforded them, specifically the 'new woman' or the flapper.[65] It frequently suggested what men should do with bossy women, and ridiculed them in cartoons.[66] In deprecating sketches the magazine presented women with more power, dominating smaller hen-pecked husbands, but this was most probably a light-hearted look at how men felt about their position, not the reality. In 1921 the company's lecturing society debated whether equality between the sexes was a 'retrograde movement'.[67] Given the content of this deabte, the lack of female symbolism may have been to assuage fears that women were taking over male profession after the war, a thorny social issue until the late 1920s. But there was a movement to including the female perspective from the mid 1920s. This was not least from the comments of passengers which either praised company attentiveness to the needs of female passengers,[68] or castigated the GWR's failings in this respect.[69] Occasionally this came from women themselves as in the case of Miss E Neal, of the National Union of Women Teachers, who complained about the frequency with which she was left without a seat.[70] Nevertheless, this was still nothing like the volume of comment directed at the male passenger; the magazine strongly suggests that women's consumption was widely viewed within the GWR as secondary to that of men.

The GWR therefore fell back on established gender notions within its marketing. Company marketing remained consistent with Langhamer's argument, that female satisfaction was perceived to lie chiefly with the adequate provision for family needs; anything else was a small concession.[71] As seen, these attitudes conditioned the company's

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[65] See for example GWRM, May 1895, p. 95 and August 1895, p. 138.
[66] GWRM, May 1895, p. 95; March 1898, p. 59.
[67] The National Archives (TNA), ZPER 38/13, Great Western Railway (London): Lecture and Debating Society Proceedings, Meeting of 10th March 1921, pp. 1-14.
[68] GWRM, October 1921, p. 244.
[69] GWRM, January 1928; April 1929, p. 163; July 1929, p. 287.
[70] GWRM, November 1927, p. 447.
[71] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, p. 7.

attitudes to holidays, but also extended to wider publicity initiatives. An advertisement from 1912 which publicised the GWR's home-buying guide, Figure 4.11, revealed the GWR's imagined gender roles. The lady, presumably the gentleman's wife, adopted a placid role in the purchase of a house. Beautiful and quiet, she listened to her husband who possessed all the understanding. His mastery is demonstrated in his deportment, actions and relative height compared to his wife. If the company imagined that this was the process behind buying a house, it was not too far from that behind choosing a holiday. Whilst this chapter does not argue that women had no input, the GWR's marketing suggests that the company saw both buying houses and selecting holidays as male-dominated, certainly before 1914, and probably afterwards too. But in this case there are parallels to how other transport providers saw women. Take for example the London Underground, a business which dramatically revolutionised its marketing before 1914. In 1911 it issued a poster, designed by Alfred France, called 'The Way for All' (Figure 4.12). The poster promoted the kind of middle-class women that the marketers were just starting to define as a legitimate consumer and urban traveller, hence 'the way for all'.[72] But the poster was not as socially challenging as it first appears. The published artwork differed substantially from the original; the lady was made to look older, plainer, and in the original she engaged the viewer's gaze. Her disengaged gaze now assured absolute propriety.[73] As in the GWR's case, although women were acknowledged as consumers, marketing to them was still heavily conditioned by male attitudes to women, their consumption and travel.

[72] Catherine Flood, 'Pictorial Posters in Britain at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in David Bownes and Oliver Green (eds.), *London Transport Posters: A Century of Art and Design*, (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 28-29.
[73] Flood, 'Pictorial Posters in Britain at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', pp. 28-29.

Figure 4.11: Advert for the GWR's new residential guide 'Homes For All', Holiday Haunts 1912

Figure 4.12: London Underground poster 'The Way For All', 1911[74]

[74] Flood, 'Pictorial Posters in Britain at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', p. 28.

In sum, the photographic evidence suggests that prior to the 1930s the GWR shared in what Drummond identifies as the failure of Britain's railways to produce advertising 'for the ladies'. British railway marketing up until the late 1920s followed a different trajectory to United States railroads, failing to appreciate that despite women's restricted independent income they had a large say in how family funds were spend, especially regarding the decision to take a holiday.[75] Yet the argument presented here is more nuanced than an abject neglect of women. It is possible that the GWR's marketing may have been enjoyed by women and that the company knew this. However, the company wavered somewhere between ignorance of the likely financial benefits of appealing to women, and indifference. A word of caution. These conclusions are conditioned by the reliance, in large part, on visual images as sources. Wider social factors such as the need to keep advertising 'decent' can also partly explain women's absence and this section has therefore attempted to remedy this by considering images of activities that might have appealed to women's interests, as well as some analysis of how they were presented in the company's magazine. Nonetheless it seems likely that when the GWR referred to the customer as 'he', this was not simply a linguistic convention but a reflection of the company's conventional assumptions about gender.[76] Although women were looked out for in certain ways, chiefly their comfort and safety requirements, this was probably an extension of the opinion that women were interested in some matters but not others. From a corporate perspective the photographs revealed men speaking to men.

We have therefore broadened the understanding the GWR's attitudes to gender segmentation of the holiday market before 1930. But the end of the 1920s nurtured the beginnings of a change in this mindset. The traditional theory of citizenship that typified men as rational, politically engaged, protectors of polity and women as emotional carers had

[75] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 35.
[76] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', pp. 168-69.

lessened over the course of the decade.[77] The percentage of women in work in Britain remained generally steady at around thirty per cent, but there was a move away from traditional industrial and craft occupations towards clerical and office work, and the participation of younger women between twenty and thirty-five in the work force increased.[78] As more of these women worked, especially in the areas served by the GWR such as the Midlands and London, more chose to holiday with partners or in all-female groups.[79] Unaccompanied by men, young women were found out with their girlfriends across Britain, enjoying the local fairs, visiting popular seaside resorts, and shopping for clothes on the expanding high street.[80] On holiday, the relaxation of bathing strictures meant that women had more scope to enjoy themselves. These trends were increasingly targeted by other travel providers such as suburban bus services and the London Underground which now offered shopping experiences as an incentive and pictured happy, confident and autonomous females.[81] In the 1920s automobile manufacturers also began to recognise an undeniable, albeit upper class, female market, with self-starters, synchromesh gearboxes, and more varied colour and upholstery choices, targeted specifically at women.[82]

A change around this time aligns with what we already know about how the GWR saw itself, its marketing and its customers at the end of the 1920s. Competition, an increasing awareness of 'new' consumers and holiday practices[83] culminated in encouraging resorts to modernise and put 'friendliness' into its own images. Whereas for other market

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[77] Collette, 'Women and Politics, 1900-1939', pp. 118-31.
[78] Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870–1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change*, (Brighton, 1984), pp. 146–51.
[79] David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-earners in Interwar Britain*, (London, 1995), pp. 1-10; Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble: Women Workers and the New Industries in Interwar Britain*, (London, 1990), p. 239.
[80] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, p. 87.
[81] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 27.
[82] Matthew Hilton, 'The Female Consumer and the Politics of Consumption in Twentieth-Century Britain', *The Historical Journal,* 45:1 (2002), p. 103; Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', pp. 117-19. However, some simply used the female body to lend all her desirability to the product, Simone Davis, *Living Up To The Ads: Gender Fictions Of The 1920's*, (Durham, N.C, 2000), pp. 6-7.
[83] Please refer back to Chapter One for an in depth discussion of the internal machinations between 1927and 1932 and how this influenced photographic procurement and the appearance of *Holiday Haunts*.

segments this meant updating the appeal, with regards to women the company had to completely re-conceptualise its beliefs about women as customers of rail travel.

Section 2: 'Letting the Ladies Know': Women as an Individual Market Segment 1930-1939

Evidence for the GWR's extensive renegotiation of the value of female customers comes chiefly in the form of new imagery, at the outset of the 1930s, which referenced the feminine perspective. Harrington's assessment of poster advertising challenges the historian to question the enormous upsurge in the depiction of women after 1930.[84] We need to know as far as possible whether it was simply the case that artists and photographers preferred to depict women over men, or whether companies such as the GWR began to consider what type of woman wanted to travel, where, and what were her likely consumption interests? This section argues that in the 1930s the GWR began to consider these questions more seriously. It demonstrates that whilst imagery of the family persisted, as seen in the previous chapter, there was a dramatic increase in Drummond's first category, images of the female traveller consuming. However, this section argues that in the climate of the 1930s, Drummond' distinctions become blurred. As we will see, the sole female traveller, her consumption of the destination and her interests, became increasingly tied together as the GWR pictured glamorous, Hollywood inspired femininity. The fact that individual appeals to women became more like a dedicated campaign suggests that in this decade a portion of GWR marketing became 'for the ladies'.

First we must consider the GWR's attempts to try to understand women's consumption patterns and motives in order to contextualise the increase and changing style of the company's photographic marketing. Where previously little attention had been paid to

[84] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', pp. 42-43.

finding out women's wants or desires, the GWR was the first British railway company to employ a female salesperson for passenger traffic.[85] Her appointment was an important step in bringing the GWR in line with other advertisers. Although an unprecedented occurrence within the railway industry, women had played a greater role in previously male-dominated sales and advertising departments since the mid 1920s.[86] Whilst it was rare for such women to escape being typecast as experts on the 'woman's viewpoint', their contribution was nevertheless a recognition of the role women increasingly played as individual consumers and as orderers of household consumption. Their appointment tackled a further issue, that men were perhaps not best placed to understand or influence female desires. Such was the reasoning behind the GWR's pioneering endeavour.

Miss Audrey Shirtliff joined the Superintendent of the Line's office in autumn 1936.[87] Her principal duties involved keeping in touch with all kinds of women's organisations, promoting outings and excursions, and distributing advice on itineraries, sight-seeing, amusements and catering.[88] Whilst little archival information on Shirtliff survives beyond her appointment and the termination of her contract on the outbreak of the Second World War,[89] an article in the company magazine explained her role. In 1938 Shirtliff described her exploration of the myriad strategies for effectively selling travel which, at the outset, had seemed to her a fairly simple job.[90] She recognised the influence that women had in consumption decisions within the household and increasingly within the organisations of civil society, but also the work needed to listen to these customers. Shirtliff joined a growing

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[85] GWRM, October 1936, p. 505.
[86] Terence Nevett, *Advertising In Britain: A History*, (London, 1982), pp. 149-50; Roland Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream: Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 33-35; Stefan Schwarzkopf, 'Discovering The Consumer: Market Research, Product Innovation, and the Creation of Brand Loyalty in Britain and the United States in the Interwar Years', *Journal of Macromarketing*, 29:1 (2009), pp. 12-17.
[87] GWRM, October 1936, p. 505.
[88] GWRM, October 1936, p. 505.
[89] TNA, RAIL 252/2301, Agreement between Great Western Railway Company and Winifred Audrey Shirtliff (spinster, Chelsea, London) for employment as canvasser; with correspondence, 1st October 1936 – 30th September 1939.
[90] GWRM, April 1938, pp. 148-49.

number of women who occupied higher, albeit ultimately middle-ranking positions, in the company, [91] and we can conclude that reassessment of the value of women employees probably went hand in hand with a reassessment of their role as consumers. But as an agent in discovering and persuading female consumers, Shirtliff was much more than a concession to the woman's point of view. Her appointment is a key moment when we can say unequivocally that the GWR recognised the complexities of gendered marketing.

Shirtliff's appointment suggests a new approach in selling travel to a female audience, one which made efforts to understand the different requirements of women as well as presenting the railway to them in a more attractive manner. This was necessary because, as Shirtliff herself concluded, women were increasingly more responsible for consumption decisions, including those associated with the holiday. Wishing to know more about how this operated, Shirtliff's example reveals why the GWR wanted to target women in 1936. But what happened in the intervening years? The photographs, their composition, content and the styles they referenced, are the best indication of the company's developing understanding of the individual female market, what they wanted and how they could be influenced.

2.1: Picturing the Female Passenger

As suggested, on the one hand it is straightforward to identify a change in 'feminine' imagery at the outset of the 1930s. From hardly any examples in the 1920s, the female face and body became some of the most frequently appearing images in *Holiday Haunts* in the 1930s. Although in part this increase extended the trend, in society more generally, for visual representation of 'people', [92] the kinds of signs depicted are indicative of who the GWR saw as important consumers. For instance, Chapter One considered how, in 1931, *Holiday*

[91] Rosa Matheson, *The Fair Sex: Women and The Great Western Railway*, (Stroud, 2007), pp. 134-42.
[92] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 227-65.

Haunts was divided, for the customer's benefit, into eight sections arranged regionally.[93] Each section featured a title page illustrated with a representative photograph. Of the eight sections, five depicted a woman alone or women in groups. 'South Wales and Monmouthshire' featured two women cavorting in the sea whilst 'The Cornish Riviera' was illustrated by a woman who walked her six greyhounds on the beach. By contrast 'North Wales' featured mountainous terrain, 'London and the Southern Counties' a photograph of Windsor Castle. 'Glorious Devon' (Figure 4.13) showed a woman in a pose which would become typical, perched like a siren on a rocky island. She differed from the demure women of the posters seen already, smiling, gesturing, windswept and energetic. Rather than a modest garment ultimately impractical for swimming,[94] she sported a bathing suit which revealed skin that glistened in the sea-spray. This kind of caper was referenced even more prominently on the cover of *Holiday Haunts* for that year, where a slightly more covered-up version, sporting shorts and a bathing cap, danced through the waves (Figure 4.14). These kinds of women set the tone for subsequent years which showed one, two, or groups of women in increasing numbers and in diverse settings.

[93] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1931); for a description of this process please refer back to Chapter One of this thesis.
[94] Horwood, '"Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions", pp. 656-62.

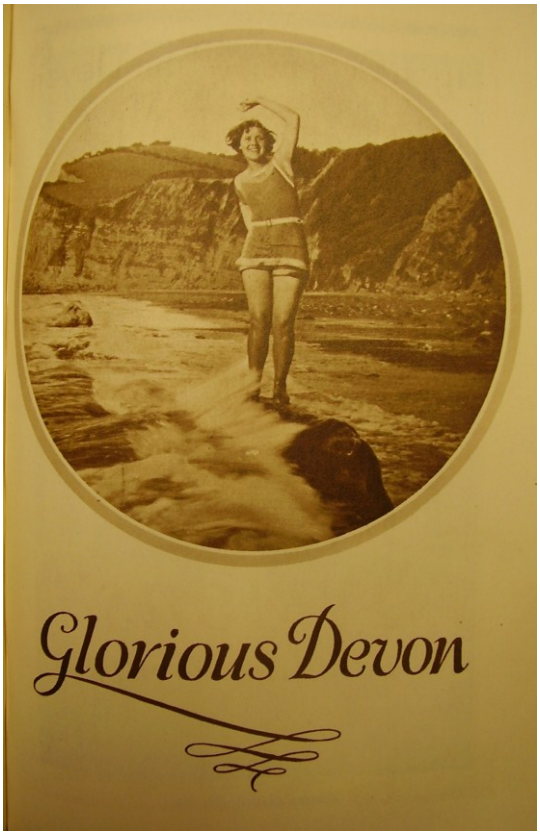

Figure 4.13: Frontispiece of 'Glorious Devon' Section in *Holiday Haunts* 1931

Figure 4.14: Front Cover, *Holiday Haunts*, 1931

But identifying what this imagery meant, how these images were intended to be interpreted, and to what extent they are indicative of re-negotiated marketing, is more challenging. For example, how far do these images indicate a considered appeal to women's interests over, say, titillation of the male gaze or the further relaxation of bathing strictures?[95] Harrington argues that railway posters in the 1930s employed aspirational female types; their high visibility, actions and clothing, as well as formal devices such as colouring, composition, style of illustration and typography, reflected the female market's importance to British railways.[96] But one can elaborate on these conclusions using photographic evidence. In some cases the photographs support Harrington's claims: the seaside girl's significance in promoting health, freedom, purity, fun and relaxation was multi-layered and complex.[97] But additionally the GWR used glamorous scenes, and modern narratives about female consumption drawn from the cinema screen. Titillation was an undoubted characteristic, but the following analysis reveals that there were many kinds of image, and the marketing process was much more nuanced than simply picturing scantily-clad women.

2.2: The 'Girl Next Door'

The GWR positioned its appeals within a broader culture which acclaimed the youthful, idealised woman such as the 'girl next door'. A concept with its origins in the interwar period, this phrase means a female perceived as familiar, pleasant, dependable, typifying an average young woman of the time.[98] It captures how the GWR and a host of other advertisers appealed to women by showing an idealised yet attainable form of femininity. The GWR knew, as did many advertisers, that the desire for beauty was one way

[95] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 8.
[96] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 27.
[97] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 32.
[98] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'The Girl Next Door', http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/78475?redirectedFrom=girl%20next%20door#eid123465197, (accessed 30th April, 2012).

to reach female consumers. Similarly youth, then as now, was privileged as a sign of health and sex appeal. An explosive interest in 'women's ages' in the 1920s and 1930s led to veneration of the youthful image.[99] A range of advertisers promised younger looking skin, slenderness and attractiveness through a diverse range of cosmetic, food and fashion products.[100] Beauty articles remained staples of the woman's magazine format throughout the 1930s.[101] Whilst recognising that people's awareness of such aspirational images did not necessarily lead to uncritical consumption of meaning,[102] scholars nevertheless believe that consumers let their desires be appealed to.[103] For advertisers it was a successful if unoriginal ploy, and a similar set of messages in the GWR's photographs suggest that it was now thinking much harder about women and how to attract them.

For example, GWR publicity managers were careful to select and picture only young women; nobody who could reasonably be considered as over the age of forty appeared in GWR marketing. Additionally, the photographs pictured women whose proportions conformed to conventional beauty ideals which had changed since the 1920s; a move away from the androgynous look and towards longer hair, fuller breasts and thighs was desired in the 1930s.[104] These virtues were exemplified in portraiture-style images such as Figure 4.15. This type of pose, more common to the fashion pages of female-oriented magazines, was appropriated to equate beautiful femininity with the coast. In other cases women were pictured in some vigorous activity, as in Figure 4.16, where the visual content connoted vitality as a virtue of consumption. Furthermore, sunlight was manipulated to influence the viewer's interpretation. We have seen already, in Chapter Three, that sunlight was used to

[99] Cynthia Port, '"Ages Are The Stuff!": The Traffic In Ages In Interwar Britain', *NWSA Journal*, 18:1 (2006), p. 138
[100] Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', p. 125; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 188.
[101] Jill Greenfield and Chris Reid, 'Women's Magazines and the Commercial Orchestration of Femininity in the 1930s: Evidence from Woman's Own', *Media History*, 4:2 (1998), p. 170.
[102] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 28.
[103] Sue Bowden, 'Consumption and Consumer Behaviour', in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion To Early Twentieth-Century Britain,* (Oxford, 2003), p. 368.
[104] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 113-14.

connote favour from God, giving products and people a 'heavenly' quality.[105] For the GWR, sunlight linked travel to health and thereby back to the overall message that beauty was a characteristic of the environs one visited by train. As well as being scientifically proven as medicinally beneficial, by the 1930s a sun-tan was no longer associated with manual labour but indicated sufficient wealth to be able to afford a holiday.[106] It was a simple technique, but by ensuring that the photographs were well-lit, the GWR could emphasise its claims that its destinations enjoyed the perfect weather as well as showing its models in literally portrayed in the best possible light. Attention paid to light and shadow glinting on limbs and hair gave a revitalising impression as well as suggesting symbolically that customers could access a better and brighter life.

Figure 4.15: 'A Belle Of Aberdovey' 1937

Figure 4.16: 'Bathing Belles at Weymouth', 1938

[105] John Gold and Margaret Gold, '"Home at Last!": Building Societies, Home Ownership and the Imagery of English Suburban Promotion in the Interwar Years', in John Gold and Stephen Ward (eds.), *Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions* (Chichester, 1994), pp. 88-89; Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream,* p. 276.
[106] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:4 (2006), p. 596; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 20:2 (2011), pp. 300-01.

The interpretation of these images relied on further social developments in connecting beauty to the holiday as well as visual media's attempts to exploit this. In the 1930s the beauty contest featured heavily at resorts and in the daily press during the summer months. At his newly established holiday camps, Billy Butlin turned such contests into mainstay activities. By persuading British-born Hollywood actress Elizabeth Allen to judge the 'Perfect Figure Competition', Butlin gave the contest additional popularity and cachet.[107] The GWR itself reported on beauty contests and voted for its own railway queen.[108] Photographic marketing which sold feminine beauty as connected to the holiday was therefore probably not just men speaking to men, but an attempt to utilise women's self-consciousness when in the public arena of the seaside holiday.

As well as their undoubted attractiveness, the women of the photographs were intended to be read as aspirational types in other ways: confident and outside of male control. This can be seen in a range of framing devices. The 'Belle of Aberdovey' (Figure 4.15), was looked up to, her height relative to the camera marked her as a person to be aspired to. Wilkinson identifies a similar tactic in the photographs produced by agencies: positioning and framing devices became important parts of the visual rhetoric of the 1930s as the photographic image was demanded by more advertisers.[109] In Figure 4.16 the group run towards and look down upon the camera creating similar impressions of a friendship group (connoting popularity) which should be looked up to. The GWR was clearly referencing the 'opening up' of opportunities for women by ensuring that the photographs portrayed a narrative of freedom and fun. Countless photographs showed women in groups frolicking in the sea and sand, consuming foodstuffs at restaurants or inland locales or individually contemplating the scenery. To further embody this freedom the GWR paid particular

[107] Sandra Dawson, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure*, (Manchester, 2011), pp. 100-02.
[108] GWRM, October 1933, p. 432.
[109] Helen Wilkinson, '"The New Heraldry": Stock Photography, Visual Literacy, and Advertising in 1930s Britain', *Journal of Design History*, 10:1 (1997), pp. 23-38.

reference to a prominent female type derived from classical art; the ‘nymph’. The classical nymph inhabited riverside locales, connoted sexual freedom, and was outside of male control. They animated nature though their dancing and singing. The GWR often explicitly referred to the women in its marketing as ‘nymphs’, and the associations to freedom, independence and gaiety were exemplified in posed photographs such as Figure 4.17 below. On first glance one is greeted by messages of ‘sisterhood’ and the women are shown as strong: they are supported by a female not male companion. That the photographer chose four women who engage each other in an unconventional pose suggests that they were not displayed primarily as commodities for a male gaze.

Figure 4.17: ‘Enjoying Life at Jersey’, 1934

Several other images typify this archetype, such as Figures 4.18 and 4.19. Commonly depicted on rocks, the GWR’s nymphs made reference to the historic depictions of sirens and

mermaids, whilst others chased each other along the beach. These women most probably represented 'ordinary girls', the newly salaried, emancipated women of the 1930s.[110] Again, rather than the destination, such photographs asked women to compare themselves to the individuals depicted. This was also encouraged by text which focused on the women or human drama of the situation as much as the destination itself: 'ENJOYING LIFE at Jersey', 'A BELLE of Aberdovey', 'Bathing BELLES at Weymouth', Devon MERMAIDS'. The images were inviting in different ways; other images pictured women waving or beckoning to viewers, and all smiled and basked in apparent appreciation of their own beauty. Welcoming and engaging the viewer, but not so much in an *overtly* sexualised manner, they were a prominent call to consume for women as well as men.

Figure 4.18: 'Sea Nymphs', 1939

[110] Fowler, *The First Teenagers,* pp. 1-10; Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 239.

Figure 4.19: 'Devon Mermaids', 1937

Undoubtedly these women conferred a *degree* of sexuality on the destination. But the GWR also used imagery which showed women as calm and dignified consumers. These women, although equally angelic, appeared to float above the landscape. Indeed, this was a favourite pose for GWR photographers to capture on cliffs or to advertise moorland. Others depicted women three-quarters on to the camera, looking out over dramatic vistas (Figures 4.20 and 4.21). They equated female power with the destination and demonstrate that the GWR possessed ideas about women different to simply the disempowered bathing belle or, Drummond's term, the 'bimbo on the beach'.[111] Marchand identifies that this visual cliché,

[111] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 8.

master of all 'he' surveys, was used in several American adverts of business executive gazing out of windows on to their company. For Marchand, looking out over a broad vista was symbolically significant as to command a view not only suggested high status but also conjured an ineffable sense of domain.[112] For the GWR, the panorama view was similarly expansive and dramatic, usually seen from considerable height. This ensured the female depicted, and the impressive scenery, were unobstructed. By obscuring the female face the viewer was encouraged to put themselves in the photograph and look where the actor looked. An un-sexualised, powerful female – note, for example, the purposeful stance in Figure 4.21 - is what British railway marketing lacked according to Drummond: for her only American railroads showed women as consumers of the countryside or interested in nature.[113] The GWR's photographic perspective provides additional evidence to show that the company possessed ideas different from the stereotype of the girl on the beach.

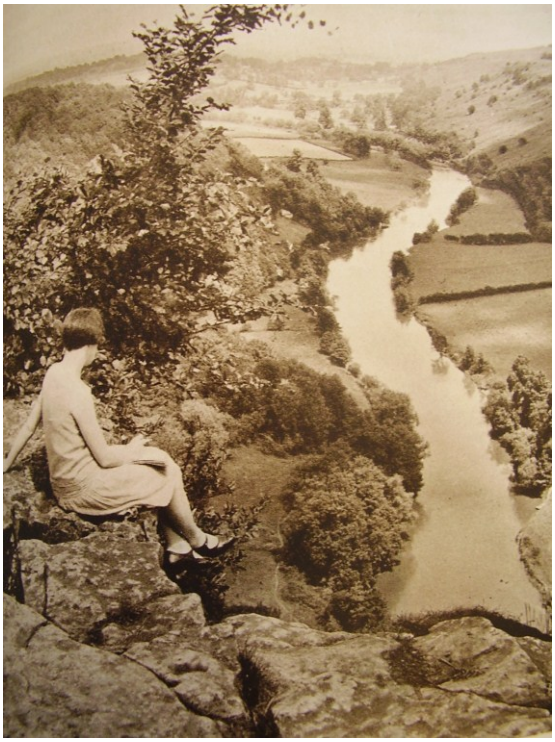

Figure 4.20: 'Symonds Yat', 1930

Figure 4.21: 'Trencrom near St Erth', 1938

[112] Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream,* pp. 238-40.
[113] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", pp. 16-18.

These photographs also refute Harrington's claim that women were never pictured alone or in all-female groups,[114] adding further weight to the idea that the GWR wanted to target new, independent women in ways that the pictorial poster, perhaps, was unable to offer. Whilst in the posters men were constant companions, in the photographs women were very rarely pictured with them. When men did appear it was they who were subordinate to women, being outnumbered or getting pushed into water by their female companions for comic effect were oft-repeated examples. Whilst the posters might have intended a 'catch-all' appeal, one might read the focus on women in photographs as a clearer attempt at targeted marketing, a ploy to the sense of freedom to be had on holiday.

2.3: The Cinematic Beauty

We have so far seen a number of female types intended to cater to different tastes, styles and interests. The above examples suggest the GWR's creation of a 'girl-next-door' type, an everywoman who was aspirational yet easy to relate to. However, the GWR needed to create a further mass appeal and in the 1930s this meant, in all likelihood, a lower-middle or working class gaze. This necessitated paying attention to popular culture, the most popular aspect at this time being cinema.[115] Film is recognised as an important factor in the shaping of the interwar ideal femininity: millions of visits were made every week and the stars enjoyed immense popularity.[116] Female film icons were used by advertisers to adorn everyday practical consumption decisions with images of the fantastical.[117] Although its messages were not absorbed uncritically, the cinema was a major force in how people

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[114] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 41.
[115] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 96-97.
[116] Martin Francis, 'Leisure and Popular Culture', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women In Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 238.
[117] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, p. 40; Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, (London, 1994), pp. 1-9; Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 96-97.

constructed their aspirations because people could imagine themselves or their lives in an exotic and aspirational form.[118] Movies created highly glamorous female images and situations where desirable and potentially transgressive feminine identities were formulated and engaged.[119] Cinema's pervasiveness helped develop a visual language around consumption which meant that consumers became exceptionally well equipped to decode photographic meaning. A comprehension of cinematic messages in turn assisted photographers in selling more effectively to women during the 1930s, predominantly fashion photographers such as Edward Steichen in America[120] and Yva in Germany.[121] Marketers of diverse products invited women to imagine themselves as participants in the modern world, and this arguably meant paying attention, and trying to replicate, the visual languages of the cinema screen.[122]

Even though all photographs alluded to the cinema more closely than posters, certain styles suggest a more considered emulation. For the GWR, 'In the Sand Dunes' and 'Friends of the Devon Moors' (Figures 4.22 and 4.23) showed idealised femininity which was reminiscent of the appearance and demeanour of cinematic beauty. The models wore heavy make-up, their hair perfectly shaped in spite of their beach situation. They sport sharply drawn eyebrows and prominent eyelashes, perfectly painted lips and waved bobbed hair designed in the 'Marcel curl' style of Hollywood stars such as Greta Garbo.[123] As a result, a glamorous look is unmistakable. Once again, these are independent women, not pictured with male companions but with their animals. Like the goddesses on screen, the GWR's models had the best things. They wore the latest rubberised bathing suit fashions imported

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[118] James Chapman (ed.), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 4; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 523; Francis, 'Leisure and Popular Culture', p. 238; Stacey, *Star Gazing*, pp. 30-31.
[119] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, p. 83.
[120] Patricia Johnson, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography*, (London, 1998), pp. 3-4.
[121] Ganeva, 'Fashion Photography and Women's Modernity in Weimar Germany', pp. 1-23.
[122] Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', p. 113; Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 239.
[123] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 96-97.

from America or fashionably relaxed attire. As we will see presently, fashion in a sartorial sense was just as important to these images as appearing in a Hollywood style, and suggests a further level of construction in the GWR's imagery. But the GWR's messages were further assisted in that some Hollywood stars could hardly be imagined without a bathing suit. 'Leg art', was expected of each actress who signed up to a major studio, marking the entrance of many a new young talent into the public relations world of Hollywood.[124] This imagery was amongst the most attractive, adorning countless pages of fanzines such as *Picturegoer*. By referencing these images the GWR tapped into an established and enticing visual culture.

Figure 4.22: 'In the Sand Dunes', 1935

Figure 4.23: 'Friends of the Devon Moors', 1938

More so than the poster or drawing, the photograph alluded closely to lurid Hollywood representations of life. Even though the look of film stars may have been

[124] Joshua Curtis, *Sunkissed: Sunwear and the Hollywood Beauty 1930-1950*, (Portland, 2003), pp. 18-19.

completely unattainable to many, photography prefigured the look as inherently more achievable than a drawing or sketch which provided less 'human' visions of perfection. Contrasting the GWR's women with screen icons such as Bette Davis and Dorothey Lamour, (Figures 4.24 and 4.25) there is an undoubted parallel. The GWR's photographic quality was not as sophisticated, nor could it afford to be, but it formed part of a snapshot culture, present in the dailies, which emulated higher fashions and democratised them for lower-middle-class women. The sun, which emulated movie lights (Figure 4.23), detailed hair and make-up and poses, suggests a degree of emulation was being sought. Cinema's construction of a new form elegant and sensual female realigned the discourse on what constituted ideal womanhood,[125] and the GWR sought to capitalise on this. Hollywood photographers worked for an industry that invested deeply in selling a dream,[126] just as did those who marketed holidays as perfect places with unfailing weather and endless consumption possibilities.

Figure 4.24: Bette Davis still from 'All about Eve'[127]

Figure 4.25: Dorothey Lamour promotional still[128]

[125] Robert Dance and Bruce Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography*, (London, 2002), pp. 107-19.
[126] Dance and Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louse and Hollywood Glamour Photography*, p. 107.
[127] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, Plate 5.11, p. 157.
[128] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, Plate 5.7, p. 150.

Certainly, the GWR sought to foster associations between its corporate identity and the film industry elsewhere too. For example, in an article from the company magazine in 1936 entitled, 'The British Film Industry Grows around the Great Western Railway', the company celebrated its links with several studios, at Denham, the newly opened Pinewood Studios and Associated Talking Pictures, and the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation. The article argued that Paddington, the GWR's London headquarters, had a film 'character'; '[f]ilm stars, directors, employees, cameramen...are now a part of its everyday life passing to and fro between terminus and the studio stations'.[129] The company clearly wished to establish a relationship, for public relations purposes, between itself and the developments in this popularly celebrated pastime. By association the company could present itself as forward-thinking, and may have perceived some value in its location, at the heart of the film industry, for discretionary travel.

Again, that such GWR imagery was meant for a female as opposed to a solely male audience is suggested from the actions and poses of the women. They were not shy and demure but emulated powerful, emancipated women.[130] Whilst some advertising images depicted women as subordinate, slumped in posture, heads bowed, smaller in relative height than males, or in domestic settings such as the silent housewife or maid,[131] the women of the GWR's photographs all appeared confident and active. These visual conventions attributed to these women a power and influence praised in strong Hollywood characters and fictional women from advertising art.[132] Indeed, Drummond finds that American railroads in the 1930s made heavy use of 'independent' sporty, outdoor women who were alone, or in small

[129] GWRM, December 1936, p. 557.
[130] Wosk, *Women and The Machine*, p. 20.
[131] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, pp. 62-95.
[132] Vickie Shields, *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image*, (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 39.

same-sex groups.[133] In their self-assured postures and sparing attire, the GWR's women challenged the public versus domestic nature of women.[134] As in the above examples sitting atop cliffs or looking out across wide vistas,[135] all were positive consuming angels which embodied characteristics favoured by cinema-goers; independence, confidence and beauty.[136] Most probably the GWR wanted women to infer that by travelling by train women would themselves make the transition from their present positions to that of the glamorised people in the photographs.

In attaining a more iconic look in the 1930s the GWR used models and agency girls. Little detail survives on this relationship, the cost, photographers or the models themselves, other than the Commercial Assistant's comment, in 1936, that excellent results were being secured by co-operating with photographic and film agencies.[137] The GWR used the Fox Films Model Agency, one of many firms set up to satisfy the demand for glamorous photographic imagery amongst a range of advertisers.[138] This was part of a trend that shied away from the Parisian model of the Edwardian period and looked to the 'ordinary girl' who was meant to look friendly and familiar, acquiring the power and trust to induce consumers to smile with them.[139] That the GWR chose a model agency suggests that it sought a level of refinement, but also a look which was in time with contemporary popular conventions and 'ways of seeing'. The same models were used for many shots but regularly changed clothes and hair to give the appearance of difference. One will note, for example, the regular appearance of a short-haired blonde here, (Figure 4.26) who was seen, in a variety of hats and dresses, in carriage and outdoors imagery. The photographs of these models are the only

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[133] Drummond, '"For the Ladies?", p. 16.
[134] Shields, *Measuring Up*, pp. 44-45.
[135] 'Symonds Yat' Holiday Haunts 1930; 'Guernsey – Fremain Bay' Holiday Haunts 1932; 'In the Sand Dunes' *Holiday Haunts* 1937.
[136] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, pp. 30-31.
[137] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Railway Students' Association Proceedings of Sessions, meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-36.
[138] Wilkinson, 'The New Heraldry', p. 29.
[139] See for example *The Daily Mirror*, 2nd May 1936; *Advertiser's Weekly* 2nd March 1933; Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream,* p. 14.

surviving evidence of what was probably a very important collaboration for the GWR. It needed to make sure that the right message was conveyed. If an aspirationalised vision of life was not desired by the GWR, the company could have made do with using images of staff or 'ordinary' holidaymakers. The use of models suggests however the company was interested in tapping into the popular glamorising of the photographic image in the 1930s.

Figure 4.26: Detail of Fox Model

Borrowing common conventions and images of 'ideal' women may not have been the most original method; the way in which women were depicted conformed to Hollywood-style and suggests that the GWR was treading a well-worn path in its appeal to the female consumer. This nevertheless reveals that the GWR increasingly thought more about what kinds of women travelled and what they wanted from the service. Drawing on images of idealised femininity found in the popular visual culture of the 1930s, the GWR's publicity material conveyed a sense of a heavily aspirationalised, idealised womanhood designed to 'connote' beauty to the destination. Just as marketers of other commodities showed beauty as achievable through their cosmetic or food products, the GWR made use of the established association between health and the seaside. It would be imprudent to say that consideration of the male gaze did not play a role in the GWR's representation of women. Created by male advertising agents, these images may have been masculine fantasies of sexually attractive women. But the commercial success of other products which advertised in this way, as well

as the popularity of *Holiday Haunts* in this decade, suggests that the feminine audience negotiated with the masculine fantasy as a feminine ideal. In a culture breaking from long-enforced feminine demureness, advertisers such as the GWR were now freer to use feminine sexuality which had titillated but also shocked since the Edwardian years. No longer an appeal just to men,[140] these ideals were extended to other areas of female interest such as fashion and conspicuous consumption at the destination.

2.4: Fashioning the Passengers

The GWR's vision of ideal womanhood was additionally complex: they had to have the right holiday fashions. Drummond's analysis omits the appeal of fashionable holiday-wear or retail shopping, crucial elements in how women were invited to imagine themselves as participants in the modern world through their consumption at this time.[141] Appearing fashionable was not solely a feminine concern,[142] but the fashion trade, as well as supporting industries such as film and printed media, predominantly targeted women.[143] Harrington mentions the presence of fashionable clothing in posters, cloché hats and a la mode bathing suits for example,[144] but does little question its inclusion. This section goes further, suggesting that the GWR's photographic styles mimicked the fashionable styles which littered the daily press and magazines in a further effort to approximate anticipation and conspicuous display to the holiday. This leads us to another consideration: that the GWR knew, or, at least, assumed, that people desired these designs and would seek to emulate them. The railways are not normally associated with the world of fashion, yet the GWR's

[140] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, p. 62
[141] Tinkler and Warsh, 'Feminine Modernity In Interwar Britain and North America', p. 113.
[142] Brent Shannon, 'Refashioning Men: Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain, 1860-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 46:4 (2004); Laura Ugolini, *Men and Menswear: Sartorial Consumption in Britain 1880-1939*, (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 21-22.
[143] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 185.
[144] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 42.

photographic publicity, as well as several other marketing initiatives, embraced fashion in an effort to boost feminine consumption.

By the 1930s fashion and display were already well-established elements of the holiday. Since the seventeenth century the seaside promenade had been a place where the latest fashions were exhibited and admired.[145] Although conformity to prevailing beauty ideals had been the aspiration of women and men for many centuries, the critical transformation during the twentieth century was that these aspirations, and the means to fulfil them, were no longer confined to a narrow elite.[146] In the interwar period, as clothing and bathing strictures relaxed further, modern holiday dress became all the rage. Expressed on the front cover of a 1932 edition of *Vogue* magazine (Figure 4.27), clothing specifically for the beach had become an immensely popular commodity.[147] Fashion journalists now declared 'we've all got to develop waists and hips this winter if we want to wear the fashionable new styles,'[148] and the demand for bathing costumes generated a multi-million pound industry in interwar Britain.[149] As a result, getting the right look was high on the contemporary holidaymaker's agenda and the warning in the upmarket periodical *The Lady* - 'not to make the mistake of going to an elegant place in your second-best, or you will feel...envious of other women who fit so well into their sophisticated background'[150] - suggests that this aspiration was not just for the young, lower-middle class woman. This reach went beyond the fashion magazines,[151] permeating British culture and becoming a regular feature of the daily newspapers during the holiday months. As the image from the *Mirror*, taken at the Olympia Woman's Fair suggests, the ordinary woman on the street

[145] James Walvin, *Beside The Seaside: A Social History Of The Popular Seaside Holiday*, (London, 1978), pp. 70-79.
[146] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 185.
[147] See also Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1950*, (London, 1975), p. 121.
[148] Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Twentieth Century*, p. 141.
[149] *Nash's Magazine*, August 1934, p. 76.
[150] Catherine Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion and Class Between The Wars*, (Stroud, 2006), p. 78.
[151] Francoise Ducros, 'The Dream of Beauty', in Michel Frizot, *A New History of Photography*, (Köln, 1998), p. 535.

displayed a great interest in holiday fashion (Figure 4.28). This fact was not lost on the GWR.

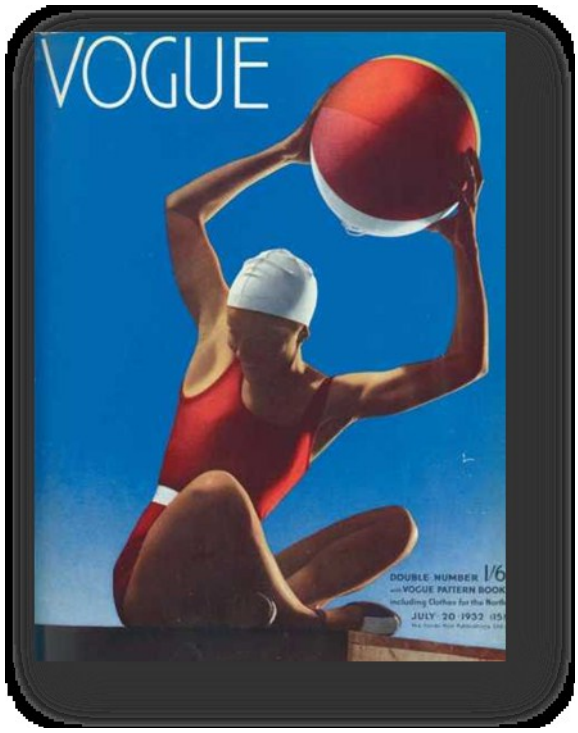

Figure 4.27: Front cover of British Vogue[152]

Figure 4.28: 'A Fair Woman', 1938[153]

[152] *Vogue*, 20th July 1932.

The GWR capitalised on these desires by putting fashion at the centre of its photographic publicity. Aided by advances in photographic technology, which allowed the detail of the clothes to be as clear as the faces of the models, the GWR's images closely resembled fashion catalogues and press advertisements as opposed to traditional holiday advertising. In this way the photograph (rather than the poster which also included fashionable styles)[154] spoke of realism and was more closely tied to the way that such commodities were advertised more generally. In Figure 4.29, below, the fact that the women have their faces turned from the viewer's gaze means attention is instead focussed on their clothing. The photographs pictured aspirational fashions, expensive manufactured bathing suits rather than homemade copies. Women testified that their efforts to make cheap copies, by knitting their own woollen bathing suits, were limited as the garments were not particularly attractive and held so much water that they became dangerous or indecent.[155] In Figure 4.29, the figure standing, and the one sitting on the viewer's left, wear stylish variants complete with caps. The woman on the right sports a bathing suit with attached shorts. All three girls wear heeled shoes in the contemporary 'rounded toe' style different from the sandals usually worn for the beach.[156] The following photographs, Figures 4.30 and 4.31, presented a closer focus on the female body elegantly swathed in a la mode bathing suits. That these women and their attire dominate the photographic message means that for the GWR, place marketing in this way relied less on the destination and more on its role as a background to undertake competitive consumption.

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[153] *The Daily Mirror*, 14th November, 1938.
[154] Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle', p. 29.
[155] Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances*, p. 78.
[156] Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Twentieth Century*, p. 185.

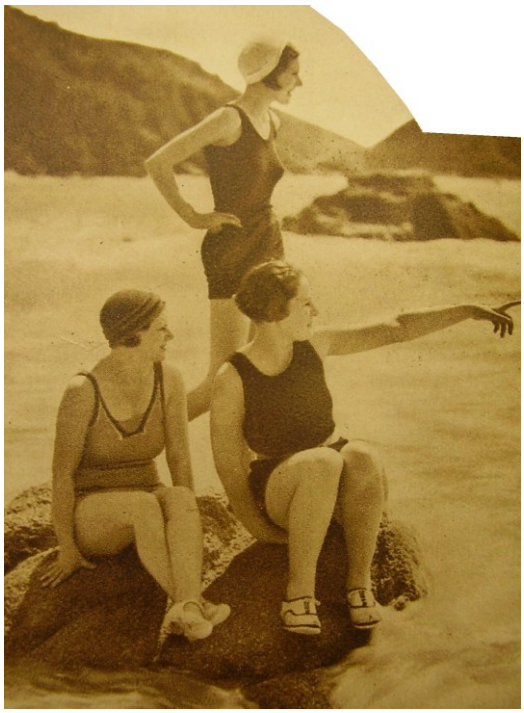

Figure 4.29: 'Sea Nymphs', 1933

Figure 4.30: 'Bouley Bay, Jersey', 1935

Figure 4.31: 'Bathing Belles at Barry', 1939

During the 1930s fashion and consumption also became a bigger part of the textual content of *Holiday Haunts*. Descriptions of towns and cities revealed which shops could and should be visited, pinpointing celebrated stores. Maxwell Fraser wrote that the glamour of London shops needed no recommendation, the difficulty being to tear oneself away from the

alluring windows.[157] But although many desired the fashion and experiences portrayed in the guide not everyone could afford them. We have already seen how the need to look fashionable on holiday encouraged some women to knit their own examples.[158] Machine-made garments complete with a manufacturer's label remained the highly prized symbol of fashionability and modernity.[159] But the GWR targeted those with lower incomes by collaborating with the Co-Operative retail chain. The idea was to sell holidays through clothing, and clothing though the holiday: a mutually beneficial partnership. 'What to wear and where to go', the slogan used to advertise the venture, encapsulated the move to actively marketing the destination using contemporary fashions. A similar display featured in the Magazine as early as 1924: the 'unique window display' by Messrs. Lewis of Birmingham was designed as a GWR station complete with ticket collector, passengers with luggage labelled for chief GWR destinations, and GWR posters.[160] Billboards exclaimed 'Holidays' and 'Everything to wear'. That the company lent these stores some branded uniforms, posters and luggage tags, as well as reporting such initiatives in the magazine, suggests that this sort of venture was valued by the company's managers. It would be interesting to know how widespread these collaborations were, but additional information is missing. Nevertheless, even the scattered examples, linked to those seen with regard to the family in the previous chapter, show the company's efforts to promote holidays through diverse measures appealing to female tastes. Therefore, disseminating 'news' about the word of fashion was not confined to fashion houses and department stores;[161] the railways' role has arguably been overlooked. As suggested, it is even possible that the GWR's photography acted as a catalogue of the seaside fashions, read specifically to 'get the look' before going on

[157] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1938).
[158] Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances*, p. 78; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 187.
[159] Buckley and Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine*, pp. 101-02.
[160] GWRM, September 1924, p. 345.
[161] Rappaport, *Shopping For Pleasure*, pp. 3-8.

holiday. If so, linking the holiday with women's fashion to create a greater propensity to consume suggests a sophisticated retail awareness on the part of the GWR.

The GWR was, however, behind other railways companies in using its company magazine to extend this appeal to women. Although the magazine was primarily read by employees and their families, the kind of information included in this source can be used to further draw-out what the company thought about customers – particularly employees' wives. By the 1930s the GWR's magazine offered a more family-centred outlook on life, including items on Christmas, forthcoming holiday plans and reports on children's activities.[162] The turn to envisaging a female audience is apparent therefore, but the GWR lagged behind other railways in that its magazine lacked a dedicated women's page. A brief analysis of the magazines of the other Big Four companies reveals that not only did they possess women's pages, but that they were used to market the holiday habit to staff and their families. For example, the LNER's woman's page included a London gossip column and a monthly section on dressmaking and dress patterns. It reminded readers to prepare clothing early so as not to be rushed or disappointed come holiday time.[163] The LMS gave similar advice, even reviewing, in August 1933, a series of skin creams for its female readers.[164] It too included guidance on summer fashion, and argued that making home-made clothes would leave more to spend on holiday.[165] By comparing these efforts with the idealised photographs in *Holiday Haunts* one can begin to appreciate some of the comparisons which interwar women would have made when reviewing the last, and selecting the next holiday. The process involved thinking and fantasising about what to wear and where to go. Again, this suggests that by the 1930s the railways were increasingly aware of the lower-middle and working-class female market, as represented by their own staff.

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[162] GWRM, January 1939, p. 23; May 1928, pp. 197-98; October 1938, p. 415; June 1932, p. 229.
[163] The LNER Magazine, June 1929, p. 34.
[164] The London Midland and Scotland Railway Magazine, August 1933, p. 289 (LMSM hereafter).
[165] LMSM, July 1933, pp. 253-54.

Turning once again to the wider market, one finds that fashion considerations also extended to the styling of the railway environs in the 1930s. Companies such as the GWR possibly saw the appointment and 'luxury' of carriages as appealing more to a feminine gaze, and this time the association to femininity is clear. By the 1930s rail's chief competition, car manufacturers, considered the women's point of view, advertising this concern prominently.[166] Austin released its 'Swallow' which featured a luxurious interior; 'you won't find a prettier small car on the road'.[167] Humber built a limited edition Vogue Saloon with interior styling inspired by the fashion designer 'Molyneux'.[168] It was imperative that the GWR approximated its services with such new, more aspirational, forms of travel. As in the case of Audrey Shirtliff, the GWR was apparently innovative in the employment of female specialists to design carriage interiors. In a brochure released to advertise the company's modern streamlined passenger railcar of 1934, the company publicised the fact that 'a lady designer has been responsible for the interior scheme of decoration'.[169] Presumably, this was a way to suggest that one's preconceptions about the drab interiors usually associated by rail were being attended to by the progressive GWR. A similar perspective was apparent elsewhere in marketing its vehicles and buildings. The interiors of the 1930s were a departure from the gloomy ones of the Edwardian period and the 1920s, and a concentration on brighter interiors consumed, predominantly, by women. The aesthetics were replicated for the station and hotel, previously seen as rather dreary places. The modern snack bar, with its central server and its counter round which travellers sat on high stools, enjoyed the same slightly raffish style of other American-style establishments gaining popularity in larger urban cities.[170] The GWR feminised this development. This image, one of the first in 1939's

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[166] Sean O'Connell, *The Car In British Society*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 43-71; Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age*, (New York, 1991), p. 118.
[167] 'Inspired by Molyneux...Built by Humber', *The Autocar*, 7th February 1932.
[168] 'Her Choice and His', *The Autocar*, 23rd October 1931.
[169] GWR, *The Streamline Way*, (1934).
[170] Neil Wooler, *Dinner In The Diner: A History Of Railway Catering*, (Newton Abbot, 1987), pp. 122-23.

Holiday Haunts, showed two smartly dressed women being served in this visually interesting environment (Figure 4.32). The carriage interior will be discussed in more depth in the final chapter of this thesis, but the initial analysis here demonstrates a further element to the GWR's armoury of marketing to women.

Figure 4.32: 'Paddington Snack Bar', 1939

In sum, fashion formed a part of the GWR's ploy which combined several of Drummond's criteria; imagery of female travellers, interests, and consuming vehicles and buildings connected to mobility. It played an important role in encouraging the holiday habit, even though it did not immediately translate into more business for the railways. The images support the idea that the GWR carefully constructed its photographs to make people think about the holiday in certain ways. As well as in lessening practical concerns, such as packing for the holiday, fashion operated symbolically, appealing to more fantastical imaginings of the holiday and signifying and aspirational experience. An awareness of this appeal demonstrates that the GWR as increasingly versed in marketing 'for the ladies'.

Section 3: Conclusions

Photographic evidence helps position the current conclusions regarding Britain's railways and marketing to women. The evidence supports the tentative conclusions of the existing secondary literature, that until at least the late 1920s railway marketing was not 'for the women' in that it did not make a detailed and specific ploy to women's interests or aspirations. We know that the GWR was a capable marketer before this, so why the neglect? First, the GWR apparently saw little reason to compete when there was no reason to (other railways also neglected the female perspective). Secondly, this decision was probably influenced by wider social estimations of women: although in theory the GWR wanted to cater to all, its marketing, like others such as the London Underground, did not challenge social norms. The GWR apparently perceived its existing marketing, which included the likes of family and picturesque imagery, as sufficient to have a cross-gender appeal, despite the calls for difference.[171] In this context the upsurge in the women's perspective during the 1930s is significant. It points to a renegotiation of the value of the female consumer, in time with their changing social role and competition from new modes such as cars. The photographic evidence deepens our understanding of how the GWR perceived women and how they were understood to be influenced. The company employed a range of signs and symbols, drawn from wider commercial culture and the leisure world, and framed these in an achievable way. By picturing women as empowered, mobile, and modern consumers, a new message about the benefits of holiday was created. The re-negotiated appeal to women is valuable evidence to reconstruct the contemporary GWR culture which saw friendliness, greater marketing segmentation and thinking about the 'present day holidaymaker' as essential to its survival.

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[171] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, p. 2 and 36-38; *The Railway Times*, 30th October 1909, pp. 442-43.

Photographic analysis reveals more about how railways approached women which poster analysis alone obscures. Photography pictured women together without male chaperones, it employed various 'types' of women to create a broad appeal, and it allowed a greater focus on interests such as fashion. Photography referenced consumption in terms more closely approximating the most popular visual medium, the cinema. Although this is ultimately difficult to corroborate fully, the GWR most probably saw great value in aligning itself with a 'film culture' to present itself in more appealing terms to the modern female consumer. Further, the chapter argued that the photographs demonstrate the GWR attempting to get into the minds of female consumers and see holidays from their point of view. In all probability, these photographs were not conceived solely to titillate the male gaze. Whilst a partial appeal to men was probably an intended outcome of some photographs, the change in styles and number of images reveal instead a considered approach to the female consumer as a new market segment, as well as bringing different dimensions to the generic femininity of the posters. A full discussion of a contrasting appeal to men is beyond the scope of this chapter. Attractive women were certainly one ploy, alongside other interests such as technology and engineering,[172] but it would be interesting to know if any other railways appealed to men through, for example, fashion. Although scholars show that other businesses did appeal to a burgeoning sense of male fashion,[173] the GWR's photographs do not reveal an 'everyman' or male consuming hero.

Women were only admitted as large individual market segment in the 1930s when the GWR broadened its gaze and turned to 'friendliness' as seen in Chapter One. This has implications for our understanding of interwar Britain; men remained suspicious of and were unwilling to accept the new roles and responsibilities of women even when it would have been commercially beneficial for them to do so. Nevertheless, gradually the GWR's

[172] Divall, 'Civilising Velocity', pp. 167-86.
[173] Ugolini, *Men and Menswear*; Shannon, 'Refashioning Men', pp. 597-630.

willingness matched its ability to change, and marketing strategy was united with prevailing trends. Photographic marketing proved important in targeting previously un-acknowledged groups such as women, but the next chapter examines how it was used to encourage some over others. As seen so far, certain customers carried reputations which, whilst it made them easy to identify, also meant that places took on these reputations. Changing ideas about place therefore necessitated creating images of ideal or desired customers to attract emerging customer groups which may have been put off by established reputations.