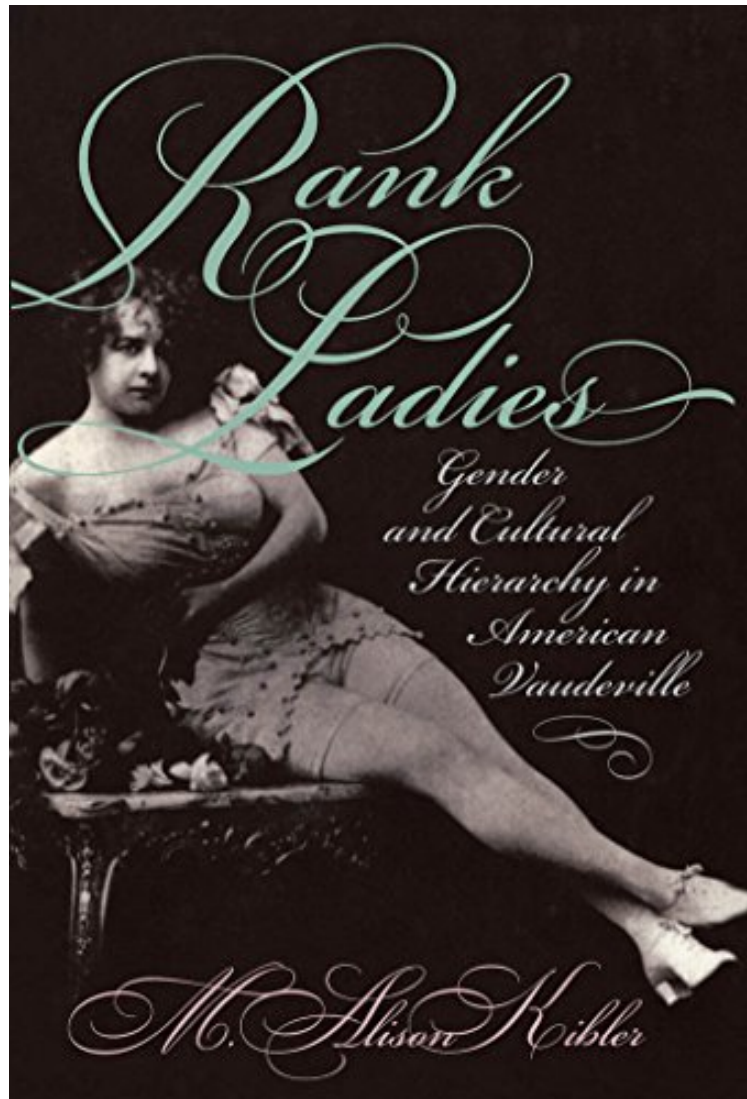


(Mobile pdf) Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville (Gender and American Culture)

## Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville (Gender and American Culture)

*M. Alison Kibler*

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**M. Alison Kibler : Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville (Gender and American Culture)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville (Gender and American Culture):

A disrobing acrobat, a female Hamlet, and a tuba-playing labor activist--all these women come to life in *Rank Ladies*. In this comprehensive study of women in vaudeville, Alison Kibler reveals how female performers, patrons, and workers shaped the rise and fall of the most popular live entertainment at the turn of the century. Kibler focuses on the role of gender in struggles over whether high or low culture would reign in vaudeville, examining women's performances and careers in vaudeville, their status in the expanding vaudeville audience, and their activity in the vaudevillians' labor union. Respectable women were a key to vaudeville's success, she says, as entrepreneurs drew women into audiences that had previously been dominated by working-class men and recruited female artists as performers. But although theater managers publicly celebrated the cultural uplift of vaudeville and its popularity among women, in reality their houses were often hostile both to female performers and to female patrons and home to women who challenged conventional understandings of respectable behavior. Once a sign of vaudeville's refinement, Kibler says, women became associated with the decay of vaudeville and were implicated in broader attacks on mass culture as well.

From *Library Journal* These two volumes examine the historical impact of women in the entertainment industry, offering perceptive comments about American culture in the process. Sochen (history, Northeastern Illinois Univ.) divides performers into various groups: black women vaudevillians, bawdy women entertainers, the entertainer as reformer, child stars, and women comics, to name a few. She examines a potpourri of stars within these contexts, including the details of their careers, the obstacles they encountered, their personal histories, their impact on the public, and their relevance to the eras in which they performed. Many were symbolic of Eve (the seductress), Mary (sweet and innocent), or Lillith (the career woman), while others violated these conventional female boundaries. Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Ethel Waters, Mae West, Eva Tanguay, Shirley Temple, Dinah Shore, and Roseanne Barr are among those discussed. Popular entertainment collections should find this work useful. *Rank Ladies*, on the other hand, focuses more exclusively on women in vaudeville, discussing their history, specialties, difficulties, and triumphs as well as their place in society in the early part of this century. Women performers gradually introduced more complex elements to the vaudeville stage. A. e. g., classical music, satire, theatrical adaptations, and inventive material that challenged previous standards. Curiously, this produced a mix that was at once successful, provocative, and threatening, changing the composition of audiences, the philosophies of theater managers, the texture of the vaudeville art form, and the nature of the entertainers' work environment. Kibler (Ctr. for Women's Studies, Australian National Univ.) has done an impressive job not only of researching her subject but also of fluidly weaving it into a valuable and entertaining narrative from which she draws perceptive insights and conclusions on the culture of the time that are relevant in any age. For scholarly audiences and those interested in early 20th century American culture. A. Carol J. Binkowski, Bloomfield, NJ Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Thorough and discursive notes, excellent bibliography." *Choice* "The great strength of Kibler's book lies in its meticulous scrutiny of underused primary sources. " *Journal of American History* "Kibler displays a masterful command of existing scholarship on vaudeville and the broader trends of theater and popular culture." *American Historical* "Thorough and discursive notes, excellent bibliography." *Choice* "Highlights the centrality of gender to social changes around the turn of the century. " *American Studies* "[H]ighlights the centrality of gender to social changes around the turn of the century." *American Studies* "Kibler has an excellent command of her material and knows how to argue for its significance. " *Women s of Books* " Kibler displays a masterful command of existing scholarship on vaudeville and the broader trends of theater and popular culture in which it participated.--*American Historical* Kibler has an excellent command of her material and knows how to argue for its significance, showing how the question of gender revises conventional interpretations of vaudeville.--*Women's of Books* Provides useful insights that challenge some analyses by previous writers. . . . Thorough and discursive notes, excellent bibliography.--*Choice* In this fascinating and thought provoking study . . . Alison Kibler reveals the centrality of female performers in the negotiation of contested cultural categories like 'high' and 'low,' 'respectable' and 'offensive.' Her examination of the intersection of gender, class, and ethnic issues enables her to move beyond the official story of vaudeville as a sanitized entertainment venue to explore a richer and more complex history.--Susan A. Glenn, University of Washington By addressing issues of gender, class, and ethnicity, *Rank Ladies* reveals an interesting interpretation of vaudeville's role in the development of mass entertainment, and highlights the centrality of gender to social changes around the turn of the century.--*American Studies* The great strength of Kibler's book lies in its meticulous scrutiny of underused primary sources. . . . The result is a complex account of how marginal audiences helped to shape even the most upwardly mobile entertainment forms.--*Journal of American History* A valuable and entertaining narrative from which [Kibler] draws perceptive insights and conclusions on the culture of the time that are relevant in any age.--*Library Journal*