The Rajah of the Great White Way: The Self-Made Man, Conspicuous Consumption, and Competitive Masculinity in Gilded Age New York City

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A larger-than-life figure in the raucous, display-oriented social world of Gilded Age New York, James Buchanan "Diamond Jim" Brady was a man of prodigious appetites. Famed for his realization of the American Dream, his penchant for flashy displays of diamonds, and his animalistic appetite for almost unimaginable quantities of food, Brady conveyed a specific competitive masculinity in a time of male self-mastery and restraint – a competitive masculinity inextricably bound to questions of economic class, wealth display, and conspicuous consumption. This article critically examines aspects of Brady's embodied gender presentation, and shines a light on the wider, gendered performance of Gilded Age, leisure class masculinity by a new class of 'robber barons,' and nouveau riche in turn-of-the-century New York City.

By all accounts, James Buchanan "Diamond Jim" Brady was a man of prodigious appetites. A prolific patron of Broadway theater, a self-made entrepreneurial millionaire, a daily consumer of almost unimaginable quantities of food, a man never found without company of the most beautiful women of his age or his eponymous adornment of choice – Jim Brady epitomized large-living masculinity in the heyday of American conspicuous consumption. The dawn of the twentieth century saw masculinity in a time of flux: the rise of industrial capitalism, women's suffrage and wealth divisions began to restructure society and class, and gave rise to disparate ideas and anxieties around manhood and maleness. Brady embodied the "American Dream" of self-made manhood, building his fortune through the explicitly and discursively masculine world of entrepreneurial business and sales. From his new position as a member of what economic theorist Thorstein Veblen called "the leisure class," Brady also constructed manhood around conspicuous consumption, most notably through his highly visible intake of stomach-turning amounts of food.[1]

[1] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1899). 1.

Furthermore, "Diamond Jim" utilized his physical body to showcase and display a competing masculinity at odds with the hegemonic "strenuous" manhood of his era, in trumpeting his self-made and consumptive manliness through jewel-encrusted adornment, sartorial fashion, and public spectacle. Throughout his life both on and off New York's Broadway, "Diamond Jim" Brady embodied (and more importantly, displayed) a highly visible masculinity, one that provides insight into competing masculinities, and into the new phenomenon of the masculine leisure class in turn-of-the-century Gilded Age New York.

Brady's meteoric rise to the upper echelons of wealth and New York society characterized the masculine self-making process that came part and parcel with the free-market capital economy of the late nineteenth century. In the heady age of a rapidly closing Western frontier and solidifying pecuniary interests, businessmen like Brady sought their fortunes in an unregulated free-market financial system. For many of these turn-of-the-century capitalists, monetary gain involved commerce, manufacturing, or heavy industry. For Brady, sales provided a quicker ticket to the zenith of New York's business and social circles. In a testimonial given before the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1914, Brady spoke of his humble origins and ascendancy to wealth:

> I am in business alone, and if I made vouchers and kept books somebody might get my business away from me. I began work when I was 11 years old, and now I am going on 58. Even with average intelligence I ought to have made some money and I do with it what I please, just so I don't break the law. I don't propose to give my business to anybody as long as I live.[2]

Brady's business acumen and tenacious personality, along with more than a fair share of lucky breaks, led to his rapid ascendancy in the free-for-all environment of Gilded Age economics. He came from humble origins, being the son of a dockyard saloonkeeper near Cedar Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Brady "began his career as a messenger boy in the offices of the New York Central Railroad,"

[2] "Diamond Jim Testifies." *Washington Herald* (Washington, D.C.), 2 May 1914.

before "[finding] employment with the firm of Manning, Maxwell, and Moore, machinery manufacturers."[3] Through the ensuing years, Brady accrued a practical education while moving ever higher in the ranks of the company, eventually becoming a salesman of specialized handsaws, with which to cut rails down to size. It was in this fast-paced world of business that Brady first donned his eponymous jewelry, the glittering emblems of wealth and prestige that would earn him the nickname 'The Rajah of the Great White Way.' "More necessary to traveling man of those days than his valise or sample case," writes Parker Morell in *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady*, "was a diamond ring."[4] Used as collateral as well as status symbols, diamonds became indispensable to Brady in his early years and earned him entrance into an exclusive club of moneyed clerks and railway officials, and thus connections to wealthier investors. "If you wanted to be successful in that grossly materialistic era," writes historian John Burke, "you…flashed and sparkled with diamonds, you spoke in a loud, self-confident voice, and you ordered drinks for the house."[5] In this way, Brady's own presentation of gender (and its strategic deployment as a means by which to signify his relative economic power) was shaped by contemporary standards of capital-based masculinity, centered around independence, visibility, materiality, and monetary prowess.

Brady's burgeoning sales career coincided with the American railway boom of the 1880s, during which the mileage of track laid in the country more than doubled in ten years.[6] His encyclopedic knowledge of all things rail-related and his high degree of self-taught business proficiency meant he was in the vanguard of this expansion. Morell writes, "…the Eighties were the climax of all previous decades,

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[3] "Diamond Jim Brady, Steel Magnate, Dies." *Sun*. (New York, NY), 14 April 1917.

[4] Parker Morell, *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 22.

[5] John Burke, *Duet in Diamonds: The Flamboyant Saga of Lillian Russell and Diamond Jim Brady in America's Gilded Age*. (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), 59.

[6] Parker Morell in *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 24.

the joyous, sprawling close of America's pioneer age."[7] Men like Brady unleashed themselves on "a virgin continent…[that] was being wastefully exploited; the swaggering, blustering men whose fortunes it was making were eager to play," writes Morell. "It was an age of easy come, easy go, easy honor, easy morals."[8] It was through masculine bravado and bluster, as well as the leverage of connections gleaned from years as a traveling salesman, that Brady "became identified with the Fox Pressed Steel Car Company, and subsequently…The Standard Car Company."[9] With the pressed steel under-trucks that the Standard Car Company produced, freight trains could carry heavier loads at higher speeds – and with this innovative design in his salesman's valise, Brady quickly set to work hobnobbing with railroad owners on the Pennsylvania Line.[10] He met with great success. "He was regarded as the best salesman in the United States," reads the Washington Evening Star upon news of his death, "having won the admiration of the business world by his marvelous success in selling railroad supplies."[11] An advertisement placed in the *West Virginian* of Fairmont, West Virginia, pays testament to his skill, prowess and renown. Promoting a series of lectures, the advertisement is entitled "The Ladder of Success: How Best to Climb It Will Be Told By America's Most Successful Men."[12] Among names such as steel magnate Charles Schwab and former President Taft, "Diamond Jim" Brady's name appears at the top of the list. Here, Brady is included in a list of powerful people, exclusively men, with an underlying schema of a fundamentally hierarchical "ladder." Through this explicit metaphor, one can see the significance of relationships of power based on vertical social and economic relationships, and Brady's own place on this very real hierarchy – as one of "America's most successful men."[13]

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[7] Ibid., 57.
[8] Parker Morell in *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 57.
[9] "Diamond Jim Brady, Steel Magnate, Dies." *Sun*. (New York, NY), 14 April 1917
[10] Ibid.
[11] "James B. Brady Dies of Bright's Disease." *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 13 April, 1917.
[12] "The Ladder of Success: How Best to Climb It Will Be Told By America's Most Successful Men." *West Virginian* (Fairmont, WV), 29 July 1916.
[13] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1056.

From virtually penniless origins, Brady accrued a fortune estimated at between "$10,000,000 and $15,000,000;" or close to four hundred million USD today – a true success story of the American free-market capitalist system.[14] In doing so, Brady's bodily presentation of male bravado and salesman bluster fit perfectly with the conflation of masculinity and economics *du jour*. Historian Bret E. Carroll notes that popular conceptions of race and gender at the time defined white men alone as possessing the competitive nature and ambition necessary to succeed, and were thus "naturally suited to the amoral roughness of the marketplace."[15] He continues, "Americans effectively defined the public world of economic exchange as a masculine sphere of activity; financial success was thus seen as a masculine achievement."[16] This gendered commercial environment was the perfect atmosphere for Brady's economically oriented and self-made manhood, as "[there was] a renewed belief in the power of the American businessman and in the ability of the business community to overcome social problems," writes New York City historian Lewis Erenberg.[17] The triumphs of the American trade system allowed these men the opportunity to indulge in greater leisure and affluence, which Erenberg terms "the fruits of a powerful economic empire."[18] Through highly visible achievement in this male-dominated arena of public life, and by displaying the sort of brash, blustering and glitteringly materialistic independence that characterized success, Brady defined his masculinity by the ways and means he knew America valued– entrepreneurial spirit, self-advertisement and most of all, monetary gain.

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[14] "Has Millions But Can't Eat: Diamond Jim Brady Pays for being a Gormand." *Charlevoix County Herald* (East Jordan, Mich.), 19 October, 1917.
[15] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003), 3.
[16] Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture.* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 47.
[17] Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture.* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 47.
[18] Ibid.

Another more visible and perhaps more famed expression of masculinity came from Brady's conspicuous consumption of food. The man ate more than anyone else, and he wanted the world to know it. A 1912 Sunday morning issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune* exhibits the degree of fascination Americans took in Brady's larger than life consumption habits: "According to statisticians…Diamond Jim Brady has been daily, and sometimes oftener, dining in the great lobster palaces along and around and about the Great White Way,"[19] the article reads. This highly visible choice of venue underlines the display-oriented aspect of Brady's eating – he was to be seen ostentatiously consuming, as only a man of his social station could. The article goes on to catalogue Brady's intake - between 1890 and 1912, by the paper's estimation, Brady had eaten "7,600 lobsters, 42,000 nude clams, 16,000 shrimp, 21,000 soft-shelled crabs and 752 golden bucks, as well as eight gallons of Worcestershire sauce and twelve gallons of ketchup."[20] George Rector, proprietor of New York's prestigious French-inspired restaurant Rector's, once described Brady as "the best twenty-five customers I've ever had."[21] This highly visible and impressive level of consumption, however, constituted a fundamental irregularity in a time of middle-class 'strenuous manhood' and increased anxiety around feminization of American culture.[22] "The close affinity," writes historian Bill Osgerby, "that developed during the late nineteenth century between constructions of femininity and modern consumerism ensured that the…practices of commodity consumption were a problematic territory for men."[23] As women's suffrage movements began to erode divisions between gendered public and private spheres, women became aligned with the new practice of conspicuous commercial consumption, while men were expected to define their public role through self-moderation, hard work and

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[19] "Diamond Jim's $250,000 Stomach." *Salt Lake Tribune*. (Salt Lake City, Utah), 08 Sept. 1912.
[20] "Diamond Jim's $250,000 Stomach." *Salt Lake Tribune*. (Salt Lake City, Utah), 08 Sept. 1912.
[21] "Brady of Broadway – He Draws A Salary of A Fortune A Year!" *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, Utah), 24 December, 1911.
[22] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003), 3.
[23] Bill Osgerby, "A Pedigree of the Consuming Male: Masculinity, Consumption, and the American Leisure Class," in B. Benwell (ed.) *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 60.

breadwinner status.[24] Osgerby notes, however, "dominant articulations of masculinity have always had to contend with competing masculine identities."[25] Through a theoretical rejection of the historical existence of a monolithic and static masculinity, one sees Brady's own selection and rejection of dominant masculine archetypical traits come into fuller focus. "Masculinity," continues Osgerby, "is a multiform, mobile, and historically variable construction."[26] Brady's performance of ingestion thus constitutes an example of a competing masculinity, in which "hedonistic consumption [was] painstakingly signposted as a bastion of robust masculine heterosexuality."[27] In the process, Brady situated himself squarely within what, in 1899, economic theorist Thorstein Veblen termed "the leisure class."[28] Far from modest, middle-class masculinity based around family, moderation and hard work, members of this new urban leisure class marked their cultural and economic ascendance through extravagant displays of consumption – the more valuable the goods consumed, the better. "Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to a gentleman of leisure," wrote Veblen, analyzing the "pecuniary culture" of the upper-echelon leisure class.[29] Brady's consumption – so notable as to be repeatedly covered across the nation in news columns – thus proved his masculine reputability and class status. Brady often conflated his rise to economic independence through food imagery – "I began to eat away downtown," he once remarked to an interviewer from the *New York Sun*, "where corned beef and beans cost a dime a plate… Finally I arrived right among you gentlemen. Since then I've eaten everything in sight except the tablecloths."[30] By explaining the masculine self-

[24] Anthony E. Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994), 45.
[25] Ibid., 61.
[26] Anthony E. Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994), 45.
[27] Ibid., 62
[28] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1899). 1.
[29] Ibid., 158.
[30] "Diamond Jim Brady, Steel Magnate, Dies." *Sun*. (New York, NY), 14 April 1917.

making process through the extended metaphor of food, Brady explicitly interlaces the two – food to him became symbolic of his social standing, and his ability to consume more than any other man underlined his masculine supremacy in a niche and gendered social class defined by its consumption. Historian Lewis Erenberg corroborates:

> Diamond Jim stood as a symbol of a man who could conspicuously consume more than others…[he] mastered dining as if [he was] mastering nature. In this age of consolidation, nature was controlled and conquered in the name of progress and civilization. For…Brady, eating was a way of storing up gratification, mastering it.[31]

Through Brady's mastery of immense amounts of food at the tables of Broadway's famed restaurants, including Rector's, Sherry's, and Delmonico's, a specific and conspicuous consumption-based masculinity emerged. "These restaurants were showplaces that glorified material pleasures," writes Lewis Erenburg, "…The Broadway restaurants helped make the life of conspicuous consumption available."[32] Newspapers painted vivid pictures of Brady, "seated in restaurants before quantities of food so appalling" that "nearby diners" sat aghast, "watch[ing] him demolish dozens of raw clams or oysters and the piles of bread and catsup" while he patiently waited for "the soup and the birds and the double steaks and vegetables that always followed." After his sumptuous repast, "he would finish a pound box of candy in five minutes."[33] As sheaves of newsprint will corroborate, Brady's highly visible and prodigious intake of high-value goods became an embodiment of his masculine mastery, his self-conscious positioning in the new urban leisure class, and his own carefully controlled and negotiated manhood in the sphere of consumption.

Diamond Jim's physical body, in this way, became the nexus of a performed and presented masculinity – a masculinity to be seen,

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[31] Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture.* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 50.
[32] Ibid., 41.
[33] "Diamond Jim Brady, Steel Magnate, Dies." *Sun*. (New York, NY), 14 April 1917

experienced and talked about. Here, Brady's physical body becomes an epitome of Judith Butler's theory of the process of gender formation. "Gender," writes Butler, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[34] Nothing underscores this idea more than Brady's eponymous jewelry, a stylized fashion accessory that he was seldom seen without. "He had thirty sets, each composed of twenty items," writes Lloyd Morris in *Incredible New York*, "and collectively they included more than twenty thousand diamonds, as well as six thousand other precious stones. 'Them as has 'em, wears 'em,' he explained."[35] Here, one can see Brady's statement of conspicuous display and consumption laid plain – "Them as has 'em, wears 'em" is tantamount to a performative speech act, constitutive of Brady's "congealed" gendered identity – inextricably tied to stylized consumption, display, and embodied power. As Joan Scott has established in her influential essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," gender is a primary means of signifying power relations – Brady here signifies elevated power position through ostentatious display and performance of masculine wealth.[36] Brady first began collecting diamonds and other precious stones during his days on the road as a salesman, where, as seen above, they were used as collateral and status symbols. This tendency continued in the man as he accrued his millions and expanded the scale of his operations.

One particular anecdote illustrates Brady's propensity for crystalline display and exhibition of his own prosperity. According to an issue of *Goodwin's Weekly* published in 1917, Brady visited San Francisco during the 1915 International Exposition. During his return from a characteristically enormous dinner toward his hotel room, he noticed an illuminated American flag on the façade of a nearby building. Without skipping a beat, he remarked, "I'm going to have a flag like that in my collection of jewels!" The article continues, "not

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[34] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 45.
[35] Lloyd Morris, *Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life from 1850 to 1950*. (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 263.
[36] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1067.

only did Diamond Jim order a jeweled flag for himself, but he had a number of others made for his friends. It is said that he gave away ten thousand dollars worth of them!"[37] These conspicuous and well-publicized displays of largesse became a trademark of Brady's, as well as a means by which to exert his display-based and leisure class masculinity. Accounts throughout his life pay testament to a man who was not afraid to spend money to create and expand his masculine brand and position of gendered power. One particular story stands out, in which Brady, while sitting on a grand jury, took pity on a female victim of a robbery, and tossed from the jury box a one hundred dollar bill – a newspaper-worthy act and one that benefited his reputation as much as the woman in question.[38] "He was Broadway's master of revels," writes Lloyd Morris in *Incredible New York*, "All America knew James Buchanan Brady, the Rajah of the Great White Way, by sight as well as reputation…he resolved to keep on buying diamonds and wearing them until all the world knew him at first glance."[39] According to the Charlevoix County Herald in 1917, Brady's "immaculate persona and glittering array of jewelry spell prosperity with a capital P"[40] – a testament to Brady's repeated performative stylization of the body, visible consumption, and ostentatious display to bulwark a distinctive, leisure-class masculinity.

Brady's use of his body to present manhood did not stop at diamonds and money. A man of means with aspirations of aestheticism, his hefty figure was always found tailored in fashions of his own design, another means by which to self-advertise and underscore a masculinity expressed by its competition with the norm. The February 29, 1908 edition of New York's *The Evening World* attests to the degree of self-defined sartorial resplendence the man displayed, and the explicitly monetary degree of consumption attendant to displaying such garb.

> Mr. Brady is universally noted for the correctness of his attire. He makes his own styles. If others do no follow them he cares not. He is a man of ideas, and is

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[37] "Diamond Jim's Flags." *Goodwin's Weekly* (Salt Lake City, Utah), 26 May, 1917.
[38] "Some Touch." *Day Book* (Chicago, Ill.), 17 March, 1915.
[39] Lloyd Morris, *Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life from 1850 to 1950*. (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 262.
[40] "Has Millions But Can't Eat: Diamond Jim Brady Pays for being a Gormand." *Charlevoix County Herald* (East Jordan, Mich.), 19 October, 1917.

> content to exploit them in his own graceful way…[One night,] Mr. Brady wore a salmon-pink satin waistcoat, embroidered with subdued but pronounced flowers. Under his chin was carelessly but effectively tied a flaring salmon-pink cravat…He was his own spotlight…As Mr. Brady was leaving the Astor, two large, square-toed, square-faced men joined him and surrounded him in a protective fashion. 'Bodyguard,' explained Mr. Brady. 'Good God, man, I've got $250,000 worth of ice on me.'[41]

Here, one can see the continued theme of the masculine self-made and leisure-class persona, untroubled by bothersome mainstream conventions of dress. By "making his own styles," Brady used his body as a physical symbol of his own particular brand of competitive masculinity, as well as a means by which to project gendered power and prestige. By explicitly and vocally assigning monetary value to his appearance ($250,000 worth of 'ice'), he becomes a physical embodiment of his own masculinized consumption habits and economic prowess. As Morell remarks, ""At a time when men's clothing was still mediocre in design and tailoring, Jim was in the vanguard of a new school which contended that a perfectly fitting suit was smart as well as comfortable."[42] Here, one sees a resistant masculinity, predicated chiefly around stylized appearance and speech which, when repeated, congeal to form a resistant identity. The Grand Forks *Evening Times* describes, "…the silk hats, without which he never appeared in public, [that] were imported from London. Mark Herald, a famous haberdasher of the day, made his shirts…and Budd, his neckties."[43] Again, one can see the monetary value and prestige attached to Brady's physical body – his hulking frame became a literal walking advertisement for his wealth, influence, and self-made, consumptive masculinity. In addition, the fact that Brady's dress did

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[41] "Diamond Jim Brady, Trimmed Up With $250,000 Worth of "Ice," Would Turn 'Bath-House John' Green with Envy." *Evening World* (New York, NY), 29 February 1908.
[42] Parker Morell, *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 57.
[43] "Only One New York." *Morning Astorian* (Astoria, Or.), 15 March, 1908.

not align with contemporary male standards of apparel further buttresses the competitive nature of his own masculine performance and presentation – by repeatedly and ostentatiously defining his own maleness against the norm, Brady became an embodiment of competitive leisure class masculinity. Brady, too, utilized the bodies of others to complement his own competitive masculinity. He surrounded himself with the most beautiful women of the age, and was "fond of giving supper parties for pretty girls of the musical comedies" during his nightly forays onto Broadway's Great White Way.[44] In fact, "a friend" of Brady's is quoted in the Grand Forks Evening Times as saying "Brady doesn't like to sit down to table after eleven o' clock unless there are a dozen pretty women there to keep in him company."[45] By collecting and displaying fashionable women much as he displayed his jewelry, Brady incorporated female bodies into a schema of consumption and performance, expounding on his own masculine self-worth in the process. It is Brady that is described in the numerous contemporaneous news articles, while the women he surrounded himself with are relegated to nameless, faceless currency, described similarly to his clothing, his diamonds, or his money. For example, when the cycling craze hit New York City in 1890s, Brady commissioned several custom bicycles to add to his collection of status symbols. When he heard of a six-man bicycle being designed for the Brooklyn Germania Cycle Club, he barked, "Hell! What's the use of having six *men* on a bicycle? What you want are *women*! [emphasis in original]"[46] Brady's use of women as objects of brazen display is underlined through another of his more unsavory practices – "…[Brady] made a rule that no woman was ever to be employed in his office. Females had a definite place in the landing of some of his contracts, but that place was not in a business office."[47] Thus, Brady collected women much as he collected diamonds, utilizing them as an integral component of his gender performance and tools of business, while denying them basic agency. Based, as his manly persona was, around display, consumption, and masculinized business-centric

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[44] "Scientific Mixer is J. Buchanan Brady." *Sun* (New York, N.Y.), 6 May 1913.
[45] "New York Day by Day." *Evening Times* (Grand Forks, N.D.), 8 May 1913.
[46] Parker Morell, *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 100.
[47] Parker Morell, *Diamond Jim: The Life and Times of James Buchanan Brady* (New York, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1934), 131.

discourse, Brady's lifestyle left no room for women to enjoy self-defined personhood, even as he used them as props to accentuate and complement a masculinity based on customized sartorial sophistication, larger-than-life appearance, and business prowess.

Through repeated stylization of his body and persona, James Buchanan "Diamond Jim" Brady came to define his own gendered public body through a variety of avenues. Through the "self-made man" ideal, Brady epitomized the aggressive, blustering male business persona that characterized contemporary capitalism and high-status commerce at the time. Through prodigious displays of conspicuous consumption with regards to food, diamonds, dress and women, Brady defined a masculinity in competition with the hegemonic conception of contemporary manliness, while firmly placing himself within a group of contemporaries that made up the new "leisure class" of the end of the nineteenth century. Through deployment of his own body (as well as those of others) as a display for the consumptive and self-making aspects of his gendered persona, Brady defined his own masculinity in highly visible and ostentatious manner. By all accounts, "Diamond Jim" Brady was a man of prodigious appetites – appetites that became defining characteristics of the carefully performed and conspicuously displayed masculinity of the Rajah of the Great White Way.

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