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指導教授：李有成教授
Advisor: Dr. Yu-cheng Lee

指導教授：陳音頤教授
Advisor: Dr. Yin-i Chen

敘述流動：三位英國女作家筆下的漫遊者與城市

Narrating the Mobile:
The Writings of Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf

研究生：王瀚陞 撰
Advisee: Han-sheng Wang

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Narrating the Mobile:
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To My Dear Advisors,

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中文摘要

本篇論文主要探討 1880 至 1930 年代英國女性作家所再現的性別化空間。女性逐漸在十九世紀末倫敦的公共空間嶄露頭角，扮演各種不同的重要角色，舉凡上班族、消費者、俱樂部會員、電影迷、行善者及觀光客等都是當時女性公共形象的最佳例證。然而這些跨越公/私領域界限的女性漫遊者迄今都未獲得學界足夠的重視。女性漫遊者在世紀末文學研究中長期遭受忽視主要肇因於早期學者對於十九世紀男主外、女主內的公/私領域劃分大致認同，未能加以批判。透過檢視艾蜜・列薇 (Amy Levy)、桃樂斯・理察森 (Dorothy Richardson) 以及維吉尼亞・吳爾夫 (Virginia Woolf) 等三位女作家的跨文類書寫，本篇論文指出世紀末的中產階級女性已逐漸掙脫傳統私領域以及家庭意識形態的束縛，開始在城市空間行走與觀看。在十九世紀末許多新興的大城市例如倫敦，如此的女性公共行走則又更加顯著並且和日益蓬勃發展的商品文化、大眾消費/享樂以及公共空間皆有極密切的關聯。流動 (mobility) 與觀察 (spectatorship) 因此成為中產階級女性在城市空間行走與觀看時的重要經驗，前者來自於女性在日益開放的公共領域遂行的空間探索，後者則是來自女性觀察者對於城市景觀例如商品展示、來往的人潮以及繁忙的街景所做的視覺凝視。經由書寫世紀末的女性城市漫遊，上述三位女作家明確地指出這些表面看似被動的中產階級女性其實早已跨越傳統空間限制，不斷挪用與創造新的城市公共空間。

Abstract

This study has examined the numerous roles played by women entering the public spaces of London in the half century from the 1880s to the 1930s as workers, shoppers, diners, clubbers, cinema-goers, philanthropists, and tourists, a wide spectrum of active female social actors that until recently have not attracted enough attention from scholars of late-Victorian and Edwardian literature. The neglect of these newly pubic women in the fin de siècle period, who are distinct from their home-bound Victorian predecessors, is largely ascribed to an uncritical acceptance of or surrender to the long-held, dominant assumption of separate spheres in the nineteenth century. Through examining the writings of Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf, who portray the multifarious pictures of women rambling the streets of modern London, this study has demonstrated that female public visibility and mobility have at least since the fin de siècle period been commonly practiced by a conglomerate of middle-class women. Mobility and spectatorship are thus two significant tropes applicable to women's spatial and visual explorations of the fin de siècle city, the former underscoring their meandering footsteps threading through the increasingly egalitarian public space while the latter their roving eyes casting glances at those enticing urban spectacles which are already a phantasmagoria of commodity display, jostling crowd, and bustling streetscapes. Through writing about fin de siècle female streetwalking, the three women writers have demonstrated that those seemingly passive women of the middle-class may indeed be capable, through their public presence and their incessant footsteps, of pushing at the established boundaries.

Introduction

The Visible Flâneuse: Female Ramblers in the Nineteenth-Century City

In her seminal article "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity" (1985), Janet Wolff argues that modernity and its literary manifestations are primarily about men's experience. Examining the "classical" statements of metropolitan experience offered by writers such as Charles Baudelaire and Georg Simmel, which are echoed by later cultural critics such as Walter Benjamin, Richard Sennett, and Marshall Berman, Wolff finds in them the dominance of a male-centered flânerie and ocular regime.[1] According to her, all figures invoked to epitomize the experience of modern life in the nineteenth-century city, including the dandy, the flâneur, the hero, and the stranger, are invariably males. In the essays and poems by Baudelaire, who is a poet-flâneur himself, she finds that women are excluded from public space, with the exception of some "marginal" women such as the prostitute, the widow, the old lady, the lesbian, the murder victim, and the passing unknown woman. Even in these rare examples of female streetwalking, "none of these women meet the poet as his equal"; "they are subjects of his gaze, objects of his 'botanizing'" (Wolff 42).

Besides, as a sociologist, Wolff indicates that the invisibility of women in the nineteenth-century streets is not only an ideological or literary construction but also a social reality. In an emphatic tone, she says "there is no question of inventing the *flâneuse*: the essential point is that such a character was rendered impossible [in

[1] For more on her view of the nineteenth-century city as a male-centered space, see Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 2.3 (1985): 37-46.

literature and in real life] by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century" (Wolff 45). Her explanation for the impossibility of female flânerie as a social phenomenon in the nineteenth-century city is threefold: 1) the nature of sociological investigation; 2) the consequently partial concept of 'modernity'; 3) the reality of women's place in society. Despite her critique of a sociology that "was dominated by men" and "was primarily concerned with the 'public' spheres of work, politics, and the market place," Wolff nevertheless does not really challenge the ideology of separate spheres, which is employed by her and other social historians to explain the impenetrability of the bourgeois's gendered spatial demarcation (Wolff 43).[2] Thus, while acknowledging that certain women were indeed visible and active in nineteenth-century streets, Wolff does not consider the utilitarian streetwalking of those women workers, women philanthropists, and women shoppers to be the paradigm of modern flânerie, which she associates with "the fleeting, anonymous encounter and the purposeless strolling" of the flâneur (Wolff 44). Yet at the end of her argument, Wolff, in a reflective mood, demands an alternative literary rendition of women's experience of modernity. She says:

> What is missing in this literature [on modernity] is any account of life outside the public realm, of the experience of 'the modern' in its private manifestations, and also of the very different nature of the experience of those women who *did* appear in the public arena; a poem written by 'la femme passante' about her encounter with Baudelaire, perhaps? (Wolff

[2] For more on earlier feminist historians' employment and reinforcement of separate spheres ideology in explaining Victorian women's exclusion from public space, see Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London: Sage, 1997) 56-91.

45)

Arguing that women are absent from the critical literature of modernity, Wolff's thesis largely focuses on the public sphere, the crowded city street, and most importantly, the experience of the flâneur, all being areas from which, according to her, women are excluded. Endorsing the spatial restraints imposed on women of the nineteenth-century, Wolff's perspective represents an earlier approach that questions modernity as a gendered formation yet maintains its division of masculine (public) and feminine (private) realms.

Since the 1990s, this article has opened up debates among feminist scholars from interdisciplinary backgrounds who manage to revise the much restrained urban topology Wolff draws for women of the nineteenth century. Such a revision was initiated by the cultural critic Elizabeth Wilson, who in her "The Invisible Flâneur" (1992), a repartee to Wolff's article, revises previous feminist scholarship on female flânerie by pointing to its negligence of the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the bourgeois's seemingly solidified demarcation of public/private space. For her, the over-emphasis on the passivity and victimization of women placed by earlier feminists has prevented a looking into women's resistance to and reworking of the lines of demarcation in nineteenth-century cities. In her article, while renouncing male visual superiority embodied by the figure of the flâneur, Wilson highlights the visibility of many flâneuses in late-Victorian London, such as white-collar female workers, working-class women, female shoppers, women journalists and writers, and even prostitutes. Though acknowledging women were exploited and oppressed in the nineteenth century city, Wilson nevertheless emphasizes that cities opened a vista of

opportunities for those women, who had appropriated urban space for various ends.

The history of women rambling in nineteenth-century cities has been further revised by a group of feminist scholars, who devote themselves to discovering various types of female mobility in a time when women's mobility across public space was made possible by the prosperity of cities, commerce, mass consumption, and public transportation. As Lynda Nead argues, the presence of unaccompanied middle-class women on the public streets has been ignored in previous accounts of modernity and nineteenth-century urbanization like Wolff's that relate the concept of bourgeois respectability exclusively to the ideology of separate spheres and locate the respectable woman in the home as wife, mother, and daughter. Within these narratives, women are the "angels in the house," largely confined to the private sphere, whereas men move between home and the public domain of work and the city (Nead 67).

This writing-out of middle-class women from the spaces of the city is mainly predicated on a gendered version of modernity, of which the flâneur is a paradigmatic figure. Over the past decades, studies on the flâneur have shown that the nineteenth-century male rambler is a prototype of the modern observer and that his observation of a transient, spectacular, and obscure cityscape embodies particularly the dialectical relation between vision and modernity. However, valorizing exclusively a male vision of the city, the flâneur's viewing becomes another "dominant" way of observation that other "marginal" viewings resist. Tackling modernity and the problem of the observer, Jonathan Crary acknowledges that there are "marginal and local forms by which dominant practices of vision were resisted, deflected, or imperfectly constituted" and "the history of such oppositional moments needs to be

written" (7). The flâneuse's vision is such marginal viewing practiced against the flâneur's male-dominated visual regime. A close look at women's negotiations with the nineteenth-century urban space would reveal that the flâneur's viewing by no means accounts for the female rambler's experience of modernity, which is overlooked by the above critics and has been slighted by urban studies over the past decades.

Feminist scholars in recent years have worked to indicate that women are already valid users of public space in the nineteenth-century city and that their visibility has been enhanced particularly by the advancement of transportation, commerce, consumption, and women's public space in the fin de siècle period. Their studies reveal that a variety of women walking the fin de siècle street, including the "New Woman," the woman worker, the woman philanthropist, the woman shopper, and the woman pleasure-seeker, have transgressed and destabilized the bourgeois, male-dominated demarcation of public (masculine) and private (feminine) spheres. Through their efforts, two paradigms of male-dominated urban mobility and spectatorship are thrown into question. On the one hand, British accounts of the mid- and late-nineteenth century urban space are denounced for subscribing to a moral, cognitive, and sexualized perspective.[3] As is indicated by the social historian Judith Walkowitz, the dominant representation of London by Victorian writers, through high

[3] See Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London: Sage, 1997) 60-64; Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000) 74-79; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 1-15; Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 3-15; Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005) 9-16; Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 15-39.

and low literary forms, is largely made through a rational, male bourgeois view.[4] Trying to read the "illegible" city, men of letters like Charles Dickens and George Gissing, social investigators like Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth, and journalists like W. T. Stead and G. R. Sims constructed "the metropolis as a dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth," or reproduced "a Dickensian cityscape of dirty, crowded, disorganized clusters of urban villages," or incorporated a mixture of fact and fancy in "a mélange of moralized and religious sentiment, dramatized characterization, and graphic descriptions of poverty" (Walkowitz 17-19).[5] Through such narrative and spectatorship, the exclusion of women, especially those of the middle-class, from an immoral, unwholesome, and dangerous urban space is rationalized and consolidated.

On the other hand, adopted by writers like Charles Baudelaire, Émile Zola, and Marcel Proust or critics like Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, the Continental approaches to nineteenth-century cities are criticized for over-emphasizing a male rambler's perspective on the volatile manifestations of a commodified, spectacular urban space. In their aesthetic or cultural view of cities, people of the street, and urban spectacles, these writers and critics explore modern cities as capitals of modernity,

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[4] See Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 16-17.

[5] Or as Nava states, accounts of the mid- and late-Victorian cityscape "tended to stress the disturbing aspects of the urban environment, the chaos and pollution, moral and sexual dissolution, and the erosion of traditional order" (Nava 60). For more about this dominant tendency to emphasize the grim, unwholesome, and immoral aspects of the city among writers, social investigators, or journalists of Victorian England (especially in the 1880s), see Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991) 62-63; James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone, 1999) 27-42; John Marriot, "Sensation of the Abyss: The Urban Poor and Modernity," *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1996) 77-93; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "The Sewer, the Gaze, and the Contaminating Touch," *The Politics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986) 125-48; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 17-25; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973); Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban life, the Control of Disorder and Women* (Los Angeles: California UP, 1991) 26-46.

where the masses have a dialectical relation to urban space and its phantasmagoric displays.[6] Despite their mapping of the city as a space of mass consumption, the legitimate user of that space is nevertheless a male, who always employs a commanding perspective upon the crowd, urban spectacles, and female passers-by. Elaborated by Benjamin in his seminal articles on the flâneur,[7] spectatorship as such is criticized by feminist scholars for ignoring that the public sphere in the later half of the nineteenth century, especially the 1880s and 1890s, has been greatly re-territorialized by women's participation in public life, the development of mass consumption, and the rise of commodity.[8]

Discovering Female Ramblers in the Streets of Late-Victorian London

In the 1880s and 1890s, England witnessed a growing number of independent, middle-class women, who began to assert their autonomy in pursuing opportunities of employment and education and participate in organized activities such as

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[6] For studies of these Continental cultural critics and their perspective on the city, see David Frisby, *Sociological Impressionism: A Reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory* (London: Heinemann, 1981), *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge: MIT, 1986); Susan Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT, 1991); Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), *Walter Benjamin: Critical Constellations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

[7] See Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973) 35-66; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge: Belknap 1999) 416-55.

[8] Since the 1990s, the flâneur as an archetype of the self-complacent male urban explorer and spectator has been challenged by scholars highlighting that women's visibility in nineteenth-century public space had significantly weakened the stark demarcation of the public/private sphere and the dominance of the male rambler's use or view of urban space. See Nava, Nord, Nead, Rappaport, Vadillo, Walkowitz, and Wilson (1992). See also Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985); Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: California UP, 1993); Gleber, "Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flâneur," *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema on the Age of Photography* (Austin: Texas UP, 1997) 55-85; Scott McCracken, "From Performance to Public Sphere: The Production of Modernist Masculinities," *Textual Practice* 15.1 (2001): 47-65; Jane Rendell, "Displaying Sexuality: Gendered Identity and the Early Nineteenth-Century Street," *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity, and Control in Public Space* (London: Routledge, 1998) 75-91; Lynne Walker, "Home and Away: The Feminist Remapping of Public and Private Space in Victorian London," *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2001) 296-311.

philanthropies and suffragist movements. While the majority of women were still housewives or underpaid workers, the emergence of those "New Women" nevertheless highlighted an enhanced self-awareness among women particularly of the middle and lower-middle classes. As a controversial figure, the "New Woman" is more than the one applauded in contemporary feminist novels or satirized in anti-feminist journals such as *Punch*;[9] she is an epitome of all liberal-minded, economically independent women in late-Victorian England. Transgressing gendered spaces, the "New Woman" in fiction and in fact challenged Victorian separate spheres ideology.

To begin with, the 1890s saw the growth of the overall number of working women in late-Victorian England, the distribution of their occupations reflecting a sharp increase in kinds other than the domestic and in professions traditionally viewed as male-dominated.[10] As well as receiving remunerative rewards, which were indispensable to women's financial independence, women were thought to form self-identity and self-respect through work.[11] The increasing number of these "surplus women" also contributed to the demographical change of women's work in

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[9] While feminist writers such as Mona Caird, Sarah Grand, and Ella Hepworth Dixon celebrated the New Woman as an archetype of the modern independent woman, she was frequently lampooned in *Punch*, which printed many articles and cartoons ridiculing and condemning her throughout the mid-1890s. See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) 1-34; Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History 1880-1900* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000) 75-96; Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds., *The New Women in Fiction and Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 1-38.

[10] See Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914* (Hamden: Archon, 1973) 3-20; Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, eds., *Women and Work Culture: Britain 1850-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 1-24.

[11] See Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, eds., *Women and Work Culture: Britain 1850-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 6-10; Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 101-40; Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia UP, 1995) 23-44; Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 10-45.

the 1890s and the early twentieth century.[12] Besides, throughout the nineteenth century, women especially of the wealthy, leisured classes had been active participants of philanthropies. Apart from engaging in a religious and humanitarian service, ladies doing philanthropies were considered to occupy themselves with a respectable profession, since most charity work had been non-remunerative throughout the century.[13] The "non-invidious" nature of women charity workers enabled them to be more readily accepted into the homes of the working-class and the poor.[14] In addition to neighborhood charitable activities such as Sunday school teaching and mothers' meeting, women charity workers in late-Victorian England showed their greater mobility in scheming the household visiting of slums and the visiting of institutions like workhouses, orphanages, prisons, hospitals, asylums, and refuges. Through all these frequent contacts with "the other world," women charity workers were able to cross class lines to travel into farther territory.[15]

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[12] England had witnessed an imbalance of male/female ratio since the second half of the nineteenth century, which was initially due to natural imbalance in the birth rate and later aggravated by other factors such as the emigration of young men to the United States and the colonies. Conservatives considered women's state of celibacy to be abnormal, unwholesome to the nation's benefit and should be discouraged by all means, whereas feminist reformers sought to improve the injustice and inequality facing the growing numbers of women who had to live a life on their own. See Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 10-45; Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Penguin, 1991) 19-37; Arlene Young's introduction to George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (Ontario: Broadview, 1998) 9-21.

[13] For more on women's charity work as a respectable, non-remunerative occupation for women of the middle-class, see F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) 5-8.

[14] See Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 211-46.

[15] Ibid. Vicinus indicates that charitable work gave these women freedom to walk and move in areas that were previously forbidden. According to her, "[neither] teaching, nor nursing, nor even mission work permitted women so much spatial freedom. The streets of the slums, away from upper-class men's eyes, were theirs; no matter how much they might be teased by little boys or abused by drunks, they carried a kind of immunity along the streets of the drab slums they sought to uplift" (220). For more on the mobility of Victorian female charity workers, see Anne Summers, "A Home from Home—Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (New York: St. Martin's, 1979) 33-63; Jessica Gerard, "Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Class and Rural Philanthropy,' *Victorian Studies* 30 (1987) 183-211; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004); Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers:*

Women as consumers also gained greater access to public space. Along the central streets of the West End, with its mushrooming of shops, department stores, theaters, cafés, female clubs, and cinemas around the turn of the century, women increasingly manifest their visibility as purchasers, pleasure-seekers, and window-shoppers on the public street and the hetero-social urban space. Women's clubs, ladies' lavatories, female dining rooms, and tea shops emerging rapidly in fin de siècle London's West End represent the joint efforts by the public and private sectors to improve the city and to satisfy the physical needs of an increasingly mobile female population. Established during the same time, situated in the same neighborhood, and courting the same consuming public, these institutions address middle-class women as target customers and, through inviting them to purchase goods and services, contribute to the disruption of the long-held Victorian separate spheres and to the increased female public visibility at the turn of the century. Thanks to the emergence of these eating and shopping establishments in fin de siècle London, female consumers were able to enjoy the comfort and freedom of navigating public spaces. Especially for bourgeois women, shopping was more than an economic activity or familial obligation; it enabled them to have legitimate accesses to streets and other public spaces, which had been considered improper venues for respectable women.[16]

Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920 (Berkeley: California UP, 2007).

[16] However, at such a time when the development of capitalism coincided with that of feminist movements, female consumers and their exploration of public spaces were encouraged by entrepreneurs and feminists for different reasons. On the one hand, feminists arguing against gendered space devoted themselves to campaigning for public spaces that were meant for female consumers. For them, women's pleasure-seeking or rational consumption, as well as other forms of female participation in the public sphere, contributed to breaking the gendered access to public spaces. On the other hand, male capitalists improved shopping spaces largely out of mercenary purposes. Devoted to enhancing the ease and pleasure of female consumption, these male capitalists and their department stores

A closer scrutiny of the socio-historical ambience of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century England thus turns up a different women's experience that departs from the more constrained view offered by the two masculine paradigms mentioned above. These historical data have been utilized by recent critics to support a more positive view of women's participation in fin de siècle public space. To offer an alternative paradigm of approaching women ramblers, feminist scholars in the past decade have produced books on the possibility and manifestation of female flânerie in late-Victorian London.[17] In *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (1992), Judith R. Walkowitz explores late-Victorian London as a "contested terrain," upon which the emergence of "new social actors" in the 1880s, including working men and women of all classes, destabilized the opposite urban landscapes (polarized in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity) that had been mapped largely through a male, bourgeois urban spectatorship. Examining sensational journalism about women's sexual transgression in late-Victorian London, Walkowitz

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nevertheless produced a commodity industry that enticed female consumers through a phantasmagoria of spectacles. See Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 18-34; Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 61-90; Sally Ledger, "Gissing, the Shopgirl, and the New Woman," *Women: A Cultural Review* 6.3 (1995): 263-74; Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 16-47.

[17] Feminist scholars are initially divided by their opposite perspectives on the visibility of female ramblers in nineteenth-century streets. While most of them agree that women were indeed "visible" in the streets of nineteenth-century cities, scholars stressing the bourgeois's hegemonic construction of the separate spheres nevertheless argue that the presence of these female ramblers is insignificant and negligible. A pessimistic view as such, which is also methodologically conservative, is revised by another group of scholars who question the notion of male-dominated flânerie and explore the possibility and various examples of women navigating the nineteenth-century cityscape. For the pessimistic view of women's strolling in the nineteenth-century streets, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, eds., *Family Fortune: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987); Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003) 70-127; Jenny Ryan, "Women, Modernity, and the City," *Theory, Culture & Society* 11.4 (1994): 35-63; Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 2.3 (1985): 37-46. For studies on the possibility and manifestation of female flânerie, see Bowlby, Gleber, McCracken, Nava, Nead, Rendell, Walker, Wilson (1992), and the books by the following scholars, who employ "revisionist" approaches to women's urban experience.

argues that the growth in amount of this narrative genre indicates exactly that the "boundaries" of the city had been walked through by women of many classes, such as shopping ladies, female charity workers, the New Woman, and working-class women, who were able to "challenge the traditional privileges of elite male spectators and to assert their presence in the public domain" (11).

While Walkowitz probes into the upheavals of gendered urban landscape represented by late-Victorian male journalists, Deborah E. Nord examines how New Women as ramblers might contribute to the literary and social narratives about late-Victorian London. In *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (1995), Nord studies the various examples of female ramblers as observers, writers and social investigators in the fictional and real worlds of Victorian England. Arguing against the impossibility of female flânerie maintained by Wolff and Buck-Morss,[18] Nord dedicates her book to exploring female spectatorship performed by the woman rambler in Victorian streets, whose particular vision might "derive from her consciousness of transgression and trespassing, from the vexed sexuality her position implies, and from her struggle to escape the status of spectacle and become a spectator" (12). In the ultimate section of her book, Nord examines New Women urban spectators including writers and social investigators such as Margaret Harkness, Beatrice Potter Webb and Mary Higgs, and the particular vision they exercised over a literary or social representation of late-Victorian London.

Deborah L. Parsons is another critic taking issue with the construction of an

[18] See Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 2.3 (1985): 37-46; Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore," *New German Critique* 39 (1986): 99-140.

authoritative, male stroller who dominates the dichotomous divisions of urban space. In *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (2000), Parsons expands the notion of flânerie to include a variety of urban explorations carried out by women ramblers in the works of modern urban writers. For her, the flâneur is "more influentially a conceptual metaphor for urban observation and walking that extends even to the present day" and flânerie is therefore characterized by "adaptability, multiplicity, boundary-crossing, and fluidity" (41). In such a new light, Parsons is able to examine the many examples of flânerie performed by women writers themselves and their heroines, whose perspective is "necessarily less-leisured, as well as less-assured, yet also more adventurous" (42). Regarding the representation of flâneuses and their peripatetic footsteps in late-Victorian London, Parsons finds that the ambiguity toward gendered stereotypes displayed by male urban writers like Henry James and George Gissing allows for "an alternative perception of women's presence in the city," whereas the self-conscious, female representations of the urban landscape by women writers like Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf "displace the traditional masculine *Bildungsroman* or *Kunstleroman* onto female journeys around the city and over time" (43; 122).

In *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (2000), Erika Diane Rappaport indicates that the history of the flâneuse was tied to the transformation of commercial spaces in the metropolis. Examining the complexity inherent in the development of consumer culture and female subjectivity, Rappaport criticizes the tendency to polarize female consumption as an emblem of either oppression or emancipation. For her, the construction of a passive female consumer

overlooks her struggle over identity, space, and purchasing itself. On the contrary, a celebratory image of an emancipated woman shopper neglects that she has always been subject to certain forms of oppression within a male-dominated, capitalist society. Thus, instead of claiming that consumption was either emancipatory or oppressive for women shoppers in late-Victorian and Edwardian West End, Rappaport proposes to study "how consumer culture constructed gender roles and power relations" (13). In *Shopping for Pleasure,* Rappaport problematizes the apparent complicity of commercial development and female emancipation by looking into the construction of a spectacular, commodified West End and the influence of its emergent public spaces for women from a wide spectrum of perspectives employed by feminists, moralists, and male entrepreneurs.

In Ana Parejo Vadillo's *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (2005), the women shopper is one of the many women "passengers" of modernity, whose mobility around the city was made possible by the technological innovation of mass-transport facilities in late-Victorian England. Focusing on a new urban epistemology and perception effected by modern transportation, Vadillo indicates that the flâneur's pedestrian and rather parochial view of the mid-nineteenth-century streetscape had been challenged by a fluid, panoramic perception of urban landscape practiced by many new, active female users of mass-transport facilities in late-Victorian London, such as omnibuses, underground trains, and the railway system of the metropolis. Examining poetry by four long-neglected women poets musing about late-Victorian London like Amy Levy, Alice Meynell, Graham R. Tomson, and Michael Field, Vadillo argues that as literary

representation, their poetry shows “women were as interested as men in urban life” and “their approach to and love of mass transport was due to the democratising possibilities that mass transport offered to women” (36).

Approaching the Flâneuse: Genre, Subjectivity, and Female Mobility in the Writings of Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf

As has been mentioned, women’s experience of modernity is an emergent theme explored by feminist scholars adopting interdisciplinary perspectives. Addressing the visibility of flâneuses in late-Victorian London, these scholars have uncovered possibilities of female walking in the metropolis. Their studies of female ramblers contribute to the remaking of Victorian urban history, which has long ignored women’s “walking practices” in urban space. Also, as has been indicated, women writers’ sympathetic portrayal of various female ramblers serves as a testimony to women’s mobility, including walking, shopping, and traveling, and active spectatorship in late-Victorian London.

Yet a review of scholarship by such scholars as Nord, Parsons, and Vadillo reveals that much has been left unexplored about women’s streetwalking, though they do examine many examples of female ramblers in literature by women writers. First, if women were indeed subjects of mobility and spectatorship in the streets of late-Victorian London, how would their perspective be represented in the emergent narrative about the city? Second, granted that women’s ability to negotiate urban space was determined by their gender, class, and ethnicity, how would that relate to the mobility and spectatorship of women as shoppers, pedestrians, travelers, workers, and philanthropists in the literarily imagined streetscapes of late-Victorian London?

Third, considering that most of these women writers were themselves ramblers in the streets of late-Victorian and Edwardian London, how would their non-fictional writings about the city, such as essays and journalism, become relevant to their representation of London's gendered space in novels?

Over the past decade, literary studies of female ramblers in fin de siècle and modernist women's writings have largely focused on fictional representation of female mobility. The fact that during this half century, from the 1880s to high modernism in the 1930s, women writers like Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf were themselves narrators relating their own experience of flânerie has been often underplayed. That Amy Levy (1861-1889) was a poetess and a contributor to popular journals, acclaiming women's greater access to public space, that Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957) was a regular film critic, commenting on urban female spectators and their unique visual and spatial experience, and that Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an essayist on London life, writing about the history, space, and people of the metropolis, has been employed by literary scholars merely as explanatory "notes" to these women writers' fictional representation of female autonomy. Thus, while the recent literary interest in urban women's mobility contributes to re-reading works by such non-canonized women writers as Levy and Richardson, it is nevertheless confined to the major genre such as novels, ignoring that female flânerie was manifested in these women writers' non-fictional writings as well. Unfolding women's authentic and private experience of modernity, these marginalized sub-genres, such as journalism and essay-writing, or diaries, letters and social investigations, have not yet been fully examined.

The subjectivity of the female rambler is another area needing further exploration as regards these women writers' fictional or non-fictional writings about female flânerie. Prior literary studies have assumed that female flânerie is primarily a gendered issue, failing to examine other no less "political" aspects of women's streetwalking. Assumption as such takes for granted that the female rambler is a gendered, bourgeois subject coming to grips with patriarchal demarcation of public space. Despite the fact that most of these women writers come from and write about the middle- or lower-middle class, their writings nevertheless reflect that women's streetwalking more often than not calls into question the construction of such a rambler. Rather than endorsing a bourgeois subjectivity, these women's writings reveal that such subjectivity is constantly challenged by women's mobility in and spectatorship of modern London's heterogeneous "representations of space."[19]

The present thesis thus would like to explore the writings about women's streetwalking by Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf, the three women writers and ramblers in modern London. Writings to be explored in this thesis include Levy's poetry, journalism as well as her novella *Romance of a Shop*, Richardson's film criticism as well as her novel sequences *Pilgrimage*, and Woolf's London essays as well as her novel *The Years*. The three women writers under study

[19] This term was coined by the French Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre, who indicated in his well-known book *Production of Space* (1973) that our everyday life is penetrated by various kinds of physically, ideologically, or socio-culturally "represented" spaces which are undermined only by people's bodily resistance. His view on the dialectics of power and space has been borrowed by feminists who probe into gendered space as being intricately demarcated by sex, class, and ethnicity and explore the possibility of women's appropriation of daily space. For them, space is not merely a passive "receptacle," determined by its materiality and reproducibility; it is also a "contestable" site where the female body performs its transgressive acts. See Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993) and Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geography* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).

are “modern” or a precursor of “the modern” in terms of their aesthetic expression and being situated at a unique historical segment. Employing certain impressionistic techniques, Levy’s poetry might link up with Richardson’s and Woolf’s stream of consciousness skills, proving that they belong to the very same aesthetic tradition of observing London space.

Besides, the time span occupied by the three women writers is marked as “modern” in that it signifies a significant development regarding British women’s experience of modernity. In Levy’s fin de siècle period, female walking is still confronted with a lot of opposition, though wonder and excitement accompanies the female walking subject. By Richardson’s 1910s, which is a “transitional period,” female walking is more accepted, though still with some opposition, and this female experience coincides with the development of a commodified, spectacular urban culture that affects the female spectator and her viewing. In Woolf’s 1930s, opposition from patriarchal forces may be much reduced, yet the female subject experiences deeper scrutiny of selfhood when faced with the class or ethnic “other,” thus producing an enlarged sense of self, more complicated than before when the battle was fought just along gender lines.

To sum up, in this thesis I would like to explore how these three women writers represent, exemplify, and meditate on women’s streetwalking in London from the 1880s to the 1930s. In doing so, I want to examine women’s streetwalking in terms of its literary, ideological, and social significance. Analyzing mobility practiced particularly by women workers, women philanthropists, women tourists, and women cinema-goers in modern London, I would like to examine the many subtle yet

effective observations on an ever-changing metropolis made by a conglomerate of critical and largely middle-class women ramblers. Considering mobility and spectatorship as two essential tropes of women's experience of modernity, this thesis would thus look into how these women's writings conflate the spatial, aesthetical, and social manifestations of "the modern" and how feminine paradigms of mobility and spectatorship contest and supplement male-dominated ones. The following is an overview of each chapter in this thesis.

Chapter Organization

Becoming "Daughters of the City": Amy Levy's *Romance of a Shop* and London Poetry

Amy Levy had been relegated as a minor Jewish poetess and novelist by the critics of her time and later decades. Due to her marginalized position, Levy and her works were not well known to the reader, academic or not. It is not until recently, with the publication of Melvyn New's *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy, 1861-1889* in 1993 and Linda Hunt Beckman's *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* in 2000, that studies of Levy and her works begin to prosper. Studies of Levy and her works in recent years are largely characterized by efforts to reconsider her as a Jewish, lesbian, feminist, and urban writer.[20] In this critical reappraisal of her works, Levy's

[20] For such a rekindled interest in Levy, see Joseph Bristow, "'All Out of Tune in this World's Instrument': The 'Minor' Poetry of Amy Levy," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 4.1 (1999): 76-103; Susan David Bernstein's introduction to *The Romance of a Shop* (London: Broadview, 2006) 11-41; Alex Goody, "Murder in Mile End: Amy Levy, Jewishness, and the City," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34 (2006): 461–79; Linda Hunt, "Amy Levy and the 'Jewish Novel': Representing Jewish Life in the Victorian Period," *Studies in the Novel* 26.3 (1994): 235-53; Meri-Jane Rochelson, "Jews, Gender, and Genre in Late-Victorian England: Amy Levy's *Reuben Sachs*," *Women's Studies* 25.4 (1996): 311-28; Cynthia Scheinberg, "Canonizing the Jew: Amy Levy's Challenge to Victorian Poetic Identity," *Victorian Studies* 39.2 (1996): 173-200; Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005). Before the 1990s, scholarship on Levy is rather scanty and tends to focus on her position as an Anglo-Jewish writer of late Victorian England.

Romance of a Shop (1888), despite the explicit feminist assertion and action made by its "New Women" heroines, has been devalued for having three marriages as its resolution.[21] Over-emphasizing women's vulnerability to domestic ideology, such devaluation is nevertheless ignorant of the many effective "spatial practices" performed by those urban heroines against male-dominated dichotomy of space.

Instead of reading *Romance of a Shop* as a love story that culminates in three marriages, this chapter considers Levy's novel to be an urban narrative in which women's right to work and walk in the city is vigorously defended. A counterpart of male urban narratives in which masculine visual superiority is tacitly approved, Levy's *Romance of a Shop* is a narrative about the flânerie performed by two self-employed female photographers as flâneuses. Besides, this chapter re-examines the importance of Levy as an urban poetess composing in rapport with the poetic tradition of the 1890s aesthetic school. In her poetry, the lyrical speaker, often unidentified, discloses a feminine, delicate perspective on the city, the streets, and the crowd. Unlike her preceding male poets, who tend to offer a darker picture of the city, Levy has her speaker celebrate the pleasures of urban life and the marvels of exploring the city, despite his/her occasional sentimental outbursts. Associating Levy's urban narratives or lyrics with late-Victorian debates over women's streetwalking, this chapter also aims to examine how Levy challenges the bourgeois idealized female images like "the Angel in the House" and feminine realms like the

[21] For instance, even when Levy's feminist position is taken into consideration by scholars such as Melvyn New and Deborah Epstein Nord, their appraisal often downplays the many positive aspects of her representation of female autonomy. See Melvyn New's introduction to *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy 1861-1889* (Gainesville: Florida UP, 1993) 22-26; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 200-02.

home, the suburbs, and the countryside by setting up examples of women navigating the city. Finally, demonstrating that Levy has established a female tradition of urban discourse, this chapter regards *Romance of a Shop*, along with her writings of women's urban exploration in poetry and journalism, as a feminist manifesto of women's rights to public space.

Consuming the City: Dorothy M. Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and Film Criticism

Given that late-Victorian women's experience of the modern city begins with streetwalking, their mobility necessarily involves visual contacts with the many "others," who are gendered, classed, ethicized, in an over-determined public space. Prior scholarship on female flânerie has over-stressed women's susceptibility to not only a male-dominated public space but also a masculine visual supremacy that reduces women to "spectacles" instead of "spectators," ignoring that they could be effective observers of the city. Examining the previous conservative approach to female ramblers and spectators, cultural critics such as Elizabeth Wilson and Erika Rappaport call for a re-consideration or re-appropriation of earlier feminist visual theories which emphasize "the male gaze."[22] Such calling has been answered by feminist scholars from various disciplines examining female spectatorship as

[22] See Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur," *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 101-03; Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 191-92. Since the late 1970s, debates over women's capability as spectators have been initiated by the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, who employed psychoanalytic theories only to exclude the possibility of female spectatorship in her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). According to her, most Hollywood-made films are underpinned by 'a male-dominated scopic regime' in which male visual superiority and visual space are maintained coherently through mechanism such as voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia. While attacking the omnipresent patriarchal gaze in popular films, Mulvey nevertheless overlooked the visual uncertainty and incoherence of gazing and thus overstressed the power of male looking. The many premises of her analytic model, such as there being a passive female spectator and the female character serving as merely a "spectacle," have been challenged by later feminists such as Elizabeth Cowie, Joan Copjec, Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman, and Tania Modleski, who assert that gazing is never a stable process and is constantly susceptible to the gaze from the "other."

manifestation of female agency and as involving cultural and psychological aspects of the spectator's viewing.[23]

The coincidental development of the film industry and women's streetwalking in the early twentieth century cities had endowed "the female spectator" with a double meaning. On the one hand, the early twentieth century female cinema-goers are the very antecedents of "the female spectator" haunting feminist film theories over recent decades. On the other hand, female ramblers consuming urban spectacle, such as those blue- or white-collar women workers, women shoppers, women philanthropists, or women pleasure-seekers in the early twentieth century streets, are no less capable spectators of a volatile and multiply represented urban space. However, despite their repudiation of a male-dominated scopic regime, many 80s and 90s feminist film theorists nevertheless consider women's film-watching as a stationary and psychological experience, thus isolating the female spectator and her "textual" or "psychological" spectatorship from the female stroller and her mobile viewing. Recent cultural studies of female spectatorship have indicated that women's film-watching is a cultural practice as well as a psychic process and that female spectatorship is subject to various cultural factors as well as psychological ones.[24] A cultural revision as such has helped to facilitate a link between the spectatorship of the

[23] While it is useful to explore female spectatorship and subjectivity in the light of earlier feminists' re-appropriation of psychoanalytic theories, there are nevertheless doubts about the overtly psychic determinism of their approach. These revisionist models fail to explain how factors other than gender, such as class and ethnicity, affect the spectator(ship); neither do they place gendered spectatorship within socially represented space. See Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993) 172-74.

[24] Such a theoretical split regarding the approach to female spectatorship has been most evident among critics working in late 70s and early 80s film and cultural studies—the former (such as Laura Mulvey) concentrating on the textual and psychological positioning of the spectator whereas the later (such as Ien Ang) on setting up new models of audience research.

female film-viewer and that of the female rambler, which are both a cultural, spatial, and visual "practice."

As professional writer and regular film critic, Dorothy Richardson is a rambler and spectator in the early twentieth century London. For six years Dorothy Richardson contributes regularly to *Close Up*,[25] a film journal published between 1927 and 1933. In her column "Continuous Performance," a title suggesting the rapid flow and untiring display of the film's images, Richardson, a critical spectator, comments on the socio-cultural aspects of film-watching and the aesthetical, technical innovations of film as an art form. That film-watching is an important cultural, metropolitan activity providing entertainment, civilization and cosmopolitan vision, and that filmic spectatorship is a complex interaction of the viewer, diegetic effects and the cinema as an alternative public space, are both persuasively argued by Richardson throughout her film criticism. Examining Richardson's comments on cinematic spectatorship in her long-ignored film criticism, this chapter will thus explore Richardson as a pioneering film critic to address cinema-viewing as a significant cultural, metropolitan, and perceptual activity, and women's cinematic spectatorship as involving particularly gender, urban space, and female pleasure in the 1920s and 1930s.

Writing about late-Victorian London, Richardson also portrays a female spectator sensitive to her urban existence in *Pilgrimage*, a grand sequence of thirteen novels written between 1912 and 1946. It is notable that Richardson invests her

[25] Exploring the potential of films, the contributors of *Close Up* such as the poet H. D. and the novelist Bryher (who are also the editors) discuss possibilities open to the film as an art form. Issues such as the film as popular entertainment or avant garde art, the literary value of films, the impact of filmic innovations upon spectatorship, and film psychology are cordially discussed by the contributors.

novels exclusively with the mind of Miriam Henderson, the heroine who worked as a dental secretary in London between 1893 and 1912, which was the very picture of Richardson herself. Since Richardson has Miriam, a flâneuse in late-Victorian London streets, capture the fragmented urban images, many reviewers and critics indicate that Richardson's experimental writing is highly suggestive of filmic representation.[26] Yet aside from studies of Richardson's *Pilgrimage* as emblematic of modernist, feminine/feminist writing, there has been little scholarship studying the heroine as a viewing subject and her spectatorship as an over-determined visual mode.

This chapter thus aims at exploring Richardson's comments on female cinematic spectatorship in her long-ignored film criticism and her fictional representation of the female rambler-spectator in her grand novel sequences *Pilgrimage*. This chapter will therefore explore: 1) women's cinema-going as a significant cultural, metropolitan activity in the 20s and 30s, and women's cinematic spectatorship as involving gender, space, and female pleasure in Richardson's film criticism; 2) the female rambler-spectator in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* as an "alienated" and "situated" viewing subject, whose disruptive vision of the city resists visual mastery and coherence.

Touring the City: Virginia Woolf's London Essays and *The Years*

Women's greater mobility in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century England was made possible by the development of public transportation such as the

[26] See Rebecca Mary Egger, "*Reading by Half-light: Cinematic Spectatorship in Modernist Women's Writing*," diss., Cornell U, 1995, 62-94; Carol Watts, *Dorothy Richardson* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1995) 58-82; Susan Gevirtz, *Narrative's Journey: The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996) 5-37; Paul Tiessen, "A Comparative Approach to the Form ad Function of Novel and Film: Dorothy Richardson's Theory of Art," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 3.1 (Winter 1975): 83- 90.

omnibus, the metro, the railway, and the ship, which enabled them to travel farther to different regions of the city. As moving subjects, these women came into contact with and increased their "knowledge" of those different spaces and people. In these various encounters with "the other", women as marginalized subjects had their alternative experience of modernity. Of the women crossing space in modern London, charity workers voluntarily traveling into slums peopled by the working-class or the underprivileged immigrants had especially an unusual encounter with "the other."

One crucial way for middle-class British women to navigate with relative freedom and independence the open streets of London in the last years of the nineteenth century, especially those more chaotic, dangerous and poverty-ridden parts of London, is as charity workers and philanthropists. Employing "mobility" as a trope to account for female experience of the city, this chapter aims to explore the significance of women charity workers as subjects navigating urban space in *The Years* (1937), whose contact with "the other" challenges, rather than confirms, their subjectivity. As well as representing in *The Years* fin de siècle female mobility practiced by the woman charity worker, whose exploration of the city is legitimated and excused by the caring services she volunteers, Woolf herself embodies a flâneuse strolling and observing the modern city that welcomes women walking publicly as contributing to and making an essential part of the increasingly democratized urban crowd in her London essays, a series of urban sketches produced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Into the 1920s and 1930s, female public walking is mostly accepted, and Woolf has indicated throughout her observations of modern London's growing egalitarian city spaces that the major concerns of her tours around the city

might be further associated with aesthetical, socio-cultural, and historical reflections on the city space, though her mobility and spectatorship practiced against the backdrop of the even more spectacular, commodified urban spectacle unmistakably also bring her into line with the previous two women writer-observers of the fin de siècle city. This section then also seeks to explore Woolf's "Street Haunting," an 1927 article on her one-hour sauntering in London, along with her collection of five articles in *The London Scene*, as manifesting her observation on the city as a site registering modern experience of transience, the movement of the urban crowd, and various monuments of the past.[27]

[27] See Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, eds., *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997); Leila Brosnan, *Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism: Breaking the Surface of Silence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997). Since Woolf is recognized mainly as a modernist fiction-writer, her essay-writing has suffered long neglect until the 1990s, when her essays are re-published and a group of scholars start to re-examine the literary merits of her essay-writing. Even such a renewed interest in Woolf's essays, however, does not pay due attention to her bulk of essays on London life, in which Woolf employs a detached and at times involved perspective upon the city as a site bearing the "imprints" of time, space, and people.

Chapter One

Becoming "Daughters of the City": Amy Levy's *Romance of a Shop* and London Poetry

The New Woman was very much a fin de siècle phenomenon and had been typically represented by contemporary writers as well-educated, socially privileged upper-middle-class women in the last decades of the nineteenth century, who cultivated radical and progressive ideas on issues like female suffrage, gender equality, and the enlargement of education and employment opportunities for women. While such a representation of the New Woman as feminist and politically activated is already prevalent and commonly perceptible in fin de siècle British literature and popular journals, male and female authors nevertheless distinguish themselves in their approaches toward this much represented image of female emancipation. The New Woman figure in the conservative, male-penned press of this period tends to be a ridiculed caricature of the militant, mannish woman who is usually presented as being well-educated, upper-middle-class, and disruptive of established gender order. The critic Vivien Gardiner summarizes the typically conservative portrayal of her in many male-penned writings as follows:

> [The New Woman] eschewed the fripperies of fashion in favor of more masculine dress and severe coiffure. She had probably been educated to a standard unknown to previous generations of women. . . . She was financially independent of father or husband . . . She affected emancipated habits, like smoking, riding a bicycle, using bold language and taking the omnibus or train unescorted. She belonged to all-female

> clubs. . . She sought freedom from, and equality with men. In the process, she was prepared to overturn all convention and all accepted notions of femininity. (4)

More negative portrayals of the New Woman are found in mass cartoon journals of this period. *Punch*, a popular journal catering for Victorian middle-class readership, published in the 1880s and 1890s a series of cartoons satirizing the New Woman as a mannish, unnatural "Donna Quixote" intellectual or strapping Amazon who could even outdo men in strength. An 1895 cartoon of this magazine, for instance, depicts a severely dressed New Woman in her college suit, smoking a cigarette, and discussing books with her equally advanced female friends, while the man of the house is forced to retreat to the servant's quarter for tea and gossip.

While the mass journal offers often a male-dominated, sensational picture of the New Woman as unwomanly and intimidating, one that is circulated among the emerging and rapidly growing mass reader of the fin de siècle period, contemporary male writers of the New Woman novels add still another dimension to the construction of her lofty, gender-disrupting profile. Writers like George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and George Gissing, the three most-mentioned and discussed authors of New Woman novels, are united in offering a satirical depiction of women attempting independence in the fin de siècle period. Addressing particularly the New Woman's perceived unconventionality and radicalism, these male authors, with the possible exception of Gissing, whose works focus on emancipated women from the lower-middle-class, collaborate in the construction of the New Woman as a highly

educated and sexually intimidating presence.[28]

Female writers of the New Woman novels, by contrast, take a more sympathetic view of the heroine demanding her rights and claiming equality in the yet male-dominated society. Their writings are often highly autobiographical, suggesting the very picture of the female authors themselves, and give a more positive image of women pursuing freedom and autonomy, who usually share a departure from the mannish, aggressive rioters ridiculed by the masculine, conservative press. The New Woman heroines these female writers portray are often highly talented, sensitive, and generally a more feminine image than those presented in contemporary male-penned works, despite that they express also a strong dissatisfaction with established gender hierarchy and seek personal or political independence from that hierarchy.

Yet despite the differences in approach toward the New Woman demonstrated by these male and female writers, the former more satirical and tending to ridicule her perceived unconventionality, the latter much more sympathetic, highly autobiographical, and reflecting on her desire for change, one thing that these literary representations have in common is that these New Woman heroines are more likely to come from better social-economic positions and are often portrayed in private, domestic settings. However, recent studies of the fin de siècle women's writings have indicated that instead of asserting exclusively an domestic presence, the New Woman is definitely an urban figure negotiating and disrupting the gendered spaces that have prevented female public visibility and mobility throughout most of the nineteenth

[28] For more on the differences regarding the representations of the New Woman by the British male and female writers of the fin de siècle period, see Eva Yin-I Chen, "New Woman Fiction and Fin de Siècle Urban Commodity Culture," *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities* 25 (2007) 41-68.

century.[29] As well as highlighting that these emancipated women of the 1880s and 1890s have already played significant roles in the emerging public spaces as white-collar workers, shoppers, diners, philanthropists, and urban writer-observers, the last a self-reflexive image of the New Woman writer herself, these studies also reveal that the previous category of the New Woman by means of social status have unwittingly excluded those emancipated women of the lower-middle class, who have increasingly embodied female independence and emancipation through claiming their rights to the fin de siècle city's public spaces. Unlike advanced women from the upper- or the middle- class, who are usually well-educated, socially privileged and more resourceful in securing female independence, those women of the déclassé represent the negotiation of public spaces by ordinary women increasingly perceived in the fin de siècle city.

This chapter thus aims to explore the New Woman represented as self-supporting urban figures in fin de siècle London by Amy Levy, a female writer of the 1880s, in her largely under-read novel *Romance of a Shop* and London poetry. In her works, Levy has a sympathetic and nuanced observation on female independence embodied by the shop girl and female writer/poet working and living on their own in fin de siècle city's commodified and largely gendered ambiences.

New Women and Shop Work

The fin de siècle period had witnessed a phenomenal increase in women working in the public space. The middle-class women of this period had started to seek works outside the home environment, availing themselves of resources such as

[29] See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) 150-76.

education and vocational training to achieve that goal. For women of the middle-class, going outside the domestic space and earning their own bread was simply considered unnecessary and indecent before the first half of the nineteenth century. Marriage, motherhood, and housekeeping had been regarded as the only proper vocations and the domestic as the only appropriate space to women of this class. For various reasons, however, gentlewomen since the 1880s had been driven to enter the conventionally male-dominated, urban working spaces. First, the government developing as a modern bureaucracy, the prospering business sectors including the emerging banks and insurance companies, and the growing retail industry with department stores as its associates all contributed to the escalating need for white-collar female workers like clerks, bookkeepers, typists, secretaries, and shop girls. Second, the increasing financial pressures or difficulties felt by many middle-class families which could no longer keep a self-sustained life often forced their daughters, young and unmarried, to earn a living of their own. Third, positive attitudes toward paid work advocated by feminists and many emancipated women around the turn of the century helped the middle-class women, whose work had long been devotional and non-remunerative, to justify their career-pursuing as seeking financial independence and self-fulfillment.[30]

As the 1890s developed, the professional working woman was increasingly presented as an attractive role model in new women's journals, social investigatory accounts, and contemporary novels by writers of both sexes, who often took contrasting views on the female independence she embodied. One of the early editions of the new feminist weekly *Woman*, established in 1890, argued that through

[30] See Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds, *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 5.

committing herself to work, "woman of today" has gradually waken up to their possibilities in life:

> With the spread of education, and the stern necessity which compels an ever-changing army of women to provide for themselves and fight their own battles in life, we find . . . women are every day more distinguishing themselves in various callings which the necessities of the time, primarily, have compelled them to adopt . . . . Women are gradually getting alive to their possibilities in life, and are so surely—with many abortive efforts, maybe—evolving to a higher ideal from that of our grandmothers.[31]

As modern women increasingly take up the role of breadwinner, their new-found independence and self-sufficiency demonstrates the enlarged possibilities for future womanhood.

Social investigators of this period revealed also that in broad terms women's large-scale employment in the new white-collar professions like clerical work, the retail industry, and the civil service, granted them respectability, creditability, and social status. As Lee Holcombe has argued, by the early years of the twentieth century "middle-class working women, a respected and self-respecting force, were an essential part of the country's labor force," rather than a self-pitying and pitied "surplus and depressed minority" (20). Clara Collet, a social investigator, in her 1892 statistical appendix to the Royal Commission Labor noted a remarkable increase in women's employment between 1881 and 1891. Women increasingly take occupations in the tertiary sector, including teachers, nurses, clerks, librarians, heads of certain

[31] Harriette Raphael, "Women of Today," *Woman*, 1 February 1890, 2, qtd. in Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 101.

business departments. This growing army of female workers testifies to "the entrance into the wages market of women in the middle-class, counting numerically but a small section of the community, and in many cases taking up new employments."[32] This is even more obviously perceived in female employment in the last years of the nineteenth century, when educated, middle-class women increasingly practice a self-supporting life style. According to a 1901 census, the number of educated women employed as clerks in government agencies like the Post Office rose from 6,000 in 1881 to nearly 25,000 in 1901. With the booming of commodity economy, women clerks finding employment in private companies also rose to 60,000 by the same year.

Although women working to support themselves increasingly emblematize fin de siècle female independence, contemporary writings by male authors nevertheless tend to portray them as deviating from traditional womanhood. The appearance of the female white-collar worker in the male-penned novels of the 1880s and 1890s both testifies to the increasing acceptance of her place in the labor market and to the fears surrounding her entry into urban commodity culture. Fin de siècle narratives about the shop girl, for instance, often employ a naturalistic, male-dominated perspective upon women working in the city, highlighting that female worker needs to struggle against all the odds their independence entails and that ultimately she would be forced into marriage to escape an exploitive, unbearable work environment.[33]

Representations of the shop-girl as a streetwise urbanite, a knowing city

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[32] "Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls," *Parliamentary Papers* 1894, vols. 91-92, c.7564, 7 qtd. in Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 65.

[33] For instance, Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), George Gissing's *The Old Women* (1893) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900). See Deborah L Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 43-81.

character of questionable respectability, are particularly predominant in these male-authored naturalistic novels of the 1880s and 1890s, which tend to portray their heroines as sexually attractive shop girls who work in fashionable West End shops or department stores. As Deborah Parsons indicates, male authors like Zola, Dreiser, and Gissing portray women working in the world cities of London, Paris, and Chicago respectively with the voyeuristic perspective of the naturalistic flâneur. As well as Gissing, fin de siècle British male writers like Meredith, Grant Allen, and H. G. Wells all take up the subject of the working woman and her exploration of the public world, yet underlying their interest in her emancipation is "a voyeuristic fascination with her sexuality" (Parsons 83). These unmarried, emancipated women depicted by the male authors are thus often judged as sexually threatening to masculinity of the fin de siècle.

While sharing with naturalistic writings of this period an intention to lay bare the dire aspects of lives led by the lower-class, these narratives nevertheless represent the male and often anti-feminist views on female autonomy and independence that the shop girl embodies through transgressing prescribed femininity. In these narratives, the shop girl is often a woman from the working or the lower-middle class, the latter a déclassé not uncommon in fin de siècle England, and is driven to work out of economic necessity. The spaces she works, including shops of all kinds and the department stores emerging since the later half of the nineteenth century, are represented more often than not as improper, dangerous, and unwholesome to the female worker, who might be subject to low payment, long working hours, and even sexual harassment if her work requires frequent contacts with customers of the other

sex.[34] The shop work therefore is usually described as transitional for especially girls from the lower middle-class, whose aspiration or career-making, if any, would eventually have to give way to their hasty marriages, a textual arrangement made in compliance with Victorian standards of womanhood.

As male authors dominated the image of the New Woman in the fin de siècle, accounts of women's urban experience from their own perspective have tended to be overlooked. While these male-authored narratives represent a grim picture of how fin de siècle capitalism and consumer culture exploit the female laboring body through a largely patriarchal lens, feminist scholars nowadays have started to read against the grain of these narratives by pointing out that the shop girl might embody female independence and transgression of separate spheres through simply working and occupying public spaces of the city at the turn of the century.[35] Arlene Young has noted the liberating effect of white-collar work on women in fin de siècle narratives, showing how the self-supporting shop girls "provide spirited and adventurous heroines for many novels of the 1890s and early 1900s" (1999: 128). Sally Ledger indicates that rather than representing merely the female spectacle or the exploited female body subject to male, capitalistic and voyeuristic forces, the shop girl is "a

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[34] In her interdisciplinary study of labor, leisure, and the shopgirl in fin de siècle London, Lise Shapiro Sanders indicates that contemporary British male writers like George Gissing and W. Somerset Maugham portray shop labor as a degrading activity for women, particularly threatening to the performance of the gentility associated with proper femininity. In addition to its "sweated" aspects, shop labor is viewed as degrading in its production of boredom, an experience imagined as characteristic of the shopgirl's everyday life. See Lise Shapiro Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006) 97-100. See also Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 101-16.

[35] See Sally Ledger, "Gissing, the Shopgirl, and the New Woman," *Woman: A Cultural Review* (1995) 265-74; Lise Shapiro Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006); Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 50-56.

figure inhabiting the metropolis in a more self-confident and disruptive way than the shopgirl-as-victim-of-capitalism narrative puts forward" (268). Or Judith Walkowitz writes, manifesting female visibility in and negotiation of the fin de siècle city's gendered space, these shop assistants, or girls in business "were neither ladies nor streetwalkers but a new category of working women in the third tertiary sector of the economy" (1992: 24). The shop girl is thus redeemed from her passivity and vulnerability, and rendered a sexually and socially disruptive, imposing figure at the fin de siècle city.

Levy's *Romance of a Shop* portrays the shop girl as embodying such female independence practiced against the backdrop of the fin de siècle city's increasingly commodified culture. In the opening pages of the novel, Gertrude Lorimer and her single sisters are forced by the sudden death of their father to choose between traditional marriage and a life on their own, the latter a more challenging and unconventional choice in the eyes of their comparatively conservative relatives or friends. Rather than going into the marriage market or the conventionally feminine, domestic work fields like teaching or nursing, which is of "the dull little ways by which women, ladies, are generally reduced to earn their own living" (55), the Lorimer sisters choose to work as self-employed photographers, opening a shop of their own in London's Upper Baker Street. Their choice of shop work is, of course, not without opposition. The proposal of working for their own meal tickets is strongly opposed by the sisters' rich aunt, who is scandalized by the fact that her dead sister's daughters should go into business as single women, a choice deemed by her as unbecoming to women of the respectable class and inviting moral and sexual dangers.

To the aunt, to go into business is “dangerous and unwomanly,” for it entails not just the “loss of caste, damage to prospects—vague and delicate possession of the female sex,” but most importantly “complicated evils which must necessarily arise from an undertaking so completely devoid of chaperones” (72). In her outright condemnation of female independence attempted by her nieces working as self-employed photographers, the aunt represents exactly the often reactionary view of women’s work by Victorian traditionalists who tend to associate work, women, female publicity, and the resultant disruption of the middle-class gender boundary of the separate spheres.

In stark contrast with her aunt’s conventional sense of womanhood, Gertrude, who takes the initiative in persuading her sisters to opt for a life of independence, finds that shop work allows greater opportunities and freedom than jobs like nursing or teaching that most women of her class are supposed to take when work is needed. As the novel demonstrates, opening a shop of their own means to Gertrude and her sisters also opening up to new social possibilities, wider inter-personal contacts, and not the least, the city’s richly public life, all of these being new social experiences inaccessible to traditionally feminine, domestic works. The shop business is thus described by Gertrude as beneficial to the future of women’s work, because it is “progressive” and “a creature capable of growth,” the “very qualities conventional women’s work is dreadfully lacking” (55). Departing from the more traditional views of female work presented by her aunt and even her elder sister Fanny, who are “behind the age” in thinking that decent women should never work, Gertrude’s is a view adopted by a woman “intensely modern,” “a free woman, ready for action”

(54-59).

Yet Levy does not simply turn up a rosy picture of young ladies making success as working women in *Romance of a Shop*. The Lorimer sisters opening a shop are presented as subject to the ups and downs of the market, which pose threat as well as opportunity to these fledglings managing to stand on their own in London's competitive business ambience. Gertrude, for instance, often has to worry about the prospects of the shop business before they eventually come across promising owing to the diligence and hard work practiced by the female photographers. The pressing needs to make both ends meet on a daily basis, to cater for the public taste so as not to lose business, are particularly felt by Gertrude as shopkeeper, who realizes that for anyone wanting to achieve success in the business world, "only a plank" lies "between them and the pitiless, fathomless ocean," "into whose boiling depth hundreds sank daily and disappeared, never to rise again" (95). To Fanny, the most delicate of the Lorimer sisters, this harsh reality even drives her to fits of hysteria and constant crying. Still another grim picture of the shop girl working for her survival in the city is discernible in Miss Stéphanie, who earns her livelihood as dressmaker below the very floors the Lorimer sisters occupy. Facing stringently financial difficulties resulting probably from slack business, Miss Stéphanie attempts suicide and is ultimately forced to move out of her lodging place. A contrast with the Lorimer sisters as paradigms of established women workers, the female dressmaker falling down from her pursuit of independence thus signifies to Gertrude, who finds the story of Miss Stéphanie "made her sick at heart," (95) what might become of women failing to secure for themselves a foothold in the city's exacting and still gendered working

ambience.

Female Public Visibility in the City

As is discussed, shop work provides fin de siècle middle-class women like the Lorimer sisters with a means of practicing self-independence and pursuing an unconventional career. Their public walking and everyday activities in the city, however, entails no less independence and unconventionality at a time when female streetwalking as well as career-pursuing was strongly opposed by traditionalists. In her article entitled “Out Walking,” Eliza Lynn Linton, a contemporary novelist and journalist, reveals herself as one of those arguing against female public walking growing popular since the later half the nineteenth century. Warning that women of particularly the respectable classes might risk losing their reputation and exposing themselves to sexual danger in pursuing the freedom of streetwalking, she thus questions:

> Is it a fact that modest women are continually being spoken to if they walk alone? And that even two well-bred, well-dressed, and well-conducted girls together are not safe, however quiet their demeanor and unalluring their attire? . . . What becomes of the modest single women of the middle-class ranks, who . . . are obliged to walk alone, yet who never dream that they are thereby reduced to the standard of social evils? (Qtd. in Nead 66)

These are questions frequently asked by late-Victorian traditionalists repelled by the increased female public walking, yet through highlighting the presences of women occupying public spaces, they nevertheless point out the very fact that the

unaccompanied public walking is more and more commonly practiced by women at the fin de siècle.

In *Romance of a Shop*, Levy engages in the issues of fin de siècle female streetwalking through having the Lorimer sisters opt for urban public life which their shop work necessitates and which brings them to constant challenges of the barriers imposed upon female use of public spaces. The novel portrays the Lorimer sisters as highly conscious of their position in the city's public spaces, as streetwise girls knowing how to keep themselves from any dangers their business errands or simply pleasurable strolling in the streets might incur. Rather than seeking protection in conventional chaperonage, these girls cultivate a more practical sense of self-reliance as a shield against any moral and sexual dangers their public walking may invite. This is how Gertrude and Lucy justify their frequent unaccompanied, public walking demanded by the shop work, which requires going about to public places with the clients, whom they may know nothing about:

> "It is a mere matter of convention, is it not?" cried Gertrude, more anxious to persuade herself than her sister. "Whether a man walks into your studio and introduces himself, or whether your hostess introduces him at a party, it comes to much the same thing. In both cases you must use your own judgment about him."
>
> "And whether he walks down the street with you, or puts his arm around your waist, and waltzes off with you to some distant conservatory, makes very little difference. In either case the chances are one knows nothing about him." (97)

Assuming a modern, unconventional attitude toward female public walking, both Gertrude and Lucy have an ironical view of the long-held Victorian bourgeois social decorum while asserting that women had better count on themselves to make judgment of the other sex on any public occasions.

Throughout the novel Gertrude and Lucy present themselves as women capable of transgressing the fin de siècle city's still gendered public spaces, though in doing so they inevitably invite the often accusing glance from those casting a moral, conservative view on female unaccompanied public visibility. As well as exploring the city on foot, the Lorimer sisters are frequent users of mass public transport like the omnibuses and the underground, the two important vehicle inventions of the nineteenth century. Phyllis is depicted as availing herself of the underground railway to have pleasurable tours around the city. Lucy also uses the third-class carriage to transport herself between London and the suburbs. Gertrude takes to particularly the omnibus, the plebeian, modern vehicle proving to her a means of navigating and browsing through the bustling city. The omnibus, in providing a democratizing way of observing the cityscape, offers also for Gertrude the possibility of transgressing the city's gendered spaces. In an episode describing the usual bus ride around the city carried out by Gertrude alone, who treats such a trip as inspiring and liberating, the female passenger nevertheless finds herself confronting a view that sees things in the opposite way:

> One bright morning towards the end of January, Gertrude came careering up the street on the summit of a tall, green omnibus, her hair blowing gaily in the breeze, her ill-gloved hands clasped about a bulky note-book.

> Frank, passing by in painting-coat and a sombrero, plucked the latter from his head in exaggerated salute, an action which evoked a responsive smile from the person for whom it was intended, but acted with quite a different effect on another person who chanced to witness it, and for whom it was certainly not intended. (99)

While responding to the salutation from a male acquaintance, Gertrude is not aware that her behavior is open to judgment by another person, whose well-meaning comes the other way round. This is no other than her aunt, who, to Gertrude's dismay, comes dashing past in an open carriage, a "look of speechless horror" on her countenance (99). Gertrude, however, is able to justify to her aunt, who takes her to task for manifesting unduly female public presence, that her public visibility in the city is a social pleasure legitimately enjoyed by women of her class, who have none of the conventional social opportunities yet rely on "judgment and self-respect" in "[their] relations with people, under any circumstances whatever" (101). In this way, Gertrude proves herself and her sisters to be examples of modern, independent women claiming their rights to the city's public spaces instead of the "complicated evils" which her aunt and many contemporary traditionalists have claimed arising from women's unchaperoned public walking.

The New Woman as Writer

As with the representation of the shop girl as deviating from conventional femininity by many fin de siècle male authors, the picture of the woman writer in this period is rendered no less negatively in many contemporary male-penned writings. In the popular press of the fin de siècle period, the female writer is one of the New

Woman types commonly satirized. In popular journals like *Punch*, the female writer is often represented as either too knowing or too innocent, too masculine or too feminine, suggesting that the female gender is unfit for the writing enterprise. On the one hand, the female author is seen either as "a love-hungry spinster, living her life vicariously through her works" or as "an innocent young lady, writing about matters she knows nothing about and making herself unattractive in the bargain" (Marks 81). The overtly feminization of women as popular, romance writers by the male satirists is thus employed to come to the conclusion that women are not fit for serious literary work and that their writing is more often than not shallow.[36]

On the other hand, women trying their hands at serious writings, which have long been a realm occupied by male authors, are stigmatized as unwomanly or falling short of the perspective needed to sustain such an effort. A *Punch* rhyme of 1894 thus ridiculed the New Woman as female writer:

> There is New Woman, and what do you think?
>
> She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!
>
> But, though Foolscap and Ink form the whole of her diet,
>
> This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!

Another instance of the New Woman writer as a sexually threatening presence is found in a cartoon in the *Idler* of 1894 depicting a man intimidated by women throwing books at him, these books by the contemporary advanced female writers like Sarah Grand and Emma Frances Brooke signifying particularly a threat to fin de siècle

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[36] See Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*. 80-89. Male satirists often complain about the shallowness of female writing, which lacks "gusto and depth" (84) and "adult literary ingredients as grammar, style and common sense" (85). Stereotypes on the female novelists as producing "inflated romantic verbosities with little plot and less significance" (80).

male sexual/gender identity.[37]

By contrast, the image of the female writer is rendered more positively in fin de siècle novels by New Women writers. These feminist writers, who often project a self-image onto their portrayals of the New Woman writer-heroine, are prone to offer sympathetic observations on the obstacles and battles she needs to fight to seek literary enterprise as a means of achieving self-assertion and self-fulfillment.[38] As well as portraying the writer-heroine as fighting against the patriarchal forces discouraging her literary pursuit, these feminist writers represent how she negotiates with the fin de siècle's increasing commodification of literary production, a phenomenon ascribed by the contemporary gender-biased, discriminating male writers to the female intrusion into the literary market. [39] Femininity was a trope commonly employed by fin de siècle male writers to deplore the degeneration of a literary market increasingly invaded by the emerging women writers and mass readers. Women writers of this period were accused by their male counterparts of producing superficial, trashy works appealing to a largely undistinguishing female readership. Not only the author of mass culture text is gendered, but also the production of this text is considered to be gendered. The woman taking part in the emerging mass literary

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[37] For more on the implications of this cartoon satirizing the female writer/writing, see Margaret Beetham, A *Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996) 132

[38] See, for instance, novels like Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Ella Hepworth Dixon's T*he Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897), or Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899). For the updated studies of the female writer as figured in fin de siècle New Woman fiction, see Margaret Diane Stetz, "New Grub Street and the Woman Writer of the 1890s," T*ransforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) 21-45; Lyn Pykett, "Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman," *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 135-50; Penny Boumelha, "The Woman of Genius and the Woman of Grub Street: Figures of the Female Writer in British Fin de Siècle Fiction," *English Literature in Transition* 40.3 (1997): 164-80.

[39] For more on the commodification and feminization of the fin de siècle literary market, see Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (London: Macmillan, 1986) 44-64.

market as a professional writer thus not only finds for her an opportunity of getting published and realizing her literary potential but also finds herself complicated in the gendered conception of women, literary production, and mass readership, which is especially perceived in the publishing trade of the fin de siècle when a shared fear about the feminization of literary market was felt by many male writers.[40]

However intimidating or benign these presences of the writing women in fin de siècle discourses might be, they indicate unfailingly that women writers are taking their place in a new professional world. The establishment of the Institute of Women Journalists in 1895, for instance, signals such a process, and by the end of the 1880s, at least 40 percent of the authors are women at large British publishing houses. Census data in Britain and the United States testifies to women's increased emergence into the profession of journalism. The 1841 census in Britain listed only fifteen women professionally engaged as authors, editors, and journalists. By 1891 this number rose to 660. Between 1890 and 1900 the U. S. census reported an even more dramatic increase in the number of female reporters and editors from approximately 1000 to 2200.[41] This emergence of female writers around the turn of the century is largely ascribable to the rise of mass literary market, which creates great demand for cheap papers and books from the working class and the expanding lower-middle class.[42] New Journalism, a stylistic change happening to the periodic press of the

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[40] In her study of gendered cultural production in the fin de siècle period, Elaine Showalter indicates that by the time George Eliot died in 1880, women writers had constituted to their male counterparts "a set of frightening rivals in the literary market" and irritation with the productivity of the successful woman novelist "surfaces [often] . . . in critical essays and stories of the period written by men." See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990) 76-77.

[41] See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004) 334.

[42] According to an 1898 article published in *Woman at Home*, "hundreds of thousands of pounds of

1880s and 1890s, characterizes particularly the mass literary production of this period. A style made popular by the publisher George Newes, whose magazine *Tit-Bits* pioneers this stylistic innovation, New Journalism is noted for its lavish use of illustration, the employment of intimate, conversational tones, and a deeply felt sensationalism, the last a feature characterizing also the production of popular literature of this period.[43]

While in *Romance of a Shop* the Lorimer sisters embody female independence by opening a shop of their own and surviving fin de siècle London's competitive business ambience, Gertrude Lorimer, a writer by avocation, exemplifies still another form of female self-assertion through managing to commit herself to literary efforts. That Gertrude is also a female writer finding literary creation a means of self-fulfillment and spiritual comfort is ignored by most critics of *Romance of a Shop*, who tend to focus on the eponymous routines the Lorimer sisters carry out to pursue their life of independence. A closer reading of the novel would, however, reveal that Levy does portray the heroine Gertrude a picture of the aspiring female writer in the city and thus a self-reflexive image of Levy herself,[44] both mirroring fin de siècle women writers wanting to assert themselves amidst the increasingly competitive and commercialized literary market, and the turn-of-century city space that offers greater

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capital are employed in the ladies' newspapers of today; hundreds of bright, talented women, and men too, are busied incessantly in providing by pen and pencil every conceivable sort of information and illustration which can help to tell all the world what the feminine half is doing." See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* 334.

[43] See Margaret Beetham, A *Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996) 124; W. T. Stead, a journalist of late-Victorian England, whose exposés best exemplify the sensational reportage characterizing his age, introduces New Journslism as that "personal style, that trick of bright colloquial language, that wealth of intimate picturesque detail, and that determination to arrest, amuse or startle" see Judith Walkowitz (1992: 84).

[44] Many scholars have found Gertrude Levy's alter-ego. Levy is herself one of the female writers active in London's literary circles. Levy regularly contributor to fashionable journals addressing particularly the female readership.

opportunities for women would-be writers.

Gertrude is obviously aware that as a would-be writer, she is entering an enterprise growing competitive in her days. Her talent at writing is indicated at the beginning of the story, when Fanny suggests that Gertrude might make a fortune via her pen, because she writes “so beautifully,” (54) an idea rejected by the practical-minded younger sister, who thinks that the literary market has become too competitive to venture upon. However, she never gives up writing even after committing herself to the comparatively more feasible work of photography. While deeming her everyday routine at the photo shop as a necessity to secure financial independence, Gertrude nevertheless mediates upon the limits such life entails:

> . . . Was this life, this ceaseless messing about in a pokey glass out-house, this eating and drinking and sleeping in the shabby London rooms?
>
> Was any human creature to be blamed who rebelled against it? Did not flesh and blood cry out against such sordidness, with all the revel of the spring-time going on in the world beyond?
>
> It is base and ignoble perhaps to scorn the common round, the trivial task, but is it not also ignoble and base to become so immersed in them as to desire nothing beyond? (120)

This outburst should not be interpreted simply as her denial of the shop work, which Gertrude as well as her sisters has found helpful and contributive to female independence. It is rather Gertrude’s complaint about the lack of perspective such work may involve. It is also her wish to find ways to transcend the changeless pattern of daily shop work.

In this regard, writing offers Gertrude a means of transcending trivialized shop work and a more elevated way of approaching daily reality. Literary writing is the "old consolation" (119) Gertrude constantly resorts to in the pauses of professional work, a means of transcending her day-to-day routines of shop work. More often than not, Gertrude is portrayed as an urban observer seeing things through the lens of a writer:

> . . . [For] Gertrude, the humours of the town had always possessed a curious fascination. She contemplated the familiar London pageant with an interest that had something of passion in it; and, for her part, was never inclined to quarrel with the fate which had transported her from the comparative tamness of Campden Hill to regions where the pulses of the great city could be felt distinctly as they beat and throbbed. (80)

Passages abound in the novel where Gertrude is found contemplating the city pageant. Her regular walk around Regent's Park before business hours is one of the few occasions she could exorcise "her demons" (119), taking a break from the hustle and bustle of day-to-day work and seeking inspiration for literary production she is embarking on. Besides, the numerous errands Gertrude runs while performing shop work doubtless offers her opportunities of walking and observing the city.

Portraying Gertrude as a female writer making home in the city, Levy anticipates many New women authors who represent women would-be writers as self-supporting, urban figures making their bare subsistence amidst the fin de siècle city's increasingly competitive literary market.[45] Like most of these writer-heroines,

[45] See, for instance, novels like Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Ella Hepworth Dixon's T*he Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897), or Mary

Gertrude, when pursuing her literary ambition, is found confronting the traditional view on female employment that demands women engage in works of domestic, feminine nature. Committing herself to literary efforts, Gertrude is by no means going into one of those "dull little ways by which women, ladies, are generally reduced to earn their own living" (55). Rather, she aligns herself with a troop of self-assertive, independent women writers increasingly perceived as making home in London at the fin de siècle, who seek literary enterprise as profession and a means of self-realization.

As a writer, Gertrude finds that the city London, with its ever-expanding publication industry catering for the growing urban mass readership, provides the very opportunities for female authors like her who want to try their hands at the writing profession. The novel never fails to impress the reader that fin de siècle London is already a huge mass literary market.[46] Most of the characters reveal themselves as consumers of daily newspapers or popular periodicals. Mrs. Maryon, the landlady to the Lorimers, is a faithful reader of *Pall Mall Gazette*, a daily newspaper providing her with sources of gossips and scandals about London people. Frank, a friend of the Lorimer sisters and a suitor of Lucy Lorimer, is revealed an avid reader of periodicals like *The Sporting Times* and *Tit-bits*, the latter a popular weekly penny paper in late-Victorian England and an emblem of New Journalism characterizing the massive,

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Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899). For the updated studies of the female writer as figured in fin de siècle New Woman fiction, see Margaret Diane Stetz, "New Grub Street and the Woman Writer of the 1890s," T*ransforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) 21-45; Lyn Pykett, "Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman," *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 135-50; Penny Boumelha, "The Woman of Genius and the Woman of Grub Street: Figures of the Female Writer in British Fin de Siècle Fiction," *English Literature in Transition* 40 (3): 164-80.

[46] In the novel, Paternoster Row is first introduced as synonymous with a cluster of publishers to which Gertrude has sent her manuscripts in vain.

sensational productions of the fin de siècle periodical press. The Lorimer sisters also indicate themselves as readers consuming popular magazines like *Punch*.

While creating greater demands for the production of newspapers and popular journals, such expanding urban mass readership in the fin de siècle period exercises nevertheless also an apparently degrading effect upon literary production. Gertrude is depicted as having to choose between producing mass-consumed, trashy works or committing herself to more serious, valued pieces that cater for only the elite reader. As the novel makes it clear, Gertrude initially works on the more elevated forms like tragedy and some high-minded novels, which do not seem to meet the popular taste and have made numerous "frequent and fruitless visits" to the publishing house (59). Gertrude is made aware that she is entering a commodified literary market, a market increasingly encroached upon by the popular, undiscriminating reader(ship), by her friend Frank, who ironically pokes at the vulgarized literary market, to which he and Gertrude contribute as illustrator and writer respectively:

> We have all to get off our high horse, Miss Lorimer, if we want to live. I had ten guineas this morning for that thing; and there is the *Death of Oedipus* with its face to the wall in the studio—and likely to remain there, unless we run short of firewood one of these days (121-22).

At comparison here is the relative profitability of a little poem by Gertrude, for which Frank gives an illustration, over the classical Greek drama that has been held as an emblem of high-quality literature. It is also a comparison drawn between Gertrude's light verses, which make a profit despite being "rather a come down," (121) and her efforts at a tragedy in five acts entitled *Charlotte Corday*, which is a more serious

work yet has been rejected by the publisher largely because of its failing to appeal to the public taste.

The Female Poet of the City

As has been indicated, the New Woman as writer embodies female self-assertion and independence through claiming her rights to the fin de siècle literary profession and urban public life. In *Romance of a Shop*, Levy portrays Gertrude the very image of such a self-assertive, independent New Woman writer, who negotiates the city's gendered and increasingly commodified spaces. In her life and London poetry, Levy represents also the female poet as urban writer-observer, strolling, watching, and eulogizing the city while making her claim to a life of independence that the city brings her to.

An Anglo-Jewish woman of letters, Amy Levy was one of the women who moved easily about London of the 1880s as an urban traveler. Levy was the first Jewish woman to be educated at Newnham. She was friends with contemporary female authors like Oliver Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, and Margaret Harkness, who write widely on feminism and politics.[47] She paid regular visits to the theater, art galleries, London's parks, and the library at the British Museum, the last especially a favorite place to many women readers and writers emerging in the fin de siècle period.[48] She also attended private salons and parties and events sponsored by

[47] Oliver Schreiner was the author of *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and *Woman and Labor* (1911). Eleanor Marx was a talented linguist as well as an active socialist and labor organizer. And Margaret Harkness was a moderately successful novelist and sometimes associate of leading labor militants in the 1880s. See Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 181-206.

[48] In her 1889 article "Readers at the British Museum," published in *Atlanta: Every Girl's Magazine* aimed at the middle-class female readership, Levy delineates the development of the Reading Room in terms of those it serves, from the earlier elite readers like Isaac Disraeli, Walter Scott, William Godwin, Charles Lamb to the "all sorts and conditions of men and women," who might be the reader as long as

London organizations like the Women Writers' Club and the Society of Authors.[49]

As Victorian woman poet, Levy, however, has been forgotten for decades since her death by suicide in 1888. Despite having enjoyed brief popularity and received praise from her contemporary writer Oscar Wilde,[50] Levy and her poetry sink into oblivion not very long after her demise. Like many female poets of her time, Levy is not even included in most of the anthologies of Victorian literature and poetry. It is not until the 1990s when a group of scholars start to re-evaluate the literary merits of poetry by late-Victorian women that Levy, together with other female bards, is read again.[51] Levy's poetry on urban life as observed and celebrated by a female bard is

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they are over the age of twenty-one. The significance lies also in the fact Levy is addressing her female readers who have now the access to a reading facility that might have denied their entrance before. This is how she describes the reading room of British Museum as an emerging egalitarian space: "Rich and poor, old and young, competent and incompetent, the successes and failures of life and literature may be met beneath the dome in undistinguishable fellowship. To each and all, no doubt, the "Room" presents its attractions, for each and all has its uses. For some it is a workshop, for others a lounge; there are those who put it to the highest uses, while in many cases it serves as a shelter—a refuge, in more senses than one, for the destitute." (227)

[49] See Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens, OH: Ohio State UP, 2000) 116-52.

[50] Levy's short fiction "The Recent Telepathic Occurrence at the British Museum" published by *Woman's World* in 1888 was highly regarded by Oscar Wilde, who was the editor of the popular journal aiming at the middle-class female readership. He described her little piece as "a real literary gem . . . sent to me by a girl . . . who has a touch of genius in her work." In the obituary that Oscar Wilde wrote for Amy Levy in 1890, he gave her writing—both her prose and poetry—high praise. About *Reuben Sachs*, Levy's novel about Jewish life, he observed, "To write thus at six-and-twenty is given to very few" and expressed his regret that "the world must forgo the full fruition of her power." Although Levy had earned such respect in her life time and in the period immediately following it, her works were largely unknown until recently scholars begin to show a surging interest in the poetry written by Victorian women, the literature produced by England's Jews, and the experience of fin de siècle women, who, like her, were female pioneers to live in an independent and unconventional manner. See Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens, OH: Ohio State UP, 2000) xi, 144-45.

[51] Some impressive anthologies in particular—Jennifer Breen's 1994 edition of *Victorian Women Poets 1830–1901*, Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds's 1995 edition of *Victorian Women Poets*, Isobel Armstrong and Joseph Bristow's 1996 edition of *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets*, and the two Longman collections (*Victorian Women Poets* by Tess Cosslett in 1996; and *Victorian Women Poets: A New Annotated Anthology* by Virginia Blain in 2000)—deserve special mention because they radically challenged the poetic landscape of the nineteenth century by re-introducing and recuperating the work of nineteenth-century women poets. Critical studies which investigated and reinforced this female lineage include, for example, Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (1992); Linda K. Hughes, ed., *Victorian Poetry Special Issue: Women Poets, 1830–1894* (1995); Angela Leighton, ed., *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader* (1996); Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, eds., *Women's Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian: Gender and Genre* (1999); Cynthia Scheinberg, *Victorian Women Poets and Religion* (2002); and Alison Chapman, ed., *Victorian Women Poets* (2003).

recognized as presenting a self-reflexive image and a female counterpart to the flâneur-poet, whose muse is "an urban Muse, and bound / By some strange law to the paven ground."[52]

As well as the delicate, strongly autobiographical, feminine voice resounding throughout Levy's London poetry, which is also audible in the poetry by many late-Victorian women and would be explored in this section, an illustration drawn for this collection lays bare particularly the female identity of the poetic persona. It is one of the two illustrations included in the published form of Levy's London poetry, in which a female writer is seen working on her pieces at desk, with her back to a panorama of the city accessible through the little garret's window.[53] This might be a useful reference to Levy's London poetry as being composed and recited by the female minstrel, whose very image has been rendered picturesquely by the illustration enclosed. As many critics have indicated, the bulk of Levy's poems in *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse,* a collection published posthumously in 1889, allows much room for identifying the persona as a female bard inhabiting and observing the fin de siècle city.[54] In "A London Plane-Tree" and "The Piano-Organ," for instance, the female poet-speaker reveals herself unmistakably as woman writer making home

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[52] See Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens, OH: Ohio State UP, 2000); Linda Hunt Beckman, "Amy Levy: Urban Poetry, Poetic Innovation, and the Fin-de-Siècle Woman Poet," *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and the 1890s* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2005) 207-230.

[53] As in Levy's other works of fiction, translation, and essays, this collection is published in the real name of the author, which is not always the case in the publishing world of late-Victorian England, where many female writers still use masculine pseudonyms to appeal to a wider readership. The employment of the real name by female authors, a practice growing popular in Levy's time when a lot of women writers began to emerge in the literary market, makes a more ready connection between the female author and the persona than the masking of identity through male, assumed names.

[54] See Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 89-98; Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005) 38-77.

in the city, an urban female figure suggesting fin de siècle women's intrusion into the male-dominated spaces and becoming increasingly recognizable particularly in late-Victorian poetry by women.[55]

In "A London Plane-Tree," after which Levy's collection of urban poetry is named, the female poet is found contemplating the city pageant from her lodging place, a little garret. While suggesting the economical embarrassment of the occupant, the garret as a space nevertheless takes on significances particularly to women writers of the fin de siècle acting out female independence and transgression of gendered spaces conventionally demarcated.[56] Here the garret is the very venue such a self-supporting female writer practices her art and commands a view of her urban ambience. The plane-tree, not uncommon in London streets, is the object of her contemplation. This London plane-tree, which retains its freshness, is perceived by the poet-speaker as native to the city's soil, while the other trees grow brown and droop and pine for country air:

> Green is the plane-tree in the square,
>
> The other trees are brown;
>
> They droop and pine for the country air;
>
> The plane-tree loves the town.
>
> Here from my garret-pane, I mark
>
> The plane-tree bud and blow,

[55] See Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005).
[56] See Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (London: Macmillan, 2000) 178-179.

Shed her recuperative bark,

And spread her shade below.

Among her branches, in and out,

The city breezes play;

The dun fog wraps her round about;

Above, the smoke curls grey.

Others the country take for choice,

And hold the town in scorn;

But she has listened to the voice

On city breezes borne. (1-16)

In the first stanza, the uniqueness of the London plane-tree in the square is highlighted. The poet-speaker then in the second stanza reveals herself as occupying the garret, taking a view of the city via the window pane and finding herself attracted to the plane-tree. The city and the country are represented respectively by the contrasting images of the city-loving plane-tree and the other trees, which take the country for choice and "hold the town in scorn" (14). The speaker ultimately finds comfort in the London plane-tree surviving the hardship of city life, the season, and the unwholesome ambience, which is nevertheless perceived to "bud and blow / Shed her recuperative bark" and "has listened to the voice / On city breezes borne" (6-8). There is also a marked correspondence between the feminized London plane-tree and the female poet-speaker at the garret, who notices the peculiarity of the London plant, in

that both are content with their lot and delight in their urban existences.

As in “A London Plane-Tree,” the female bard in “The Piano-Organ” inhabits a garret and finds her place to be an integral part of the city. The female bard describes herself as working at desk, where the “student-lamp is lighted” and “the books and papers are spread,” and is distracted only by the music coming up from the street:

> I open the garret window,
> Let the music in and the moon;
> See the woman grin for coppers,
> While the man grinds out the tune.
>
> Grind me a dirge or a requiem,
> Or a funeral-march sad and slow,
> But not, O not, that waltz tune
> I heard so long ago.
>
> I stand upright by the window,
> The moonlight streams in wan:—
> O God ! with its changeless rise and fall
> The tune twirls on and on. (5-16)

The music does not seem to produce a consoling effect as it is expected. The waltz tune played by the street musician simply reminds the listener how long she has been kept from a socially active life, a sacrifice her commitment to literary production might entail. Together with “A London Plane-Tree,” “The Piano-Organ” presents a

delicate observation and reflection by the female poet upon her urban existence, which evokes also the shared experience of women managing to stand on their own in the fin de siècle city.

While the garret represents a space the female bard needs to assert her autonomy and independence, the newly enlarged public spaces of the fin de siècle city prove to be the very sites she occupies to exercise her poetic imagination. In “London Poets,” for instance, the poet-speaker, who walks around the city, identifies with her predecessors doing exactly the same thing:

> They trod the streets and squares where now I tread,
> With weary hearts, a little while ago;
> When, thin and grey, the melancholy snow
> Clung to the leafless branches overhead;
> Or when the smoke-veiled sky grew stormy-red
> In autumn; with a re-arisen woe
> Wrestled, what time the passionate spring winds blow;
> And paced scorched stones in summer:—they are dead.
>
> The sorrow of their souls to them did seem
> As real as mine to me, as permanent.
> To-day, it is the shadow of a dream,
> The half-forgotten breath of breezes spent.
> So shall another soothe his woe supreme—
> “No more he comes, who this way came and went.” (1-14)

This poem is intended as a memorial to the London poets who had walked and mused about the city before the bard who now follows suite. The affinities between the present poet-speaker and the dead poets are especially manifested through a suspension of time and space they share. As well as the previous London poets, the poet-speaker is presented as subject to sorrow and sentiment which the urban environment generates.

While presenting itself as a space evoking personal, sentimental outbursts in poems like “London Poets” and “A March Day in London,” the street might be also a site for topical and topological representations of the fin de siècle city. In “Ballad of a Special Edition,” Levy mocks at sensational journalism prevalent in late-Victorian London, a phenomenon metaphorically represented against the backdrops of the city’s imagined geography and the increasingly sensationalized mass journalism. The speaker is repelled by the approach of the newspaper boy, who is a “bird of ill omen” in heralding the news of murders, evils, and accidents:

> He comes; I hear him up the street—
> Bird of ill omen, flapping wide
> The pinion of a printed sheet,
> His hoarse note scares the eventide.
> Of slaughter, theft, and suicide
> He is the herald and the friend;
> Now he vociferates with pride—
> A double murder in Mile End!

A hanging to his soul is sweet;

His gloating fancy's fain to bide

Where human-freighted vessels meet,

And misdirected trains collide.

With Shocking Accidents supplied,

He tramps the town from end to end.

How often have we heard it cried—

A double murder in Mile End. (1-16)

Here Levy offers an alternative picture of the city life, one placed against the largely pleasant urban landscapes found in most of her London poems. The evils and harsh reality of urban life are presented through the daily paper, an emerging public medium accused of taking advantage of the urban mass reader, who craves for sensational report or anecdotes. Despite their topical and topological significances,[57] these murders and accidents the speaker refers to throughout the poem are nevertheless subject to fabrication by the public press. Like its dispatcher, the newspaper is imagined and condemned by the speaker as contributing to "gloating fancy" and "apocryphal" reports (10, 27). Ultimately the speaker is able to dispel such a "bird of ill omen," whose sounds simply "offend" her ears (26).

As well as being an urban stroller making home and observation in the street, the female bard presents herself as capable user of mass public transportation. Celebrating the omnibus as an urban, plebian form of transport, Levy is one of the

[57] In this sense, Mild End has typological significances regarding its association with not only the crime sites but also another fact that Levy and her Jewish contemporaries might be well acquainted with—that the East End is where the Jewish immigrants have settled down.

first female poets to write about the pleasure of riding on the modern mass vehicle. In "Ballad of an Omnibus," the female bard reveals herself a habitual user of the omnibus, a vehicle growing popular with the proletarian masses in the fin de siècle city:

> Some men to carriages aspire;
> On some the costly hansoms wait;
> Some seek a fly, on job or hire;
> Some mount the trotting steed, elate.
> I envy not the rich and great,
> A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
> I am contented with my fate—
> An omnibus suffices me.
>
> In winter days of rain and mire
> I find within a corner strait;
> The 'busmen know me and my lyre
> From Brompton to the Bull-and-Gate.
> When summer comes, I mount in state
> The topmost summit, whence I see
> Croesus look up, compassionate—
> An omnibus suffices me. (1-16)

Based on Levy's experience of riding the omnibus at a time when women hardly show

themselves on the top of the vehicle,[58] this ballad is a recital by "a wandering minstrel, poor and free," who delights in her humble way of exploring the city via the help of modern mass transportation. The ballad, a form conventionally used by the ancient, wandering minstrel giving vent to his wonders and woes, is employed by Levy to record the love of the modern city by the female poet-passenger. The minstrel identifies herself as a poet of the city and a constant user of the urban vehicle, for "the 'busmen know [her] and [her] lyre / From Brompton to the Bull-and-Gate." While carriages or hansoms might present a more comfortable and bourgeois form of transport, the urban minstrel is content with her bus ride especially in summer because she is able to command a view from the top of "the human tale of love and hate" and "the city pageant, early and late," the scenes whereof she extracts "a pleasure deep and delicate" (19-23). Unlike the speaker in "A London Plane-Tree" or "The Piano-Organ," who commends a partial view of the city through the pane of the garret and is herself more or less stationary, the female poet mounting the omnibus enjoys a mobile, panoramic view of the crowd and the streetscapes. Through taking an omnibus, the poet-speaker also distinguishes herself from the well-to-do employing carriages or hansoms, who "look up, compassionate," thus identifying herself with the proletarian masses who take great pleasure in the bus ride.

While in "Ballad of an Omnibus" the female poet-passenger presents herself as moving and observing amidst the city's changing pageant, a viewing position shared

[58] In July 1929, the London *Observer* ran a series of articles celebrating George Schillibeer's opening of the first omnibus line in London exactly a hundred years earlier. In response to that series, Katie Salomon, Amy Levy's sister, wrote the following letter to the editor: "Dear Sir, In connection with your article about the omnibus, your readers might be interested in the following verses. The writer was among the first women in London to show herself on the top of omnibuses. She excused herself to her shocked family circle by saying that she had committed the outrage in company with the daughter of a dean, who was also the granddaughter of an archbishop of Canterbury."

by the speakers strolling the London street in Levy's other poems previously explored, the speakers in "The Village Garden" and "Out of Town" nevertheless indicate themselves as visitors to the countryside and thus entitled to a view of the city from outside, though their visits invariably make them long for a quick return to their urban habitats. The country in both poems is described as a place of beauty, quietness, and serenity, as contrasted by the city as a place of pollution, noise, and hurly-burly. In "The Village Garden," for instance, the garden giving "breathes of peace and sunshine" embodies rural beauty and serenity, and the speaker "with mixed delight" finds him/herself linger there in the noontide "dreaming" (1-4, 9). Such serenity the country evokes is not disturbed until there is a sharp turn regarding the tone in the fourth stanza, where the speaker says that he/she would like to stay in the village garden only if the city does not call him/her from afar:

> Fain would I bide, but ever in the distance
> A ceaseless voice is sounding clear and low;—
> The city calls me with her old persistence,
> The city calls me—I arise and go.
>
> Of gentler souls this fragrant peace is guerdon;
> For me, the roar and hurry of the town,
> Wherein more lightly seems to press the burden
> Of individual life that weighs me down.
>
> I leave your garden to the happier comers

For whom its silent sweets are anodyne.

Shall I return? Who knows, in other summers

The peace my spirit longs for may be mine? (13-24)

The speaker unfolds his/her desire to go back to the city. Unlike those "gentler souls" who might find comfort in the "fragrant peace" the village garden embodies, the speaker finds that the bustling city is more congenial, since "the roar and hurry of the town" seems to him/her to press the burden of individual life "more lightly." The city personified and feminized thus becomes a voice calling the speaker from within "with her old insistence." In this poem, Levy does not simply follow the romantic, male-dominated tradition of eulogizing the pastoral that the country stands for. Rather, the city is revealed by her as more appealing to a soul aspiring to experience excitement and liveliness of which the modern city is a much better provider.

Such a contrast of the city and the country is also perceived in "Out of Town," another poem featuring the love of the city expressed by the speaker who seeks a temporary sojourn in the countryside and ultimately finds him/herself attached to the urban ambience. The poem takes the form of three stanzas, in which the city is unfavorably compared with the country in the first two stanzas:

Out of town the sky was bright and blue,

Never fog-cloud, lowering, thick, was seen to frown;

Nature dons a garb of gayer hue,

Spotless lay the snow on field and down,

Pure and keen the air above it blew;

All wore peace and beauty for a crown.

London sky, marred by smoke, veiled from view,

London snow, trodden thin, dingy brown,

Whence that strange unrest at thoughts of you

Out of town? (1-12)

The speaker indicates him/herself as being out of town and entitled to a comparison of urban and rural scenery. The city London is initially revealed an ambience not very pleasant, “fog-cloud, lowering, thick,” and “was seen to frown,” when compared with the rural area, where “Nature dons a garb of gayer hue,” the air blows “pure and clean,” and all “wore peace and beauty for a crown.” The speaker, who might be out of town temporarily, seems to take greater pleasure in the vistas the country opens to him/her. Yet all the happiness and blessings this life in the country brings are eclipsed simply by the speaker’s addiction to the city as/and his/her beloved, hinted at by “that strange unrest at thoughts of you.”

Chapter Two

Consuming the City: Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and Film Criticism

While through her life and works Levy represents New Women making their claims to a wider public sphere embodied by the city and streets, the unaccompanied public walking by particularly the middle-class women in the 1880s is, as the previous chapter indicates, still strongly disapproved in both the real and fictional worlds. Delighting in unchaperoned streetwalking in spite of a Mrs. Grundy's reprimand, Levy and her female characters pioneer in breaking from the social code requiring that women going out need the company of a gentleman or an older female relative, a practice strictly observed by the middle-class throughout most of the nineteenth century. Female visibility in the public space, however, becomes more and more acceptable and desirable when women of the fin de siècle are increasingly encouraged to enter public space as workers, shoppers, diners, and pleasure-seekers. In her 1900 article entitled "The Decay of the Chaperon," the social observer Mary Jeune notices that women of her days have started to assert their presence in public without the supervision of guardians:

> English society and life have been adapting themselves to the independence, which modern thought and education must inevitably have on women . . . the intimacy which women and men now occupy in regard to each other, seems almost another safeguard to the new relations, as the naturally chivalrous feeling of men towards women is not weakened, but rather strengthened, by the confidence which such a position creates, and which must prevent a man of honour taking advantage of it, added to

> which, though a girl may in reality know less of the dark side of life, than in a time of more supervision, the self-reliance which is the result of her independence, must enable her to better stand alone, or as one may put it, take care of herself.[59]

Writing about late-Victorian London, Dorothy Richardson portrays a female rambler enjoying such greater freedom of walking on the open streets of fin de siècle London in *Pilgrimage*, a grand sequence of thirteen novels. It is notable that Richardson invests her novels exclusively with the mind of Miriam Henderson, the heroine who works as a dental secretary in London and is the very picture of Richardson herself. In especially the middle volumes of the novels, Richardson has detailed descriptions of a wide spectrum of women entering fin de siècle London's public spaces. For her portrayals of the city life in *Pilgrimage*, Richardson is praised and dubbed "a Wordsworth of the city of London" (Powys 19-21), the female counterpart to the famous Romantic poet eulogizing nevertheless the scenery of the countryside. Richardson's fictional representation of women's public walking and using of public spaces corresponds to the actual enlargement of women's sphere during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. A contemporary writer and friend of Richardson's, Winifred Bryher recommends for people abroad to read *Pilgrimage* if they would know England as it really was like between 1890 and 1914 (168).

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[59] Mary Jeune, "The Decay of the Chaperon," Fortnightly review 74 (1900) 629-38 qtd in Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 149. An 1889 article entitled "Chaperones" from *Woman's Penny Paper* also proclaimed: "Our social life has changed. One could hardly walk a quarter of a mile in any street of London without seeing instances of it, particularly in [the] dress and manner of women, in the things they do, in the words they say." See "Chaperones," *WPP*, 2 March 1889, excerpted in E. S. Riemer and John Fout, eds., *European Women: A Documentary History* (New York: Schocken, 1980) 37 qtd. in Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 68.

Bryher's recommendation is of particularly historical significance regarding Richardson's representation of Englishwomen at the fin de siècle as increasingly disrupting the spatial demarcations of the public and private spheres. Yet aside from previous studies of Richardson's *Pilgrimage* as emblematic of modernist, feminine/feminist writing, there has been little scholarship studying female urbanism in her work. It is not until recent years that studies of the city, space and gender rekindle interests in re-reading Richardson's novels, which represent women's streetwalking and visibility in fin de siècle London's public spaces.

In *The Pilgrimage*, Dorothy Richardson has her heroine Miriam Henderson, a flâneuse exploring fin de siècle London, engage in a new mode of observing the city. The mode of observation employed by Richardson and passed on to her heroine breaks from the often male-dominated, realistic observations coming into dominance since the later half of the nineteenth century in British novels. In her foreword to the 1938 edition of *The Pilgrimage*, Richardson states that she has tried to produce a "feminine realism" in writing her grand novel sequences. Indicating that the tradition of realism has been established by male practitioners such as Honeré de Balzac and Arnold Bennett, Richardson says:

> Since all these novelists happened to be men, the present writer, proposing at this moment to write a novel and looking round for a contemporary pattern, was faced with the choice between following one of her regiments and attempting to produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism. Choosing the latter alternative, she presently set aside . . . . (1938: 9)

In her rather evasive rendition of "the feminine equivalent of masculine realism," Richardson associates it with literary experiments by the French novelist Marcel Proust, who produced "an unprecedentedly profound and opulent reconstruction of experience focused from within the mind of a single individual," with newly-invented terms such as "the stream of consciousness," "interior monologue," and "slow-motion photography," and ultimately with "feminine prose," which is "unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstructions," in *The Pilgrimage* as well as in the novels by Charles Dickens and James Joyce (1938: 10-12).

Richardson's employment of a new mode of observation in *The Pilgrimage* has been explicated by Mary Sinclair, a contemporary British novelist and literary critic. In her 1918 review of the early novel-chapters of *The Pilgrimage*, Sinclair remarks that Richardson "is not the wise, all-knowing author" and "is not concerned in the way that other novelists are concerned with character" (92). The heroine Miriam is "an acute observer, but she is very far from seeing the whole of these people [moving through her world]"; "they are presented to us in the same vivid but fragmentary way in which they appeared to Miriam, the fragmentary way in which people appear to most of us" (Sinclair 92). Besides, praising Richardson for her breaking from realistic conventions, Sinclair famously refers to Richardson's representation of the heroine's fragmented perception as "the stream of consciousness":

> In identifying with this life, which is Miriam's stream of consciousness, Miss Richardson produces her effect of being the first, of getting closer to reality than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close. . . . . It's to Miriam's almost painfully acute senses that we owe

> what in any other novelist would be called the "portraits" of Miriam's mother, of her sister Harriet . . . . (Sinclair 93)

Virginia Woolf is another contemporary critic indicating that Richardson has renovated the way of observing reality in her novels. In her 1919 review of Richardson's *The Tunnel*, the fourth novel-chapter of *The Pilgrimage*, Woolf remarks that Richardson as novelist aware of "the discrepancy between what she has to say and the form provided by tradition for her to say it in" gets so far as to "achieve a sense of reality far greater than that provided by the ordinary means" (15-16). In her 1923 review of Richardson's *The Revolving Lights*, the seventh novel-chapter of *The Pilgrimage*, Woolf says "[there] is no one word, such as romance or realism to cover, even roughly, the works by Miss Dorothy Richardson" and their characteristic is "one for which we still seek a name"(51). Besides, in claiming that Richardson has invented throughout her works "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender," Woolf points to Richardson's gendered way of approaching reality. The sentence Richardson employs is "of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (51). It is also "a woman's sentence, but only in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex" (51).

Both Sinclair's and Woolf's evaluations of Richardson and her novels are used by scholars nowadays to prove that the female novelist has anticipated the many literary innovations of modernism. Employing largely an aesthetical perspective, Sinclair and Woolf indicate that Richardson as novelist has come up with a refined,

feminine way of seeing, representing, and knowing the reality, departing from the previous novelists practicing the rather naïve, unsophisticated methods of realism. However, such a new mode of observation is not exclusively aesthetical or ontological, existing between the observer and the observed *per se*, as Sinclair and Woolf seem to suggest in their reviews of *The Pilgrimage*. It is also exercised against the fin de siècle's London's public spaces in which the heroine Miriam and her mobility are situated.

In *The Pilgrimage,* London embodies spaces of freedom and adventure for the heroine Miriam Henderson, who comes to the city to make her own living as a dental assistant. *The Pilgrimage* does not begin with Miriam's exploration of London until in the opening chapter of *The Tunnel* where the heroine, we are told, finds her lodging place at Mrs. Bailey's in Tansley Street abutting the Bloomsbury square. Driven out of a necessity to support herself by the family's bankruptcy, Miriam has known the toil of labor since her previous work as governess for a wealthy family in North London. Moving out from a largely suburban, bourgeois environment characteristic of both her family before the sudden loss of fortune and the household she has worked for, Miriam during her long residence in London, which lasts for more than one decade, launches into discoveries of a city whose ambience opens vistas she has hardly known before. Unlike life in the suburbs, which Miriam consistently associates with exclusiveness and domesticity typical of the middle-class, living in central London, or more specifically the West End, means to her opening up to people and space of all kinds, making contacts with the crowd, the streets, and public venues such as cafés, restaurants, shops, theaters, and clubs. Thus, settling down in a city which would

prove to be her love for the subsequent years, Miriam perambulates the street in her nightly walk, feeling emancipated:

> Strolling home towards midnight along the narrow pavement of Endsleigh Gardens, Miriam felt as fresh and untroubled as if it were early morning. When she had got out her Hammersmith omnibus into the Tottenham Court Road, she had found that the street had lost its first terrifying impression and had become part of her home. It was the borderland of the part of London she had found for herself; the part where she was going to live, in freedom, hidden, on her pound a week. (II, 29)

Throughout the middle volumes of *The Pilgrimage*, Miriam explores London with such meandering footsteps threading through the streets of the fin de siècle city. At a time when women's streetwalking is still not widely accepted, Miriam, who strolls the street unaccompanied even at night, challenges the gendered norm of streetwalking and claims her right to the space conventionally male-dominated. In a mid-night walk across Piccadilly Circle, Miriam glimpses someone of her acquaintance standing at the island:

> There was a solitary man's figure standing near the kerb, midway on her route across the island to take to the roadway opposite Shaftsbury Avenue; standing arrested; there was no traffic to prevent his crossing; a watchful habitué; she would pass him in a moment, the last fragment of the West End . . . (III, 277)

Miriam's is a last look at the male passenger, reversing the hierarchy of the male spectator and the female spectacle perceived in Charles Baudelaire's poem "À Une

Passante," which is famously cited by Walter Benjamin as the flâneur's experience of modernity. Miriam acts out the experience of a female flâneur, who rambles about the city at night-time, feels "epical" when passing by a man, who was "shocked into helpless inactivity" (III, 277). The man is heading for his home in the suburbia, which is "feminized," while Miriam enjoys streetwalking and navigating the city. Casting a female gaze, Miriam thus embodies the destabilizing power overwhelming the male viewing by the flâneur.

Despite that Miriam is able to look back, the male gaze she encounters nevertheless represents a viewing that tries to eroticize the female body/spectacle and condemns female public walking for its implications of sexual transgression and questionable respectability. The connection of Miriam walking unaccompanied at night with the prostitute is hinted at by her male acquaintance's look of surprise. While embodying female independence and emancipation, the public, unaccompanied walking by Miriam nevertheless invites also the association of her with the "public woman," the object of male, eroticized desire. An association as such manifests also the fin de siècle men's fear of the threatening mobility practiced by female public walking like Miriam's that tends to blur the boundaries between the gentlewoman and the "public woman," the public and private spheres consolidating the order of a male-dominated world.

Throughout *The Pilgrimage,* London as a space is such a metaphor of freedom that Miriam employs to commend the city for its openness and for generating a mobile way of life. Such freedom and pleasure of navigating the city which Miriam and her female contemporaries enjoy in *The Pilgrimage* is largely made possible by

the improvements in the policing and lighting of central London, the extension of mass transport systems like the bus, the tram, and the underground, which women at the turn of the century had known as part of their everyday life. For Miriam, who enjoys navigating the city, London is "a prairie," and the consciousness of being Londoners, with whom she identifies unmistakably in terms of her physical and social positions, is "going out happy," "looking at nothing and feeling everything, like people wandering happily from room to room in a well-known house" (II, 156). Or as Miriam eulogizes, riding through the city on a hansom, one might be momentarily cut off "from all personal difficulties," lifted out right into "the freedom of a throng of happy people," and everyone "was invisible and visionless, united in the spectacle . . . in a brilliant embroidery" (II, 155).

This new anonymous dimension characterizes the collective public appearance of ordinary women in fin de siècle London. For women of earlier decades, unchaperoned public walking on the street is still unusual and subject to criticism by disapproving traditionalists, but with the increasing female public visibility by the end of the nineteenth century, for the first time women walkers are able to benefit from the anonymous qualities offered by the street crowd. This is a new dimension to female streetwalking, since fin de siècle women are appearing *en masse* on the public streets as workers, shoppers, or ramblers, and forming a sizable crowd themselves.

The representation of the crowd as a wholesome part of the cityscape by Richardson distinguishes her from many late-Victorian writers employing a classical, bourgeois perspective upon the fin de siècle city and its jostling pedestrians.[60] Unlike

[60] See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987); Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century*

the crowd representing a contaminating, threatening presence to the city of order and manageability desired by the middle-class in these often male-authored writings of fin de siècle London, the pedestrians in *The Pilgrimage* are represented as indigenous to the city space, forming a collectivity integral to the emergent masses' sphere which Miriam observes and actively takes part in. Employing a plebeian spectatorship, Miriam shows an affinity especially with the proletarian masses, whose experience of the city she finds congenial and manages to represent.

In her letter replying to a friend inquiring about the social position from which the heroine observes her world in *The Pilgrimage*, Richardson refers to Miriam as being ambivalently situated between the middle-class, whose wealthy, leisured life she lived and loved, and the white-collar working people, whose toiling life she now is forced to live. *The Pilgrimage* is, as Richardson indicates, composed of books wherein Miriam, a sympathetic onlooker to the bourgeois working-class life, places herself:

> My books, in their substance, do belong to "the workers," the bourgeois working-class into which M. [Miriam] was pitched headlong without training or suitable preparation, & wherewith she is a sympathetic onlooker. She fails to recognize herself as "a worker," always, though quite unconsciously, assuming that life should be leisure & should be lived in perfect surrounding. (1995*:* 304)[61]

France (New haven: Yale UP, 1981); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard UP, 1995) 73, 222; Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 43-81.

[61] In other places Richardson also clarifies the social position of Miriam as such: "She never completely escapes her earliest house, not the Barnes house represented in the earlier books, but a really spacious habitation, hugely gardened & so high-walled that nothing of the world was visible. She imagined everyone living in this way except servants, & these as known in her house were anything but

This conflict of identities Richardson highlights as unique to Miriam, who has to condescend from her middle-class ambience to survive, though unprepared in every way, as a worker in London is a key to understanding the heroine's often ambivalent views of the city and its people. The displacement Miriam undergoes as both an insider and outsider to the leisured classes enables her to take on, as Richardson suggests, a more sympathetic view of the working people, their life, and the spaces they need to negotiate with throughout daily activities. The financial embarrassment Miriam constantly feels and learns to deal with as an ill-paid clerk thus enables her to sympathize with "the resourceless crowd of London workers," including white-collar workers like her and other no less marginalized denizens "who lived in St. Pancras and Bloomsbury and in Seven Dials and all around Soho and in all the slums and back streets everywhere" (II, 266; III, 313).

Viewed in this light, Richardson's representations of Miriam as a worker, her perspective, and her making use of the city's spaces depart from Virginia Woolf's portrayals of the often leisured viewing and ramble performed by the upper middle-class women throughout her works. A contemporary of Richardson's, Woolf, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, largely represents the wealthy, leisured women's experience of the city, though she does so with a critical view on the experience itself. While Richardson and Woolf both celebrate the city and its wholesome effects upon the female rambler, the former nevertheless addresses particularly the experience lived by urban working people like the clerks or shop girls with whom Miriam identifies in *The Pilgrimage*. Theirs is an experience overlooked

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pitiable, those indoors having marvelous things to play with from which she was excluded, while those in gardens & stables had things still more marvelous."

by canonical modernism and canonical works such as Woolf's that privilege the experience of the dominant classes.

At the fin de siècle, women's use of public spaces is, however, still limited. While managing to walk and avail herself of various kinds of public facilities or spaces in the West End, Miriam does not always find herself welcomed in these facilities or spaces. For example, coming off work one night with gnawing hunger, Miriam wonders if "it was possible to go into a restaurant late at night alone" and "they would even refuse to serve her" if she really finds the dining place (II, 359). Or while walking across the old Bond Street, where male clubs have turned the neighborhood into the male clubland, Miriam, tired of her walk and wanting a place for rest, cannot but think: "Why hadn't she a club down [there]; a neutral territory where she could finish her thoughts undisturbed" (III, 274).

While fin de siècle London where Miriam works, dwells, and strolls is still male-centered, as perceived from the fact that most of the middle-class male characters in *The Pilgrimage* are entitled to professional jobs, better socio-economic positions, and legitimate accesses to public spaces, women nevertheless are seen to negotiate the demarcations of the public and private through walking and participating in an increasingly enlarged public sphere. Female transgression of male-dominated, public sphere is manifested by the many female characters working as clerks (like Miriam), shopkeepers (like her sister Eve), girls in business (like Jan and Meg), philanthropists (like Miss Holland), and suffragettes (like Alma). The numerous unnamed women manifest also female public visibility, who appear *en masse* throughout Miriam's observation of fin de siècle London as shoppers, clubbers, diners,

and visitors to museums, lectures, concerts and theaters. These women are highly contrasted with the conventional home-bound middle-class Englishwomen, whom Miriam considers to be living a "simple, sheltered, domesticated" life (II, 200). The appearance of women like Miriam in fin de siècle London making their own living as clerks, secretaries, or shopgirls is partly because their middle-class families can no longer afford to keep their life in comfort as they used to do. The economic embarrassment felt by the middle-class and particularly the lower-middle-class often drives their unmarried daughters to work, who have been required to play the roles of "the angel in the house" in previous decades. The visibility of these middle-class women workers in the city is also coincident with the development of commercialized public spaces emerging in the fin de siècle period which in turn remap the gendered boundaries of the city.

Consuming Fin de Siècle London

Opposition against female streetwalking faced by Miriam and her female contemporaries lessened when women were increasingly encouraged to enter public space by fin de siècle consumerism, which recognizes female consumers as indispensable to its rapidly expanding enterprises. The rise of commodity culture and the concomitant development of commercialized public spaces in the fin de siècle period paved the way for women claiming their rights to the city. Before this period, public spaces in the city had been nearly male-dominated. With the taverns, pubs, cafés, and clubs catering for men exclusively, there had been hardly resting places for women visiting the city, except the ill-provided pastry-cook's. Thus, catering for particularly female clientele, spaces like department stores, lavatories, cafés,

restaurants, and female clubs emerging in the fin de siècle city contributed remarkably to the increased women's visibility. Women of various classes started to use the female-friendly amenities in the city, participating in the increasingly democratized public sphere and making up a major part of the consuming masses. For middle-class women, to get away from their suburban home and ramble leisurely around the city sight-seeing, shopping or visiting friends means a unique spatial experience linking up female consumption with the enlarged senses of emancipation and freedom. For white-collar women workers increasingly visible in the fin de siècle city, including the female clerks, the shop-girls, and the "girls in business," their visits to places like cafés and teashops after a day's tiresome work might provide as much comfort and pleasure as many other entertaining activities they did in evenings or on Sundays when going around in the city.

While the late nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of female consumers and their joining in a wider, more heterogeneous public sphere, as is indicated above, the significances of these women consumers and their exploration of public spaces nevertheless have been overlooked until the recent years when the scholars start to challenge the construction of a largely male, bourgeois public realm endorsed by the earlier models. Previous studies of the public sphere have been dominated by the approach the German sociologist Jűrgen Habermas employs in his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[62] Habermas famously argues that the

[62] In his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the German sociologist Jűrgen Habermas famously argues that the emergence of new institutions including the print media in the early modern Europe has contributed to the opening up of public affairs to scrutiny by citizens. Although setting up a paradigm for later studies of the public sphere, Habermas has nevertheless been criticized for his over-emphasizing an idealized bourgeois, homogeneous public sphere and overlooking the significance of the mass media that shapes an alternative, proletarian public sphere. For scholars disagreeing with Habermas on his endorsing a bourgeois conception of the public sphere, see Oskar

eighteenth century is a golden age giving birth to the untainted public sphere, constituted by institutions such as the coffee house, the club, the salon, the discussion society, and the yet commercialized press. However, such a "pure" public sphere, according to Habermas, has gone into decline due to the intervening of government regulation and the rising of mass consumption since the late nineteenth century. Mapping out a largely bourgeois domain, Habermas nostalgically evokes the eighteenth-century institutions such as the coffee house, the club, and the salon as the meeting places for the middle-class, where open dialogue and freedom of discussion features a burgeoning liberal public sphere. Habermas's approach thus dominates many later studies employing a rigid, pessimistic view on the development of the public sphere through their joint efforts to deplore the loss of untainted public spaces and castigate the penetration of those spaces by the consuming masses.

Over the past two decades, however, scholars inspired by the cultural approaches have indicated that Habermas's theory fails to address the many alternative public spaces catering for people who do not fit into the category of a white, male, bourgeois subject.[63] Reading against the grain of his theory, feminist scholars argue that the emergence of consuming spaces in the fin de siècle period might not symptomatize the degenerate public sphere, as Habermas claims, but open up possibilities for especially women participating in the increasingly enlarged,

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Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1993); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*; Miriam Hansen, "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity," *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vaneessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: California UP, 1995) 374-84; James Donald and Stephanie Hemelryk, "The Publicness of Cinema," *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000) 114-29.

[63] See Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London: Sage, 1997) 56-91.

egalitarian public sphere. Spaces like department stores, cinemas, female clubs, and many dining places such as cafés and teashops emerging in the fin de siècle city have been thus re-examined and explored as sites registering female pleasure, mobility, and transgression of gendered space.

The emergence of department stores since the later half of the nineteenth century, for instance, significantly paves the way for women asserting themselves as subjects of consumption, leisure, and pleasure. Provided with female cloakrooms, lavatories, and restaurants, the department store is often identified as a feminine space, where women might enjoy purchasing, browsing, window-shopping, dining, and meeting friends.[64] Browsing through those tantalizing commodities displayed by the windows, women as shoppers are the subjects of desire, claiming their rights to the commodity, female independence, and femininity. Department stores like Whiteley's and Liberty's in London's West End thus offered fin de siècle women an opportunity to become leisurely spectators in a new urban landscape, comfortably gazing and reviewing everything on display without having to buy it.

Yet female visibility in fin de siècle consuming spaces means also women's more complicated involvement in public space, commodity culture, and mass consumption. Addressing the paradoxical effects consumerism exercised upon fin de siècle female consumers, scholars nowadays acknowledge that women were emancipated yet subject to newer forms of oppression when entering the spectacular, commercialized spaces. The female shoppers consuming commodities, however, also risk being objectified through the often association of them with spectacles and

[64] See Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London: Sage, 1997) 56-91.

commodities. The fantasy world of consumption creates a defamiliarized world of floating images, detached from material referents, where values and perceptions appear to be in constant flux. This decline of stable referents encourages consumers to retreat into intense personal experience and to seek emotional fulfillment through material consumption. Women are especially vulnerable to these seductions of the purchasing impulse, and the new dream world of consumption exercised a "seduction of women by men," in which women are addressed as yielding objects subordinate to a powerful male subject, who formed and informed their desires (Walkowitz 1992: 48) .

Invaded by the swarms of commodities and women shoppers, fin de siècle London's West End registers such a realm of paradox. In the early nineteenth century, Oxford Street had already been described as a "dazzling spectacle" of "splendidly lit shop fronts" and "alluring and handsome displays" where shops became "exhibitions of fashion."[65] Regent Street, the epicenter of the West End's shopping district, had been considered to be the only spot, "outside the park, where Society people are certain to meet, as smart women would never dream of shopping elsewhere," and the main artery of the West End displaying "all the tempting treasures of luxury trades."[66] Since the later half of the nineteenth century, the rise of commodity culture and mass consumption has further enhanced the image of the West End as the dominant

[65] As the historian Judith Walkowitz writes in her study of female shopping in fin de siècle London: "From a wealthy residential area, the West End of Mayfair and St. James, particularly its main thoroughfares, had been transformed and diversified into the bureaucratic center of empire, the hub of communications, transportation, commercial display, and entertainments. . . . In late-Victorian London, the West End no longer signified the home and fixed reference of the privileged urban flâneur; it became known as a "pleasure of capital" and second business district used by men and women of different classes" (Walkowitz 1998: 2-3).

[66] See Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 9.

shopping area, where sumptuous boutiques, innovative shops, and department stores begin to replace the small grocer's, dry-goods', and draper's stores. With Regent Street, Oxford Street, old and new Bond Streets, the Strand, Piccadilly, Leicester Square, and Tottenham Court Road mapping out the main terrains of fin de siècle West End's shopping district, women increasingly find themselves distracted by the spectacles and displays of commodities while walking and browsing along the street.

The proximity of these shops and emporia to many dining and resting places like teashops, restaurants, cafés, and female clubs in the streets of Regent, Oxford, and Bond means that women as consumers are more than catered for in fin de siècle West End's increasingly commercialized spaces. Together with the recently improved shopping facilities, the public dining places emerging since the 1880s and 1890s were a project of creating a larger consumer's space joined by the entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, and feminists. While male entrepreneurs build up these amenities mostly out of the mercenary consideration, feminists perform the same task to map out a wider women's sphere. The establishment of lavatories, teashops, restaurants, cafés, and clubs catering particularly for women by feminists around the turn of the century provides female consumers with decent and inexpensive venues to rest, dine, and socialize and thus promotes an image of women's consumption positively associated with female freedom and emancipation.

The following sections would thus explore female consumption in fin de siècle London, as is observed and embodied by the heroine Miriam Henderson as consumer in *The Pilgrimage*. Throughout the novel-chapters, activities such as shopping, dining, entertaining, and socializing are represented as indispensable to Miriam and her

female contemporaries increasingly making home at the city as shoppers, diners, or pleasure-seekers. And the West End is the very site where Miriam finds herself catered for by the shops, cafes, restaurants, and female clubs booming in fin de siècle London.

The Female Shopper in the West End

In *The Pilgrimage*, the first narratives about shopping are unfolded through juxtaposing Miriam's past and present experiences of buying hats. Her memory is initiated by a look at the hat she collects and is not exhausted until the same look returns her to the present, her thoughts refreshed by the memory:

> Miriam had once bought a hat in a shop in Kensington. As long as it lasted it had kept for her, whenever she looked at its softly dyed curiously plaited straw, something of the exciting fascination of the shop, the curious faint flat odours of millinery, the peculiar dim warm smell of silks and velvets—silk, China and Japan, silkworms weaving shining thread in the dark. Even when it had become associated with outings and events and shabby with exposure, it remained, each time she took it afresh from its box of wrappings, a mysterious sacred thing; and the soft blending of its colours, the coiled restraint of its shape, the texture of its snuggled trimmings were a support, refreshing her thoughts (I, 407).

Her shopping experience is represented as a process of desire provoking and satisfying. Miriam as a female shopper is the subject of desire, stimulated by her "exciting fascination of the shop" and her fetishistic immersion in the hats prompting exotic imagination. Those haptic, olfactory, and visual manifestations of the shopping

ambience and the commodities arouse and reinforce her fantasy and obsession. Finally, what accomplishes her pleasure and memory of shopping is the ultimate possession of the commodity she desires, a consummation of fetishism and a realization of fantasy.

Miriam's memory is evoked to contrast with her present experience of accompanying the mistress Mrs. Corrie, to whom she works as a governess, to obtain proper hats at one luxury millinery in Regent Street. An upper-middle-class woman, Mrs. Corrie, who resides in North London, is a habitué to West End's high-end shops. Her shopping serves as a contrasting experience, which is poignantly observed by Miriam, who casts a classed as well as gendered look at the commodity, the woman consumer, and female consumption. For Miriam, her mistress does not have the same obsession with shopping as she. Mrs. Corrie does not notice or think of "the bright shops," "the strangely dyed artificial flowers with their curious fascinating smell," and "the strange warm smell of velvet, chenille, and straw," which are all sources of ecstasy enjoyed by Miriam as the humble accompanist (I, 407). Mrs. Corrie only wants to buy hats; the going and the shops "were nothing to her" (I, 408). Their shopping trip is merely one of the numerous visits to Regent Street paid by Mrs. Corrie, who could afford "a hansom, a smart obliging driver with a buttonhole" and "the first-class journey home, the carriage at the station" after shopping is done (I, 410-11).

As women shoppers, Miriam and Mrs. Corrie are starkly contrasted. While Mrs. Corrie in the millinery "stood ruthlessly trying on a hat, talking and trying and discarding, until the collection was exhausted," Miriam as an observer simply sat angrily and admiring, "wondering at the subdued helplessness of the satin-clad

assistant, sorry for the discarded hats lying carelessly about, their glory dimmed" (I, 410). A wealthy, domineering purchaser, Mrs. Corrie contrasts with the observing Miriam, whose envy is much related to her lower social rank, less privileged economic position, and the thus incurred ambivalence toward the commodities and Mrs. Corrie the shopper. Thus, whereas Mrs. Corrie grows excited about trying and discarding the hats, with each hat addressing the large mirror "calling herself a freak, a sketch, a nightmare, a real, real fogey," Miriam, with her "hot tired eyes" finds "the process seemed endless" (I, 410). Miriam, who just looks and could not afford any purchase, casts a proletarian look at the commodities, which is ambivalent in that it signifies both her fetishistic desire and her failure to fulfill it. Beside, as a shopper, Miriam is dwarfed by not only her inferior economic power but also her shabbiness, that is, her failing to dress herself in a more fashionable way, as the richly dressed Mrs. Corrie and the elegantly attired shopgirl do. Miriam is pained by the shining appearances of Mrs. Corrie and her attendant and "their united contemplation of her brown stuff dress" and "her brown straw hat," whose plainness reduces her femininity as well as self-complacency (I, 411). In this sense, Miriam's look is further complicated by the gendered concerns, for it associates feminine commodities, female bodies, and femininity in the contemplation. Those fashionable women's hats, the female bodies well decorated like Mrs. Corrie's and the shopgirl's, and the femininity associated with such decoration all mark the boundaries between the wealthy female shopper and the humble one.

Their shopping trip ends up with a brief window-shopping done by Miriam alone, who has the liberty of streetwalking and browsing Regent Street while Mrs.

Corrie retreats to the neighboring flat occupied by her friend Mrs. Kronen. The fatigue Miriam has experienced at the hat shop gradually vanishes. Walking along the "wide golden streaming Regent Street," where there are no "vulgar bun-shops," Miriam feels that with every step "she could fly" and finds the radiant pavement of sunlit Regent Street "a pavement of heaven" (I, 411, 416). In her ecstatic perambulation, Miriam glimpses at the various objects on display in the shop windows:

> Shops passed by, bright endless caverns screened with glass . . . the bright teeth of a grand piano running along the edge of a darkness, a cataract of light pouring down its raised lid; forests of hats; dresses, shining against darkness, bright headless crumpling stalks; sly, silky, ominous furs; metals, cold and clanging, brandishing the light; close prickling fire of jewels . . . strange people who bought these things, touched and bought them. (I, 417)

Corresponding to the natural splendor of the sunlit, afternoon Regent Street, the brightness of those objects, even amplified by the glass and the artificial light, dazzles Miriam the looker. Miriam's admiring gaze at those luxury goods such as hats, dresses, furs, metals, and jewels is accompanied by her poignant awareness of the distance between the people watching them and the "strange people who bought these things, touched and bought them." It is a distance between the West-End people, "their clothes, their carriages and hansoms, their clean bright spring-filled houses, their restaurants and the theatres waiting for them," and Miriam, who rejoices simply that "the mysterious something behind their faces, was hers" (I, 419). It is remarkably also a distance between the well-to-do suburban lady purchaser like Mrs. Corrie or a Mrs.

Kronen, who occupies "a wonderful West-End flat" and "went regularly to good hat shops," and Miriam, who could just browse the shop windows (I, 407, 412). Besides, Miriam's "just looking" is propelled and facilitated by the modern, democratizing way of displaying commodities commonly employed by the shops as well as the department stores of Regent Street, which "was Salviati's" and "Liberty's" (I, 419). While representing freedom of view to Miriam as looker, these shop windows nevertheless mark also the limit of not only her physical access, which is only possible through touching and purchasing, but also that of her desire, which is stimulated by the fetishistic look yet unrealized by the failure to possess the desired objects.

The dinginess and financial embarrassment of Miriam as shopper is further explicated in the later volumes of *The Pilgrimage*, when she begins to work as dental assistant in central London, who lives on "her pound a week." While enjoying navigating the city anonymously and having pleasure at inexpensive eating places, Miriam nevertheless finds it hard pressed to swagger down the shopping streets where both the commodities and the shoppers appear to mock at her resourcelessness. Perambulating in the Strand with her girl friends, Mag and Jan, after their habitual tête-à-tête at a restaurant, Miriam finds:

> They [Mag and Jan] marched along at a great rate, very upright and swift—like grenadiers—why grenadiers? Like grenadiers, making her hurry in a way that increased the discomfort of her hard cheap down-at-heel shoes. Their high-heeled shoes were in perfect condition and they went on and on, laughing and jesting as if there were no spring

> evening all round them. She wanted to stroll, and stop at every turn of the road. She grew to dislike them long before Kenneth Street was reached, their brisk gait as they walked together in step, leaving her to maneuver the passing of pedestrians on the narrow pavements of the side streets, the self-confident set of their this-season's clothes, 'line' clothes, like everyone else was wearing, every one this side of the West End; Oxford Street clothes . . . . (II, 152)

A comparison of Miriam and her girl friends as shoppers is made through the former's associating streetwalking with the military march and the ramblers with grenadiers, whose ability to walk confidently is decided by their capability as consumers. The lack which Miriam's gaze signifies does not derive from a look at conspicuous consumption by the well-to-do women shoppers but from a look at ordinary consumption practiced by working women like Miriam and her friends.

The fact that women go shopping in *The Pilgrimage* mostly for their own sake corresponds to a transition in the fin de siècle period from a purposeful, family-oriented consumption carried out by most Victorian women shoppers before the prevalence of mass consumption and commodity culture to women's consumption for pleasure or female beauty. For Mrs. Corrie, who does not want "a silly hat" and would like to buy "a really lovely teapot or a Bartolozzi or somethin'," her frequent visits to Regent Street through the help of "a hansom, a smart obliging driver with a buttonhole" register the wealthy woman shopper's cartography of consumption, which is largely classed, leisure-oriented, and involved with the construction of an active female consumer (I, 410-11). By contrast, Miriam's window-shopping in the

West End's main streets, which places her in the position of a distracted consumer and exposes her "personal dinginess" and "resourcelessness in a strong resourceful world," is a female gaze at the tantalizing commodities exercised by the lower-middle-class woman shopper (II, 392-93).

It is also notable that Mrs. Corrie's shopping experience is typical of many upper- and middle-class women in the late-nineteenth-century England. Inhabiting the suburbs, those wealthy, leisured women shoppers availed themselves of private carriages such as victorias and hansoms to have access to fashionable shops or department stores in the city, greatly reducing the necessity of streetwalking and avoiding street harassments that public walking may expose them to.[67] Besides, walking the shopping districts of fin de siècle London's West End, upper-middle-class women like Mrs. Corrie still have to distinguish themselves from the streetwalkers, whose walking is sometimes not easily identifiable just through the attire they take on.

On the contrary, the streetwalking performed by Miriam and her confidantes as female shoppers are more likely to push at the boundaries prescribed by the separate spheres ideology prevalent in the Victorian age than that performed by the well-to-do women shoppers. Without the help of private vehicles, Miriam and her friends employ public transportation such as buses or simply walk to do their business. In either case, they are much more exposed to and able to mix with the increasingly heterogeneous urban crowd and space in the fin de siècle period. Besides, limited by their budget,

[67] As the historian Judith Walkowitz argues in her study of female shopping in late-Victorian London: "Despite the development of Oxford Street as middle-class marketplace, the emporia of Bond Street and Regent Street retained their small scale and aristocratic tone; their architecture, interior design, sales technique, advertising 'reflected a notion of fixed and class-specific market'; entering the luxury shops might have presented a social challenge even to middle-class women, but they and their humble sisters could still catch the bus into town, walk down Regent Street and gaze to shop windows, and thus partake in the 'Londoners' ability to enjoy things without buying them" (Walkowitz 1998: 5).

these working women map out an alternative cartography of shopping which does not have the aristocratic Regent or Bond Street as the center but other more "common" shopping areas, where the female shopper could also have accesses to the emerging cafés, restaurants, or tea shops.

Women in Cafés and Clubs

In *The Pilgrimage*, Miriam's visits to an ABC,[68] one of the chain cafés emerging in fin de siècle London, register female transgression of the largely male-dominated eating establishments. Coming off work, Miriam walks along the Strand, where "most of the shops were still open" and there were theatres "linking it up with the West End," and finds the district "more like the City with its many sudden restaurants" (II, 75). Driven by hunger, Miriam manages to look for one out of those "many sudden restaurants," which her humble earnings could afford. She finds ultimately "an A. B. C. appeared suddenly at her side, its panes misty in the cold air":

> She went confidently in. It seemed nearly full of men. Never mind, City men; with a wisdom of their own which kept them going and did not affect anything, all alike and thinking the same thoughts; far away from anything she thought or knew. She walked confidently down the centre, her plaid-lined golf-cape thrown back, her small brown boat-shaped felt hat suddenly hot on her head in the warmth. (II, 75-76)

The place Miriam puts her foot in is a chain café, one of fin de siècle London's public dining spaces, cheap and respectable, and growing rapidly to meet the increased demands of the swarming urban habitués. Entering the café after "the strange, rich,

[68] The Aerated Bread Company (known as A. B. C.) was founded in the 1880s and expanded at a phenomenal rate thereafter.

difficult day" working at the dentist's, Miriam feels "her untouched self here, free, unseen, and strong" (II, 76). The café, in its "dark lit wilderness," is perceived by Miriam as providing the same freedom and anonymity as the streets, which accommodate the "strong free untouched people, going about the streets looking at nothing, thinking about no special person or thing" (II, 76). Not intimidated by a swarm of male diners, Miriam sits down as if "she were the guest of the City men" and eats her boiled egg and roll and butter "in that spirit" (II, 76).

As with many other public spaces Miriam explores in *The Pilgrimage*, the male-dominated café manifests manifold cultural significances regarding the gendered formation of fin de siècle London's public space. Located near the City, the hub of the world's finance, the café Miriam visits is frequented mostly by the businessmen, who are largely male professionals or semi-professionals aspiring upward mobility. The appearance of those businessmen in the public dining space highlights the male dominance over the fields of professional work, which has until the early twentieth century generally excluded women. Such dominance, as the quoted passage indicates above, reinforces the long-held male privileged access to eating houses like pubs, coffee houses, and here the emerging chain cafés.

However, a female intrusion like Miriam's into a dining place that used to be male-dominated marks a significant destabilization happening by the turn of the century to the conventionally gendered demarcation of public spaces. The ABCs Miriam frequents were one of the new chains of cheap but respectable cafés and restaurants that sprang up to serve fin de siècle London's new customers, catering for especially female shoppers, workers, and pleasure-seekers emerging in central

London. In a city well-known for its unsanitary and poor-quality food and the masculine culture of its pubs and eating houses, these new teashops were designed to appeal to unaccompanied women like Miriam.[69] That Miriam and her girl friends often use chain cafés like ABCs or Lyons as places for refreshment, relaxation, and private talk reveals that women as white-collar workers, shoppers, and pleasure-seekers in the fin de siècle period have started to push at the boundary of spaces traditionally occupied by men.

The sense of emancipation felt by Miriam, who finds the café a place of comfort, is endorsed by her approving attitude toward women's participation in popular pleasure and public space. Miriam's approval of female pleasure is particularly manifested by an episode on the night trip to a café made by Miriam and her roommate, Miss Holland, who initially shows a "horrified resistance" against the idea of "going out in search of coffee" at late hours (III, 426). In their visit to Donizetti's, Miriam, who "sat back upon her red velvet sofa evidently enjoying the adventure," has a sympathetic look at those who find also shelter and happiness in that space:

> The place was not crowded. Every one there was distinctly visible—the lonely intent women in gaudy finery, the old men fêting bored, laughing girls who glanced about; the habitués, solitary figures in elderly bondage to the resources of the place. (III, 427)

Identifying with her fellow pleasure-seekers, Miriam feels at home in her "little haunt" and makes interesting observations on "all sorts of queer people" around her

[69] See Scott McCracken, "From Performance to Public Sphere: The Production of Modernist Masculinities," *Textual Practice* 15.1 (2001): 47-65

(III, 427). On the contrary, her accompanist Miss Holland, who could "never expand to the atmosphere," would always sit "upright and insulated," "making formal conversation," and "decorously busy with the small meal" (III, 427). Unlike Miriam, who gives a favorable view of her surroundings, Miss Holland sees "only material for pity and disgust" and sees "only morally" (III, 427). Miss Holland's is largely an edifying perspective on women's transgression of space and unchecked pursuit of pleasure, as she refers to her imagined horror of being seen "sitting [there]" and "at such an hour" (III, 427).

While through seeing morally Miss Holland might represent a reserved attitude toward mass pleasure that the café embodies and especially toward women's taking part in it, there are nevertheless other people, like Miriam, considering the café to be an essential venue for urban distraction. In her visit to Ruscino's, a café providing "continental food and wine" and "the solid, filmy, thrilling music," Miriam reflects:

> She could understand a life that spent all its leisure in a café; every day ending in warm brilliance, forgetfulness amongst strangers near and intimate, sharing the freedom and forgetfulness of the everlasting unchanging café, all together in a common life. It was like a sort of dance, everyone coming and going poised and buoyant, separate and free, united in the freedom. It was a heaven, a man's heaven, most of the women were there with men, somehow watchful and dependent, but even they were forced to be free from troublings and fussings whilst they were there . . . the wicked cease from the troubling and the weary are at rest . . . (II, 394).

Accompanied by her Jewish friend Mr. Mendizabal, "a habitué" to cafés, Miriam finds herself among a group of "wicked happy people" seeking pleasure after the day's tiring work (II, 394). The café is, as Miriam observes, a space catering for the emerging consuming masses constituted significantly, though not exclusively, by the urban working people needing to have pastimes to fend off daily tiredness and boredom. Women are recognized there by Miriam as happily taking a rest from their everyday routines. Yet despite its apparently hetero-sexual ambience, the café, as Miriam perceives, is nevertheless a male-dominated space, since it was "a man's heaven" and "most of the women were there with men," without whom the female patrons might not always find themselves welcomed when visiting alone or in pairs.

For women exploring the city unchaperoned in fin de siècle London, female clubs booming in the West End might provide an alternative venue. Women's clubs prospering in big cities such as London since the 1880s and 1890s have made possible the middle-class women's accesses to social and intellectual lives which have long been the male privilege in previous decades. Before the 1880s, the club life was almost known only to the gentlemen who found the club a venue of entertainment, society, and intellectual discussion.[70] The prosperity of women's clubs and many clubs allowing both ladies and gentlemen in the 1890s West End has greatly re-mapped the boundary of the male-dominated public space. The development of

[70] In her study of the nineteenth-century street as a spatial representation of gendered identities, Jane Rendell indicates that since the early nineteenth century the West End had been predominantly a site of male fashion, with its thoroughfares playing an integral part in producing a public display of heterosexual, upper-class masculinity. As Rendell writes, along with theaters, coffee houses, operas, hotels, Bond Street, St. James's Street, Pall Mall and Piccadilly, and many of the minor streets in the West End were lined with exclusive clubs or bachelor chambers catering for only single men of the nobility and gentry. See Jane Rendell, "Displaying Sexuality: Gendered Identity and the Early Nineteenth-Century Street," *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity, and Control in Public Space* (London: Routledge, 1998) 79-81.

London's female clubs in the later half of the nineteenth century has since its beginning had subtle liaison with the burgeoning consumer capitalism. From the establishment of the first women's club, the Berners Club, in Langham Place in the 1860s to the mushrooming of female clubs in fin de siècle West End's high streets, one of the main purposes of such an institution has been to make possible women's access to a larger public sphere. Through offering women a legitimate and comfortable place to rest, dine, and socialize, fin de siècle feminists and entrepreneurs are thus apparently united in their pursuit of a larger female public, though the latter attempt to do so mostly out of the mercenary consideration.

The early women's clubs are founded by feminists, with a view to providing the upper- and middle-class women with a place to stay in during their visit to the city, when most of the eating places cater for men exclusively and the services open to women are limited and poorly provided. In her 1871 article urging for the building of women's clubs, Frances Power Cobbe, a feminist journalist and co-founder of the Berners Club, complained about the lack of decent amenities for women perambulating, shopping, or sight-seeing in the city. According to her, women who come to the city for business or pleasure were perpetually driven to seek rest and refreshment in "those miserable refuges of feminine distress, the confectioner's shops" or to "a greasy pastry cooker's counter."[71] Believing that inexpensive accommodations would help bring women into the public sphere, Cobbe called for the establishment of female clubs that both served "the wants of [women's] body" and

[71] See Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 88

provided "facilities for improving their minds."[72]

Comments as such were echoed by later feminists who were not obviously against fin de siècle consumerism and were inclined to believe that in creating a consumer's space, the clubs would broaden women's access to the public sphere. Almost two decades after Cobbe arguing for establishing clubs as facilities catering for women navigating the city, Amy Levy in her 1888 article "Women and Club Life" was able to celebrate fin de siècle West End as terrain of female clubs and their wholesome effects on women playing active roles in an enlarged public sphere. For Levy, female clubs prospering around the turn of the century meet the increased desire for "a corporate life, a wider human fellowship, and a richer social opportunity" shared by women of various classes, who in class-room and lecture-theatre, office and art school, college and club-house alike, are "waking up to a sense of the hundred and one possibilities of social intercourse" (Levy 213). The clubs, as Levy maintains, are sober and business-like haunts enough, "to which no dutiful wife or serious-minded maiden need feel shamed of belonging" (217). As well as those providing middle-class women with "the dignity of a club-house," high quality accommodation, and lavishly decorated rooms, there are clubs for working women offering "a small but daintily-furnished set of rooms" and "simple meals at moderate charges" (Levy 216). Thus, the suburban high-school mistress, in town for a day's shopping or picture-seeing, might exchange here "the discomfort of the pastrycook's or the costliness of the restaurant for the comforts of a quiet meal and a quiet read or chat in the cosy club precincts" (Levy 217). The busy woman journalist could also rest here

[72] Ibid.

"from her labors of 'private viewing,' strengthening herself with tea and newspapers before setting out for fresh lands to conquer" (Levy 217). There are also clubs for women from all classes of society, which aim at "combining the usual advantages of the club proper with those of the class or college" through organizing debates, lectures, and social evenings for the benefits of their members (Levy 217).

In spite of the subtle differences regarding their appeals to women members, these clubs in fin de siècle London, Levy argues, constitute for especially the middle-class women "a haven of refuge," where they can write their letters and read the news, "undisturbed by the importunities of a family circle, who can never bring itself to regard feminine leisure and feminine solitude as things to be respected" (Levy 215). These female clubs are also a venue of leisure or social intercourse, where "ladies can entertain their friends of both sexes, make appointments, or merely pass the time pleasantly in the perusal of periodical literature" at the comfortable reading-room or library (Levy 215). Last but not least, female clubs, as Levy stresses, through providing "a level platform of intercourse" offer the most substantial advantages to the greatly increasing professional women, who need to compete with a guild of craftsmen all more or less known to one another, bound together by innumerable social links (218).

In *The Pilgrimage*, the first mention of a women's club is made by Miriam when walking alone one night from the old Bond Street to Piccadilly. The black-coated, elderly men passing by draw attention of Miriam, who identifies these men in their evening dress as "wrapped in their world" and "going home to the small encirclement of clubs and chambers" (III, 273). Knowing that it is the terrain of the

male clubland she traverses, Miriam, tired of walking, cannot but think: "Why hadn't she a club down [there]; a neutral territory where she could finish her thoughts undisturbed?" (III, 274). Narratives as such might appear to confirm the male clubber's long-held dominance over the city's social and entertaining space, if we follow the conventional mapping of streets of Bond and St. James, Piccadilly, and Pall Mall as terrains for clubs catering for exclusively the upper- and middle-class men. Yet Miriam's is more likely a complaint about her failure to choose as her own one of the female clubs booming in this area, when we follow the revisionist cartography of fin de siècle West End's public spaces made by recent feminist scholars.[73]

Miriam indeed has a club of her own. Her visit to the Belmont club is made on one Saturday afternoon, when tired of the weekday's work and the stifling domesticity of her lodging place, she finds that to go out for tea offers the advantages of being "refreshed" and temporarily "cut off from fixed circumstances," and "[sitting] at leisure in an undisturbed world" (III, 416). The Belmont club is where Miriam, accompanied by her roommate Miss Holland, seeks "laughter and relaxation" (III, 416). Entering the club, Miriam finds it a place catering exclusively for the pleasure of its women users. In the large drawing-room, she observes, women are "half hidden in the depths of easy chairs," engaging in "the low murmuring of conversation" (III, 418). Taking her seat, Miriam finds herself surrounded by "a roomful of independent strangers," who, like her, feel "in company, enriched" in the freedom of a "neutral territory" (III, 418). The club is represented unmistakably as a feminine space, which

[73] See Lynne Walker, "Home and Away: The Feminist Remapping of Public and Private Space in Victorian London," *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2001) 296-311.

middle-class women use for refreshment, private talk, and socialization.

As is indicated above, the streets of the late-nineteenth-century London which Miriam perambulates have seen teashops or cafés catering for both men and women, yet not all of them open their doors to women navigating the city unchaperoned or in pairs.[74] In this sense, the female club like the Belmont's provides an alternative resting place for the female explorer of the city, who may not always find herself welcomed in the male-dominated dining spaces. Seen in this light, the rise of female clubs, along with many women-managed tea shops and eating places emerging in the fin de siècle period,[75] could be interpreted as an effort by women to actively construct a female-friendly public space and thus to negotiate the city's gendered spaces. The proximity of these centrally located female clubs to the shopping streets of Oxford, Bond, and Regent and other entertaining facilities like cinemas mushrooming in the turn-of-century West End further proves that women have become the major patrons of mass commodities and enjoyed themselves in the city as not only ramblers but also consumers and pleasure-seekers.

Dorothy Richardson and Her Film Criticism

With the rise of mass consumption and public space in the early twentieth century, women going to the cinema were indeed subjects observing a wider public

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[74] As Rappaport indicates, even though restaurant dining had become a fashionable pastime since the Savoy Hotel opened in the Strand in 1889, the hotel nevertheless established a rule that unescorted women were not permitted. Likewise, the Trocadero Restaurant owned by John Lyons, the founder of Lyons chain teashops, had a written code excluding "strange ladies" from being admitted when they were alone or in pairs. See Rappaport 105.

[75] In London by the late nineteenth century there were many teashops, restaurants, clubs and shops managed by well-educated well-to-do women that catered especially to women who either work, shop, or simply take a pleasurable walk in the city. "The Dorothy," for instance, was a successful women's only restaurant established by a Girtin girl in the 1888 to serve women workers, students, and "weary" shopper.

sphere. As contemporary surveys indicate, women have constituted a significant part of the British cinema-going population as late as the 1920s.[76] The development of the motion picture house's design from the early years of the twentieth century into the 1920s has made cinema-going more comfortable and appealing to the consuming masses. The luxurious, extravagantly decorated auditoria, the plush seats, the rich decorative scheme adopting the style of department stores and the air-conditioned environment surrounded by the synchronized sound system all make cinema-going a more entertaining experience.

Indulging in popular pleasure, women cinema-goers including the girl student, the working woman, and the bourgeois housewife with or without small children go to the motion pictures to escape the harsh reality of daily life and to seek the fantasy provided by stars and dream-like images. For women satisfying the escalating need for female work force in the early-twentieth-century city, cinema-going offers a momentary relief from the day's tiresome, heavy work. For married women laboring through housekeeping and childrearing, going to the pictures means not only seeking pleasure but also taking a rest from the humdrums of housework and motherhood. Addressing the early cinema as a new social space for women, the film historian Miriam Hansen thus comments:

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[76] As is indicated by Lant and Periz, fan mails submitted mostly by women cinema-goers have been employed by British journalism as indicator of their attendance until the mid 1930s, when studios and other organizations conducted more "scientific" surveys. These mails show at least that the female gender makes up an important part of the viewing population, considering that women cinema-goers are more willing to voice their opinions than men cinema-goers. See Antonia Lant and Ingrid Periz, eds., *Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema* (London: Verso, 2006) 36. Using the first systematic surveys as evidence, Jeffrey Richards in his study of cinema-going in the 1930s Britain indicates that "of the married, women go more often than their husbands" and that "while there is a large proportion of the population at large went to the cinema occasionally, the enthusiasts were young, working-class, urban and more often female than male" (13, 15). See Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London: Routledge, 1989) 11-33.

> More than any other entertainment form, the cinema opened up a space—a social space as well as a perceptual, experiential horizon—in women's lives, whatever their marital status, age, or background. The movies offered women a more casual participation in the world of entertainments, an experience that could easily be incorporated into a variety of everyday itineraries and at the same time, a relief from the monotony of housework. Thus, married women would drop into a movie theater on their way home from a shopping trip, a pleasure indulged in just as much by women of the affluent classes. Schoolgirls filled the theaters during much of the afternoon, before returning to the folds of familial discipline. And young working women would find in the cinema an hour of diversion after work, as well as an opportunity to meet men. (1991: 117)

The fact that women have become major patrons is also discernible from the exhibitors' various endeavors to promote or cater for the needs of the emergent female cinema-goers, such as making the cinema a more respectable venue to stay in, providing a crying room and a checkroom for mothers with infants or small children, offering matinees, and launching advertisements addressing particularly female clientele.[77] Besides, fan culture promoted by magazines, journals, trade papers, and advertisements aiming particularly at female cinema-goers indicates unfailingly that

[77] The exhibitors of the 1910s and 1920s were aware that the female audience had constituted a great part of the viewing population. See Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton UP, 2000); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1983); Elizabeth Ewan, *Immigrant Women in the land of Dollars: Life and Culture in the Lower Easter Side, 1890-1925* (New York: Monthly Review, 1985); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1986).

women have played a significant part in the making of cinema-going as popular pleasure and mass consumption.[78]

Women's cinema-going in the early twentieth century registers not only the emergence of the cinema as feminine form of pleasure but also female participation in the recently enlarged public space. Cinema-going as popular pleasure providing city dwellers or city travelers with entertainment, relaxation, and relief has flourished along with the concurrent development of public space and mass consumption. Particularly for women working, shopping, or simply seeking pleasure in the city, going to the cinema is a unique spatial experience linking their exploration of various kinds of public spaces with mass consumption and popular pleasure. As the writings in many film journals and magazines of this period testify, cinema-going has become an enjoyable activity for women, integrating entertainment with fashion, socializing and shopping.[79] Facilitated by the abundance of eating establishments like restaurants, cafés, and tea shops, and of venues like shopping streets and department stores, cinema-going in the early-twentieth-century city offers women a greater access to public space and a more legitimate way to assert female visibility and pleasure.[80]

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[78] For studies on women's involvement in the early cinema's fan culture, see Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon*; Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991); Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gaylyn Studlar, "The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse as Women's Commodified Culture in the 1920s" *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Athlone, 1996) 263-98.

[79] For a collection of articles on women's cinema-going excerpted from the film journals and magazines of the 1910s through 1940s, see Antonia Lant and Ingrid Periz, eds., *Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema*. See also Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Women: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indian UP, 2004); Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon*.

[80] For more on women's cinema-going in the early twentieth century as disrupting the separate spheres, see Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991); Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1998); Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1995).

Besides, like other decent, female-friendly public spaces for women navigating the city, the cinema gradually becoming a respectable place of leisure has been regarded as an appropriate space even for the middle-class women as late as the 1930s.[81]

Over the past decades, studies of the early cinema by mass cultural critics have tended to assume that the spectators consuming cinematic fantasies are minor, passive viewers and that their viewing is insignificant and ignorable.[82] Representing a pessimistic, disapproving attitude toward various forms of mass culture, critical theorists of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Siegfried Kracauer criticize the production of cinemas for endorsing a capitalist, hegemonic power over the masses. Highlighting that mass culture exerts a regressive influence on the general public, these opponents of mass consumption subscribe to a hierarchy of cultural communication in which mass goods such as cinema, radio, and popular fiction predominate their users. These critics of mass culture consider that the cinema is a means of cultural manipulation and that the spectator is hopelessly vulnerable to its domineering influence. Hence, the spectator, like any other consumer of mass commodities, occupies a rather pale position in these critics' construction of a "top-down" relation between the producer and the consumer, which presupposes that

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[81] For women of the middle-class, going to the motion picture house in the early 1910s was still considered improper. However, as theater owners grew eager to make cinema-going a respectable activity, going to the movies had become an approved leisure activity for middle-class women as late as the 1930s. Scholars such as Hansen, Stamp, and Conor all indicate that the upward mobility of the cinema through the efforts of entertainment entrepreneurs eager to make cinema-going a respectable, bourgeois activity in the 1910s and 1920s has made middle-class women's cinema-going more acceptable. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film;* Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon*; Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Women: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*.

[82] See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,"*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1994) 120-67; Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995).

the spectator addicted to anesthetic, visual stimuli is a collection of undistinguishable, passive, and easily-duped audiences.

Such assumption is underpinned by a culturally pessimistic, male-dominated perspective overlooking the significances of the mass viewers and particularly women viewers as consumers employing cinema-going and cinema-viewing as cultural practices.[83] On the one hand, to claim that the mass viewers are easily manipulated "dupes," as theorists of mass culture used to, is to downplay the agency of the viewer as consumer and to attribute femininity and passivity as negative tropes to cinema as mass consumption, to which the female viewer is supposed to be more susceptible and addictive than her male counterpart. On the other hand, to fail to acknowledge that women going to the early cinema have shown their ability to negotiate public space is to be blind to the historical significance as regards the destabilization of the "separate spheres" in the fin de siècle period.

However, feminist film historians have recently begun to tackle female

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[83] The 1970s witnessed a significant revision of these earlier "mass cultural" approaches to popular consumption. Led by Stuart Hall, who chairs the institute of Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, scholars such as Paul Willis, Dick Hebdige, Tony Jefferson, and Angela McRobbie begin to devote themselves to uncovering the possibilities of resistance carried out by the masses in their everyday consumption. Departing from earlier approaches stressing the masses as the passive consumer, their studies foreground the appropriation and active use by the mass consumer. Together with the revision of the consumer's role going on throughout the 1970s and 1980s studies of mass consumption, there has been a re-examination of everyday consumption as a cultural event and the significance it could produce. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a 1984 book by the French cultural critic Michel de Certeau, is a landmark study on everyday consumption as a significant cultural practice. According to de Certeau, popular culture exhibits a "consumer production," in which our everyday consumption, being devious, dispersing, and insinuating itself everywhere silently and almost invisibly, manifests itself "through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order" (xiii). Emphasizing the consumer's "tactical" appropriations in his/her apparently trivialized daily consumption, de Certeau's theory elevates the consumer to the position of the producer, whose everyday activities such as shopping, reading, television- or film-watching, and walking manifest his/her subtle yet effective resistance. See Colin MacCabe, "Defining Popular Culture," *High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986) 1-10; James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger, "Six Artistic Cultures," *Modernity and Mass Culture* (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1991) 1-23; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkley: California UP, 1984).

spectatorship as a specific social and historical construct. Studying women's cinema-going in the early twentieth century, scholars such as Miriam Hansen, Patrice Petro, and Anke Gleber indicate that female spectatorship could hardly be elucidated by earlier textual, determinist models but by a new paradigm examining female viewing as a gendered, cultural practice exercised in the context of the cinematic and the extra-cinematic.[84] Historicizing the female spectator, these scholars challenge assumptions of spectatorship established by previous male-dominated discourses on cinematic pleasure. Indicating that theories by male critics at best overlook the gender difference concerning cinematic spectatorship and at worst "corroborate the inherently masculine economy of film technology and spectatorship," Petro suggests that "women were indeed situated differently from men with respect to the image and to structures of looking" (58-59). Associating female spectatorship with women's flânerie "on the screens and streets," Gleber underscores that cinema as an emerging social space and visual medium encourages an active female gaze and scopic pleasure indulged by women strolling the new public space as well. Thus, the figure of the female flâneur-spectator "goes beyond the cultural construction of women as an image wherein she exists primarily to be looked at, offered as a visual commodity to the consuming male spectator" (Gleber 188). Arguing that earlier feminist film critics have highlighted the power of patriarchal coding at the cost of its complicated historical implementation, Hansen considers female spectatorship, contextualized by the development of public space, commodity culture, and mass entertainment, to be a

[84] See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*; Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*; Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989).

site of ambivalence registering "at once the containment and empowerment of the female gaze, of female desire in general." (1991: 122).

Their studies reveal that in addition to consuming cinematic spectacles, the female spectator takes part in the emerging public space, mass consumption, and popular pleasures and that her spectatorship negotiates the complicated visual cultures characteristic of the early twentieth century. Besides, historicizing and contextualizing concepts such as identification, fantasy, and women's pleasure, which has been renounced by previous feminist film critics, these scholars argue that female spectatorship exhibits women's active, if not always positive, participation in and appropriation of the emerging commoditized, visual cultures. Stressing that female spectatorship has been complicated by stardom, fan culture, mass commodity, and a wider, alternative public space for women, these scholars re-imagine the female spectator as a social and cultural subject, whose textual viewings are closely and often paradoxically connected to her subjectivity.

The coincidental development of the film industry and women's streetwalking in the early twentieth century cities had endowed "the female spectator" with a double meaning. On the one hand, these earlier female cinema-goers are the very antecedents of "the female spectator" haunting feminist film theories over recent decades. On the other hand, female ramblers consuming urban spectacles in the street of the early twentieth century are no less capable spectators of a volatile and multiply represented urban space. One of the first British female practitioners of stream-of-consciousness novel-writing, Dorothy Richardson is also a rambler and spectator in London of the 1920s and 1930s. For six years Richardson contributes regularly to *Close Up*, a film

journal published between 1927 and 1933.[85] In her column "Continuous Performance," a title suggesting the rapid flow and untiring display of the film's images, Richardson, a critical spectator, comments on the socio-cultural aspects of film-watching and the aesthetical, technical innovations of film as an art form. That film-watching is an important cultural, metropolitan activity providing entertainment, civilization and cosmopolitan vision, and that filmic spectatorship is a complex interaction of the viewer, diegetic effects and the cinema as an alternative public space, are both persuasively argued by Richardson throughout her film criticism. Examining Richardson's comments on cinematic spectatorship in her long-ignored film criticism, this chapter will thus explore Richardson as a pioneering film critic to address cinema-viewing as a significant cultural, metropolitan, and perceptual activity, and women's cinematic spectatorship as involving particularly gender, urban space, and female pleasure in the 1920s and 1930s.

Cinema/Cinema-going as Popular Pleasure

As an entertaining apparatus, cinema has begun to catch the eye of the masses since the late nineteenth century. In their crude, primitive form, those "motion pictures" were mostly brief, non-feature variety shows entertaining the populace at nickelodeons. Throughout the early twentieth century, however, the advancement of cinematic technology has been such that cinema-goers enjoyed enhanced visual pleasure and for the first time exposed themselves to the dream-like effects now generally credited with modern cinema-making. During the early decades of the

[85] *Close Up* distinguishes itself as one of the several film journals published in the 1920s and 1930s which provide forums for debate for the mainly middle-class intellectuals who are concerned to see the development and potential of film as an emerging art form. See Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003).

century the cinema experienced a remarkable expansion.[86] By 1914 the number of cinemas in Britain was estimated at 4,000 with a weekly audience of seven to eight million. The audiences attending these movies house were composed predominantly of women, young people, and children. With the "talkies" coming into trend in the late 1920s, cinema as a medium incorporating the visual and audio has achieved further unparalleled popularity. The late 1920s and 1930s saw an unprecedented increase in the number of audiences consuming cinematic fantasies and those providing them. Besides, as late as the 1930s, equipped with a cluster of producers, distributors, and exhibitors, the cinema industry, running on a capitalist basis, started to boost its production nationwide and internationally.

In Richardson's time, when moving pictures were becoming one popular entertainment and attracting especially the masses of metropolises such as London, conservatives employing a moral, elitist perspective nevertheless failed to appreciate the democratizing potentials of the cinema as cultural apparatus and venue of popular pleasure. Instead, they repudiated cinema for being an inferior, immoral art form wielding unwholesome influence over the spectator who, they assumed, easily fell prey to the degrading effects of moving pictures. Besides, as a place of entertainment, the cinema was, for these guardians of high culture and morality, where people got "mixed-up" and by no means an appropriate venue for gentlemen or ladies seeking

[86] By 1909 there were over 340 movie houses and nickelodeons in New York City with an estimated two million visits per week. Paris had two cinemas in 1907 and by 1913 it had 160. In Germany the number of cinemas rose from two in 1900 to 2,446 in 1914. See Alan O'Shea, "English Subjects of Modernity," *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, eds. Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (London: Routledge, 1996) 7-21 and Ken Ward, *Mass Communication and the Modern World* (London: Macmillan, 1991), qtd. in Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London: Sage, 1997) 56-91.

pleasures of more refined forms. In Britain, many cultural elites repudiated cinematic pleasure.[87] For them, cinema, as well as other forms of mass entertainment like popular fiction and broadcasting, is an "anesthetic" providing narcotic, escapist pleasures and making people thus addicted. In addition to being standardized and crudely produced, cinema, they maintain, is by no means able to elevate people to a higher state, as refined culture such as literature does. Instead, cinemas, especially those made by Hollywood, produce tempting illusions and a hypnotic effect upon spectators so much so that the latter become addicted to such a cheap, uncultivated source of pleasure. In a word, representing a resisting and disapproving attitude toward cinematic pleasure as symptomatic of a wide-spreading, anesthetic mass culture, these cultural moralists and critics of commodity culture assume that the pleasure deriving from consuming mass-produced fantasies is unwholesome and addictive.[88]

Throughout her film criticism Richardson, however, argues for the legitimacy of film as popular pleasure. To justify her argument, Richardson takes issue with a group of "prophetic critics" renouncing cinema for being a spoon-feeder of "an

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[87] The utter mindless passivity of the cinema audience was taken for granted by the British critics of cinema F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis in the 1920s and 1930s. Representing an elitist view that valorizes a higher form of traditional culture over a degenerate mass culture, the Leavises condemn cinema, along with other forms of mass pleasure like television and popular fiction, for producing hypnotic receptivity. See Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature, and Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Interwar Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1987) 81-101.

[88] These British elites repudiating cinema-going for manifesting a cultural regression anticipate the later critical theorists of the Frankfurt School criticizing the production of cinemas for endorsing a capitalist, hegemonic power over the masses. In his essays on "the culture industry," Theodor Adorno, a representative of the Frankfurt School, famously argues for a re-examination of mass culture and its falsifying, anesthetic effects. For him, since the early twentieth century, capitalism and the concomitant development of cultural commodity and media technology have established a culture industry that works to sustain its ever-expanding realms of production and reproduction. Looking through lens as such, Adorno lays bare film production as miniature of the greater culture industry and examines the many pseudo-satisfactions provided by the film's production mechanism that ultimately wants to contain the desire and consciousness of the spectator. See Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Berstein (London: Routledge, 1991).

Everyman who becomes more and more a looker and a listener, increasing unwillingly to spend his leisure otherwise than in being entertained" and claiming that the cinema would "demolish the theater, leave literature bankrupt, and the public taste hopelessly debauched" (177, 204).[89] Knowing that these critics represent a disavowal of popular pleasure *per se*, Richardson summaries the arguments made by "those who dislike the pictures":

> It is claimed that the people who flock to the movies do so because they love to lose themselves in the excitement of a dream-world, a world that bears no relationship to life as they know it, that makes no demand upon the intelligence, acts like a drug, and is altogether demoralising and devitalizing. (189)

Theirs are arguments Richardson frequently returns to and tries to come to terms with in her re-examination of cinema and cinema-going as registering forms of pleasure in ways unthinkable to these elitists pessimistic about popular pleasures.

To begin with, the film, for Richardson, civilizes the viewing public by delighting them. Regarding the film as an appropriate medium of conveying beauty and morality to the masses, Richardson believes that even the most condemned forms such as the average sensational story-film, the newsreel, and the comic strip may supply to "the bookless, thoughtless multitude . . . a civilizing influence more potent and direct than any other form of entertainment available in their leisure hours and sufficiently attractive to draw them in large numbers" (204-05). Unlike critics of mass

[89] All of Richardson's film articles cited in this paper come from *Close-Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1998), an anthology edited by James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus. Further references will be noted parenthetically.

culture renouncing popular films for their unwholesome influences, Richardson considers the spectators and their spectatorship to be nourished by the benevolent effects of almost any kind of film. For "all pictures are not bad or base or foolish" and civilization works unawares since there is "even the irreducible minimum of whatever kind of goodness in any kind of picture not deliberately vicious" (181).

Of those frequenting London's cinemas, Richardson singles out a specific group, for whom the cinema serves particularly a civilizing function. According to her, the cinema is immeasurably powerful as a civilizing agent for those inhabitants of slums, including the immigrants and newly urbanized working-class occupying the nether world of the city. Based on a largely middle-class perspective, Richardson's view of slum people's cinema-going coincides with the contemporary view of slumdom and slum people as needing reforming. Comparing slum inhabitants to "a recruited army," who in their hundreds of thousands are half-starved labourers of all ages and both sexes "available for exploitation in the basements supporting the British Empire," Richardson, as well as her contemporary philanthropists and social-workers, would like to see the improvement in those people living in the darker half of the state (180). For slum inhabitants, Richardson argues, cinema as a cultural apparatus outdoes other forms of "cultural largesse" such as "teaching, state-aid, welfare-work, and art-galleries" in that it offers "as many kinds of salvation as all previous enterprises combined and offers them impersonally, more impersonally than even the printed page" (181).

In Richardson's view, all the other social or cultural works meant for the poor are more or less tainted by the motive of interest and cannot be entirely above

suspicion. Even the charity worker, whose motive and labour are selfless, does slumming with an aim, "the confessed aim of betterment, of bringing light into darkness and comfort where no comfort was" (180). However, being a neutral and intimate means of "illustrating," Richardson argues, cinema and its illustrations are "encountered innocently, unguardedly, in silence and alone" (181). Richardson thus claims that for those slum cinema-goers, cinema exerts its influence apart from the intention of what is played. Cinema's civilizing power is such that those slum people, "who are condemned, with no prospect of change to a living death, are lifted for a while into a sort of life as are said to be on the great festivals the souls in hell" (181). Before even the poorest pictures, these onlookers are "unawares in an effectual environment" and "[w]hile they follow events, they are being played upon in a thousand ways" (181). While Richardson may seem to be over-optimistic in theorizing and believing in the film's elevating power on the general public and the slum people in particular, yet her theory and belief is better understood as a willingness to take into account the fact that popular pleasures like films have begun to exert unprecedented influence on the working class's everyday life and that the influence may not be overwhelmingly bad.[90]

As an emerging form of art, the film is despised by the contemporary critics of mass culture for failing to meet the standards of beauty as the more conventional forms of art like painting, sculpture, or classical literature do. Questioning the conventional hierarchy of arts, Richardson, however, argues for an alternative

[90] In practice, Richardson, who celebrates cinematic pleasure, is actively involved in a 1929 petition asking the Parliament to revise censorship on films so that the film classification categories could be broadened and censors could be more representative of average audiences. See Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003) 140.

measure of film as popular art. She says:

> But when we condemn the inartistic let us beware of assuming aesthetic excellence as always and for everyone the standard measure. If we feel we must condemn popular art let us know where we are, know that we are refusing an alternative measure and interpretation of the intercommunications we reject. (178)

Employing an egalitarian view, Richardson sees no need to debase popular art like films while claiming the value of high art.[91] In her aesthetical re-assessments of the cinema, Richardson shares many of Walter Benjamin's positive views on the cinema as mass art in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanic Reproduction." Walter Benjamin famously re-evaluates the cinema as a modern invention which challenges the traditional domain of art. Employing a socio-aesthetical perspective, Benjamin indicates that the cinema has opened up new possibilities for the production and the reception of art. For Benjamin, mechanic reproduction of images offers an alternative means of claiming authenticity, uniqueness, and permanence, thus blurring the boundary between classical arts such as painting and mechanically-reproduced works such as the photograph and the cinema.[92]

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[91] Even in her division of films into "the FILM" and "the movies," of which the former is more artistically rendered than the latter, Richardson nevertheless stresses that "the welcome for the FILM does not by any means imply repudiation of the movies" (188).

[92] The impact that cinema as a new technology exerts upon human beings' perception has been significantly explored by Walter Benjamin, who looks into the renewed aesthetical experience following the invention of cinema. With technical innovations like close-ups and slow motions, the cinema extends "our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives," revels "entirely new structural formations of the subject," and introduces us to "unconscious optics" ("The Work of Art" 236-37). See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanic Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) 217-52.

Similarly, rather than considering cinematic reproduction to be symptomatic of the loss of artistry, Richardson regards the cinema as an unconventional form of art and sees in it the potential of a renewed aesthetical experience, which is made possible by the advancement of technology. For her, the film has a power of tackling aspects of reality that no other art can adequately handle. She finds that in a continuous miracle of form of movement, of light and shadow in movement lies "the power of the Film, or Film drama, filmed realities, filmed uplift and education, all its achievements in the realm of the Good, the True, the Beautiful, appealing to the many, and in the realm of the abstract, only to the few" (208-9). Richardson further relates such aesthetical experience to the spectator's new perceptual and particularly visual position facilitated by the cinema as an innovative means of approaching reality. Arguing that the cinema has passed far beyond photographic reproductions of the familiar, Richardson emphasizes that the utmost role of the cinema is to mirror the customary and restore its essential quality. Whatever the ostensible interest of the film, she argues, "it is arranged and focused at the distance exactly fitting the contemplative state" and raises "the onlooker to a varying intensity of contemplation" (202). Echoing the ideas held by her contemporary film intelligentsia,[93] Richardson believes in the effect of films alienating and enlightening the spectator. For her, in any film of

[93] A contemporary of Richardson's, the Russian film theorist and film-maker Sergei Eisenstein, who exploits the potential of the cinema as an expressive (rather than realist) art, argues that the cinema as a medium should transform the real, has its own language and its own way of making sense instead of reproducing the reality. See Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1949). Noticeably, Walter Benjamin also addresses the "disfamiliarizing" effect that the cinema is credited with. According to Benjamin, "our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then come the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of the second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling" ("The Work of Art" 236).

any kind, "those elements which in life we see only in fragments as we move amongst them" are "seen in full in their moving reality of which the spectator is the motionless, observing centre" (202-23). In an emphatic tone, she says among the innumerable gifts bestowed by film-viewing, such is "the gift of quiet, of attention and concentration, of perspective" (205).

Urban Spectators, Urban Spectatorship

The audiences most likely to experience vicariously the film's aesthetic and visual pleasure are those distracted also by the phantasmagoria of a developing urban space. A period between the two world wars, the 1930s, often nostalgically and memorably called "the golden age of the cinema," witnessed not only the development of the cinema into the "dream industry" but also that of cinemas into a new urban, public space of entertainment, consumption, and sociability. Being a material space, the spectacular super-cinemas emerging in the city since the 1910s is part of the dream industry producing illusion on and off the screen. As the screen conveys diegetic illusion effectively, so the cinema built like a "dream palace" serves to reinforce the illusionist effects of not only viewing but also going to those pictures. These lavishly decorated cinema-buildings, designed in a wide variety of styles, became themselves "escapist fantasies." The décor and accoutrements, sweeping marble staircases, silvery fountains, uniformed staff, and glittering chandeliers all provide a real-life extension of the dream world of the screen.[94] As a social space, the

[94] See Rachael Low, *History of British Film*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 1997) 16-17. Low quotes the description of the Tower Cinema as super-cinema from the 1914 November 26 *Bioscope*, a prominent British trade journal of this period: ". . . a handsome marble and mosaic stairway, with three gangways of ample proportions, leading to a crush hall equaling in size many an ordinary cinema. This noble place alone can accommodate 1,000 waiting patrons, and with its marble tiling, dadoes, and grand staircase, and with tapestry panels for the higher portions of the wall, presents a sumptuous effect, still further enhanced by leaded domes and the use of cornice lighting. Choice palms here and there, floral

cinema invites indistinguishably its urban patrons, regardless of their gender, class and age. Yet the frequency and demographic distribution of those going to the pictures in the early twentieth-century cities is unequally divided by audiences whose interests and tastes vary according to a matrix of class, gender, age, and education. As the documents and statistics indicate, these audiences are mostly women, young people, and the working class.[95]

Over the past two decades, social historians have unearthed the significance of the early cinema as an alternative public space. Unlike earlier scholars mapping a bourgeois, homogeneous public sphere, these historians reconstruct the early cinema as a hetero-social public space particularly catering for the proletarian masses.[96] Rather than condemning consumerism for contaminating the public sphere, they have a more positive view on the impact consumer culture has exerted over the making of the early cinema as a public space. Their studies show that more than any other forms

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decorations, and, midway to the circle, a luxurious lounge, complete a remarkable *ensemble*. In one corner, under the terrace lounge, is an Otis passenger lift for the use of rush nights of circle patrons. From the lounge one ascend a paneled oak stairway to the circle, whence is gained an adequate idea of the huge proportions of the house." As well as catering for the emerging consuming masses, there is a strategic reason for such transformation form nickelodeon to a theater-like screening plaza—the early cinema strived to raise its social and cultural status as high art and thus made the screening space resemble the theater in order to level with theater-going experience. While the early cinema is indeed an egalitarian public space at first, the effort to make itself look more splendid is also a way to move upward on hierarchy.

[95] See Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London: Routledge, 1989) 13-15.

[96] In his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the German sociologist Jűrgen Habermas famously argues that the emergence of new institutions including the print media in the early modern Europe has contributed to the opening up of public affairs to scrutiny by citizens. Although setting up a paradigm for later studies of the public sphere, Habermas has nevertheless been criticized for his over-emphasizing an idealized bourgeois, homogeneous public sphere and overlooking the significance of the mass media shaping an alternative, proletarian public sphere. For scholars disagreeing with Habermas on his endorsing a bourgeois conception of the public sphere, see Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1993); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*; Miriam Hansen, "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity," *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vaneessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: California UP, 1995) 374-84; James Donald and Stephanie Hemelryk, "The Publicness of Cinema," *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000) 114-29.

of entertainment in the early twentieth century, the cinema opened up a social space in the masses' lives because of its neighborhood character, low admission fee, egalitarian seating structure, and informal atmosphere.[97] Allowing for the mixing with friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, the cinema is becoming a respectable site for experiencing diversity. Besides, providing fantasy, pleasure, and distraction, the early cinema is also a venue for the masses wanting a momentary relief from their everyday boredom and surveillance. Especially for the immigrants, the working class, and women indulging the anonymous, modern form of leisure, the early cinema means a threshold, a liminal space mediating the ethnic, class, and gender demarcations of their everyday life.[98]

These revisionist views on the early cinema shed much light on Richardson's observations of the cinema-going masses and the cinema as an emerging public space in the late 1920s London. In her "ethnographical" observations on the fellow cinema-goers, Richardson represents the early cinema as a public space for the heterogeneous viewing public. Frequenting London's cinemas, large and small, Richardson observes that the cinema is a place embracing all kinds of urban pleasure-seekers. For her, the cinema is a "refuge, a trysting-place, a shelter from rain and cold at less than the price of an evening's light and fire" (171). It is a place of

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[97] See Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon*; Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*; Elizabeth Ewan, *Immigrant Women in the land of Dollars: Life and Culture in the Lower Easter Side, 1890-1925*; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*.

[98] As the film and social historian Miriam Hansen puts it, the early cinema was a real place, ordinary and easily accessible, yet at the same time it was a site for the imaginative negotiation of the gaps between family, school, workplace, between traditional standards of sexual behavior and modern dreams of romance and sexual expression, between freedom and anxiety. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* 118.

"universal hospitality," where "[anyone] may be there" (170-171). The cinema is also a "school, salon, brothel, and bethel" providing "art, science, religion, philosophy, commerce, sport, adventure" through flashes of beauty of all sorts (171). In saying so, Richardson highlights the multiple, though apparently contradictory, functions the cinema is supposed to serve in her time. As venues of art, entertainment, education, and morality, the cinema is paradoxically conceived through Richardson's comments.

Comments as such reveal also the cinema's threshold status in terms of its breaking with the traditional domain of art and the bourgeois conception of the public sphere. Through comparing the cinema to a school, salon, and bethel as well as to its earlier stigmatized label "the brothel," Richardson gives a twist of mass pleasure which traditionalists condemn. Richardson's observation enables her to claim that cinema-going is an emerging urban activity inviting indiscriminatingly the masses, regardless of their sex, age, class, and taste of art. Of those sitting on the velvet seat may be "[happy] youth, happy childhood, weary women of all classes for whom at home there is no resting-place" (171). Or those elder spectators, "whose ears sound always the approaching footsteps of death," are "free from the sense of moments ticked off" (171). Or those slum cinema-goers, "who are condemned, with no prospect of change to a living death, are lifted for a while into a sort of life as are said to be on the great festivals the souls in hell" (181). Or a charming girl, despairing of her first quarrel with the lover, may find that the cinema "as [a] refuge near her lodgings opens its twilit spaces and makes itself her weepery" (171). Or still even the intellectual, who "[sues] the cinema as a stupefier," would nevertheless come to films for refreshment.

Admittedly, cinema-going is, for Richardson, an activity of social significance particularly to the urban masses. According to her, the film is a "social art, a show, something for collective seeing" and "a small ceremonial prepared for a group" like the urban spectators who otherwise find themselves isolated in their everyday experience (191). And cinema-going is an evening's entertainment "providing hours of relaxation" and the trip to downtown cinemas "revives the unfailing bright sense of going out" and "lifts off the burden and heat of the day" (170). Thus, as well as indulging the visual pleasures in the dark, closed space, the urban cinema-goers enjoy visiting the cinema because in doing so they are able to free themselves from daily routines and walk off the marked boundaries of the family, school, and workplace.[99] Celebrating particularly the pleasure of women's cinema-going in the late 1920s London, Richardson indicates that cinema-going has become a trendy, plebeian activity linking up with the development of fashion, mass consumption, and public space:

> Splendid. It's the next best thing to a dance and sure to be good you can get a nice meal at a restaurant and decide while you're there and if the one you choose is full up there's another round the corner nothing to fix and worry about. And it's all so nice nothing poky and those fine great entrance halls everything smart and just right and waiting there for friends you feel in society like anybody else if your hat's all right and your things and my word the ready-mades are so cheap nowadays you

[99] See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* 115-18; de Certeau's theory on the walker's practice of detouring or deviating from his/her everyday routes is also applicable to these mass pleasure-seekers negotiating their daily space. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 91-110.

> need never go so shabby and the commissionaires and all those smart people make you *feel* smart. It's as good an evening as you can have and time for a nice bit of supper afterwards. (170 italics original)

These lines indicate also that instead of employing a top-down, male-dominated perspective on popular pleasures, as critics of mass culture do, Richardson, who identifies with the female viewing public, looks at the many pleasurable, positive effects of cinema-going on women cinema-goers conscious of their taking part in a wider urban space and a fashionable, respected form of pleasure.

In Richardson's view, urban cinema-goers are the subject of spectatorship as well as that of mobility. Considering the younger generation to be more accustomed to modernized, urban distractions, Richardson asserts that "[u]ncertainty, noise, speed, movement, rapidity of external change that has taught them to realise that to-morrow will not be as to-day, all these factors have helped to make the younger generation shock-proof in a manner unthinkable to the majority of their forebears" (204). The newly urbanized generation's much improved visual ability to deal with urban shocks is further linked by Richardson to the film spectator's ability to contemplate the no less distracting spectacles on the screen. Richardson draws many analogies between the urban spectator and the film spectator capable of aesthetical contemplation, which is mediated by their similarly enchanted eyes. To begin with, for Richardson, the film spectator capable of contemplating filmic fantasies finds his/her counterpart in the urban spectator adapting to visual stimuli of all sorts and becoming aware of his/her taking part in commoditized, urban distractions. Rather than being distracted by the modern, commoditized spectacles, the film spectator, as well as the urban spectator,

learns to distance him/herself from "well-acted fantasies." The film, in Richardson's view, plays a vital role in technically and aesthetically mirroring the customary and restoring its essential quality so that the film spectator, emerging from his/her "narcissistic" contemplation, becomes a disinterested observer, "through whose eyes what had grown too near and too familiar to be visible is seen with a ready-made detachment that restores its lost originality" (202).[100]

When accommodating to the visual stimuli, the film spectator, like the high-strung urban spectator, cultivates the attitude of *blaséness*, a self-defending mechanism developed to adjust to the constantly-renewed visual shocks. In his 1903 article "The Metropolis and Mental Life," the German sociologist Georg Simmel famously addresses being blasé as typical of metropolitans needing to deal with shocks in an ever-changing ambience. According to him, the incapability to react to new stimulations with the required amount of energy constitutes "the blasé attitude which every child of a large city evinces" (329). And the blasé attitude is a particular adaptive phenomenon, in which "the nerves reveal their final possibility of adjusting to the content and form of metropolitan life by renouncing the response to them" (330). While Simmel notices particularly the blasé attitude of the urban spectator, Walter Benjamin in his 1936 artwork essay explores the tactile, distracted

[100] For Richardson, among the innumerable gifts bestowed by film-viewing, such is "the gift of quiet, of attention and concentration, of perspective" (205). For her, however, the soundless is a better catalyst for the making of a disinterested spectator. In her September 1930 article entitled "A Tear for Lycidas" addressing the rise of "the Talkies," Richardson argues against going to these speech films threatening to deprive spectators of their ability to contemplate. She laments over the wane of silent films, in which the soundless environment could enhance a contemplative distance between the seer and the seen better than the speech film. Indicating the precedence of the faculty of sight in the silent film, Richardson believes that silent films are more conducive to the detachment on the part of the spectator and that in giving a sufficient level of concentration on the part of the spectator, silent films allow "a sufficient rousing of his collaborating creative consciousness" (197).

spectatorship associated with the film spectator accommodating to filmic stimulations by apperception and habit. According to Benjamin, the spectator's reception in a state of distraction "finds in the film its true means of exercise" and through putting the distracted viewing public in the position of the critic, "the film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway" ("Work of Art" 240).

Both Benjamin's conception of distracted filmic spectatorship and Simmel's conception of blasé urban spectatorship are useful in approaching the fellow film spectators under Richardson's observation, who are learning to suspend their visual response to the film's shocks and adapt to those visual stimuli tactilely and apperceptively. For Richardson, the distraction is much reduced by the spectator's over-exposure to filmic fantasies, thus creating the possibility of his/her "critical" viewing. Frequenting the late 1920s London's cinemas, Richardson finds herself accompanied by many such blasé film audiences, who are particularly drawn to "the first rows." Impressed by the audiences growing in "critical grace" and their "audible running commentary," Richardson finds also that the quality of attention and collaboration on the part of these audiences has changed accordingly:

> . . . the front rows are no longer thrilled quite as they were in their earlier silent days by the hocus-pocus. They come level-headed and serenely talking through drama that a year ago would have held them dizzy and breathless. Even a novel situation does not too much disturb them. They attend, refused to be puzzled, watch for the working out. (173).

Through these lines Richardson highlights that the general viewing public, instead of being passive onlookers and mass consumers, manifest their power to judge and look

at the mass-produced fantasies critically, despite the fact that they might be "trained" to do so by those same filmic fantasies originally dazzling them.

Another analogy Richardson draws between the urban spectator and the film spectator is that they are both capable of a cosmopolitan vision, exercised in the city's and the film's cosmic backdrops respectively. Owing to commercialization, immigration, and the improvement in international transport, capital cities like London have since the late-nineteenth century turned into a site of cosmopolitan encounters. For different reasons, the "aliens" including the business-people, the travelers, and the immigrants walk side by side across urban space with the "native" strollers, who are already a mixed breed as a consequence of urbanization. The city's phantasmagoria is enhanced by these "alien spectacles." Walking the streets, the urban spectator is thus a "man of the world" as well as a "man of the crowd." Filmic spectatorship, for Richardson, is also featured by a cosmopolitan vision as such. Richardson believes that as a media of cultural communication, the film plays a powerful role in "the world-wide conversations," entitling the spectator to "the insensibly learned awareness of alien people and alien ways" (186, 205). For the cinema-goers in rural districts, whose life is limited to the confines of a village or hamlet, the effect of the film's cultivating an urban, cosmopolitan vision is even more obvious.[101] For facing the screen, these rural cinema-goers "become for a while

[101] While considering cinema to be essentially a form of urban pleasure, Richardson nevertheless examines its effect on cinema-goers in the rural district, "where life is lived all the year around in the open or between transparent walls, lived from birth too death in the white light of a publicity for which towns can offer no parallel" (185). Richardson maintains that the cinema may provide these rural cinema-goers "their only escape from ceaseless association, their only solitude, the solitude that is said to be possible only in cities" (185). Besides, highlighting that cinema-viewing could offer a cosmopolitan vision, Richardson elaborates on the new, urban experience these rural viewers may have. Through associating cinema-viewing with urban visual experience, Richardson thus reinforces her conception of cinema as being an urban pleasure for even the rural viewer.

citizens of a world whose every face is that of a stranger" and "the mere sight of these unknown people is refreshment" (185). They are "amplified," "have a joyful half-conscious preoccupation with this new world," and "have no longer quite the local quality they had" (186).

As is demonstrated, cinema-going is an urban pleasure registering not only the masses' mobility but also their spectatorship, both being ascribed by Richardson to the democratizing possibilities inherent in ways of urban life. While primarily concerned about the mass spectatorship made possible by a new form of public entertainment and a new visual media, Richardson, as a female spectator, nevertheless pays particular attention to the ways women spectators get involved in filmic pleasure and their practices of mobility and spectatorship through cinema-going.

Women's Viewing

At the first issue of *Close-Up* in July 1927, Richardson, aware of the increasing significance of cinema-going as women's pleasure, offers her sympathy for women indulging the dream world. Of the crowd facing a screen where fantasies of all sorts are being played, Richardson is particularly drawn to a newly-born female audience who, momentarily indulges herself in fantasies thus created, has been able to escape from her daily boredom of housework and motherhood. Going to a garish cinema in North London one Monday afternoon, Richardson finds among the scattered audience a large congregation of women spectators being entertained and comforted in a new women's place of pleasure:

> [The] scattered audience was composed almost entirely of mothers. Their

> children, apart from the infants accompanying them, were at school and their husbands were at work. It was a new audience, born within the last few months. Tired women, their faces sheened with toil, and small children, penned in semi-darkness and foul air on a sunny afternoon. There was almost no talk. Many of the women sat alone, figures of weariness at rest. (160)

The appearance of these female audiences indicates exactly the undermining of separate spheres commencing since the fin de siècle period. Together with young working girls or single working women frequenting the city's fashionable cinemas or super-cinemas to solace tiredness coming from the weekday's routine job, these mothers finding shelter in local, suburban cinemas are among the phenomenally increasing female audience of the late 1920s London.[102]

Besides, as a newly-created pleasure for women, the cinema engages gender, consumption, and entertainment as much as any other forms of female pleasure. Inspired by the approach of culture studies, feminists in recent decades have come up with explanations for women's pleasure in cinema-going. Considering women's cinema-going to be a site of resistance, cultural feminists examining the previously stigmatized popular pleasure highlight that women's cinema-going, as well as other forms of female pleasure, is a conscious and active appropriation of mass consumption. Rather than constructing an a-historical, universal spectator, cultural feminists through ethnographical studies examine the real female spectator in the "context" of viewing, her specific appropriation of the cinema image-text, and her

[102] See Nicolas Hiley, "The British Cinema Auditorium," *Film and the First World War*, ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 1994) 162.

cinema-going as a cultural practice.[103] As Miriam Hansen writes, the early cinema was a place women could frequent on their own, as independent customers, where they could experience forms of collectivity different from those centering on the family:

> [The early cinema] catered to women as an audience, as the subject of collective reception and public interaction. It thus functioned as a particularly female heterotopias, because it simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted the gendered demarcation of private and public spaces. It was a site for the imaginative negotiation of the gaps between family, school, and workplace, between traditional standards of sexual behavior and modern dreams of romance and sexual expression, between freedom and anxiety. This arena consisted not only of the theater's physical space and the social environment it assimilated, but crucially involved the phantasmagoric space on the screen, and the multiple and dynamic transactions between these spaces. (1991: 118)

Through offering escape, fantasy and pleasure, the cinema, like department stores and romance fiction, might thus provide a "borderland," material and imaginary, where Richardson and her fellow women spectators have momentary relief from the suffocating daily routine or domesticity as well as women shoppers and readers do.

In a large sense, Richardson's approving attitude toward women's cinema-going is underpinned by her critical observations on women's cinematic spectatorship.

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[103] In this regard, these cultural feminists are joined by a group of feminist film historians exploring the historical female spectator and her involvement in the production and consumption of cinema. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* 114-25.

According to her, women going to motion pictures are not merely passive recipients of diegetic illusion. Frequenting the palace of dreams, certain women spectators are capable of criticizing what is being played on the screen, though not with a professional eye. In her March 1928 article Richardson indicates that in their bold disobedience of the yet-to-be-made film etiquette,[104] women spectators growing tired of "stock characters" and the "typical incident of an average film" may feel "a little blasé" and choose to dialogize with their companions over the pictures they are watching (176). It is thus simply out of the question to sit beside these talking women spectators and have an "escape via incidents into the world of meditation or of thought" (176). The appearance of these talkative women spectators, who see through mass-produced fantasies and do a "negotiated" viewing, has thus a twofold significance. On the one hand, the "critical" power of these women spectators is such that they emblemize the masses getting disillusioned with cinemas as mass-produced, formulaic designs of popular culture. On the other hand, Richardson highlights that such a viewing capability is a gendered practice, exhibiting women's ability to distance themselves from those otherwise delusive fantasies on the screen.

In this regard, Richardson's active, critical woman spectators are sharply contrasted with those passive, manipulated women spectators depicted in Siegfried

[104] As the cinema has since the late 1920s begun to require a silent, attentive mode of film spectatorship, the viewers failing to meet such requirements were often caricatured in contemporary film magazines for their misbehavior. Women viewers were particularly the target of these caricatures accusing them of their talkativeness and absent-mindedness. Mockingly, Richardson also makes a list of admonitions on the offensive behaviors the female viewer is likely to make, such as "Don't be audile in any way unless the film brings you laughter," "Cease, in fact, to exist as a contributing part of the film, critical or otherwise, and if critical, silently so," and "Don't deliver public lectures on the film as it unfolds" (175). However, Richardson ultimately comes up with a positive view on those talkative women resisting being consumed by filmic fantasies. For women spectators caricatured for their misbehaviors in the cinema of the 1920s, see Shelley Stamp, *Movie-struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* 26-27.

Kracauer's 1927 series of articles on female spectatorship entitled "The Little Shop Girls Go to the Movies."[105] Unfolding his observation on the shop-girls crying over a film melodrama, Siegfried Kracauer claims that they surrender to the sentiments roused by the heroine's self-sacrificial, tragic love.[106] Implying that these female spectators with "stupid little hearts" are like the heroine sacrificing for her ungrateful lover, Kracauer says "there are many people who sacrifice themselves nobly, because they are too lazy to rebel" and "many tears are shed because to cry is sometimes easier than to think" (292). Employing a pessimistic perspective on women's cinema-viewing, Kracauer considers these shop-girl spectators, no less than the heroine's untrustworthy image, to be susceptible to mass culture's deceptive schemes. By contrast, highlighting the appearance of those blasé female spectators learning to criticize cinematic fantasies through their newly acquired apperceiving ability, Richardson indicates that women as spectators are hardly passive, mindless, or even over-identified with cinematic images, but distanced, skeptical, and active. Besides, unlike Kracauer, whose male-dominated view overlooks the historical and gendered significances of women's cinema-viewing in the 1920s, Richardson stresses the many positive aspects such a cultural practice involves for women, such as fending off the

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[105] Each of the eight short articles satirically portrays the shop girl as a certain type of classical spectator, who immerses herself in the film through empathetic identification and absorption. See Siegfried Kracauer, "The Little Shop Girls Go to the Movies," *The Mass Ornament*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995) 291-304. For views on Kracauer's linking up mass consumption, femininity, and passivity in these series of articles on the shop girls' cinema-viewing, see Lise Shapiro Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl 1880-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006) 186-87; Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* 66-68.

[106] The plot of the film melodrama is summarized as follows: the heroine is a young woman, who is left in poverty by her father's suicide and is subsequently abandoned by her fiancé concerned with promoting his career as a lieutenant and wanting to avoid any hint of poverty or indecency. To support herself, the young woman takes a job under an assumed name as a dancer on the stage. After many years, the lieutenant repenting his wrongdoing finds the women again and suggests marriage. Yet the woman poisons herself to force her lover, through her death, to think of only his career.

boredom of everyday life, indulging in the pleasures the cinema offers, and joining a new women's public space, as has been indicated above. In doing so, Richardson is able to give a twist of femininity that Kracauer has linked with passivity, sentimentality, and uncritical mass consumption in his observation on the shop-girls' cinema-viewing.

While addressing particularly female spectators frequenting the late 1920s London's cinemas, Richardson nevertheless universalizes their spectatorship as a feminine paradigm of viewing, contrasted by a male viewing commanding the apparently unified perception. In Richardson's view, the female spectator conscious of her viewing asserts a critical and highly meta-perceptive vision. She has the discriminating female spectator typified as such:

> She does not need, this type of woman clearly does not need, the illusions of art to come to the assistance of her own sense of existing. Instinctively she maintains a balance, the thing perceived and herself perceiving. . . . She is the amateur realist. Not all the wiles of the most perfect art can shift her from the center where she dwells. Nor has she aught but scorn for those who demand that she shall be so shifted. (176)

Casting a female gaze on and off the screen, the female spectator, free from man's pitiful illusions of history, "takes all things currently" and "sees everything in terms of life that uncannily she knows to be at all times fundamentally the same" (176). Ultimately, in an emphatic tone, Richardson concludes that the female spectator asserting herself in the presence of cinematic grandeurs "unconsciously testifies that life goes on, art or no art and that the onlooker is a part of spectacle" (176).

Since the late 1970s, debates over women's capability as spectators have been initiated by the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, who employs psychoanalytic theories only to exclude the possibility of female spectatorship in her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." According to her, most Hollywood-made films are underpinned by 'a male-dominated scopic regime' in which male visual superiority and visual space are maintained coherently through mechanism such as voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia. While attacking the omnipresent patriarchal gaze in popular films, Mulvey nevertheless overlooks the visual uncertainty and incoherence of gazing and thus overstressed the power of male looking. The many premises of her analytic model, such as there being a passive female spectator and the female character serving as merely a "spectacle," have been challenged by later feminists, who assert that gazing is never a stable process and is constantly susceptible to the gaze from the "other." [107] To provide paradigms accountable for women's viewing, feminist film critics have recently devoted themselves to uncovering cinematic pleasures unique to women spectators consuming mass-produced, patriarchy-laden spectacles. Re-appropriating theories of psychoanalysis maintaining that the visual space is incoherent and unstable, these critics repudiate the traditional dichotomy of the male as spectator and the female as spectacle. For them, the subject looking is also the subject being looked at and vice

[107] See Joan Copjec, "The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan," *October* 49 (1989): 53-72; Elizabeth Cowie, "Fantasia," *The Woman in Question: M/F*, eds. Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie (London: Verso, 1990) 149-96; Mary Ann Doane, "Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 11.1 (1988): 42-54; Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (London: Methuen, 1988); Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)," *Framework* 15-17 (1981): 12-15; Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 1992).

versa, thus relieving the female spectator and her viewing from an omnipresent, all-powerful male gaze. In this regard, Richardson, whose view on women's spectatorship is largely based on the resistant, active female gaze, anticipates those later feminist film critics overwhelming the male-dominated visual regime.

Such a construct of the female gaze is further elaborated in her March 1932 article entitled "The Film Gone Male." In this article, Richardson argues that film as an expression owes much to the essentially dichotomized, gendered modes of perception. According to her, men priding themselves on "clear speech" are nevertheless inferior to women whose various uses of speech are merely a "façade" and whose excellence lies in neither speech nor language but in memory *per se*, which instead of being a passive consciousness, could "pile up its wealth only round universal, unchanging, unevolving verities" (206). Pitting the sound/the local/masculinity against the soundless/the universal/femininity, Richardson thus argues that with the coming of the sound to films, cinema-viewing would be less contemplative and more propagandistic, thus becoming a "masculine" experience. Lamenting the loss of "the old time films' gracious silence," Richardson claims that the sound, the speech, and the language are masculine forms of expression and that the sound film becoming audile might become also a medium of propaganda, "the chosen battle-ground of rival patterns, plans, ideologies in endless succession and bewildering variety" (206-07). On the contrary, the silent film, a feminine form of expression, is a medium of communication, which "in the day of its innocence" has "more intention than direction, more purpose than plan" and has a power to "evoke, suggest, reflect, express from within its moving parts and in their totality of

movement" (206). Besides, whereas the sound film might insinuate and propagandize, the silent film in its insistence on contemplation "provided a pathway to reality" (206).

As the above has indicated, the female gaze in Richardson's film criticism denotes alternative ways to perceive, express, and approach reality as well as the female spectator's ability to assert herself amidst cinematic illusions. Associating the silent film with a feminine, contemplative viewing position, Richardson renders "femininity" a trope of aesthetical and perceptional contemplation, not unrelated to women's gendered viewing position. Besides, the female spectator in Richardson's film criticism manifests femininity in terms of her being a female gender, a viewing subject, and a cultural consumer. Such feminine spectatorship is practiced not only by her fellow spectators but also by Richardson herself. Re-appropriating femininity as a critical edge upon issues such as perception, spectatorship, filmic expression, and popular pleasure, Richardson thus tackles women's cinema-viewing as a matter of gendered, perceptual, and cultural significances and in addressing this matter her film criticism also embodies an alternative, feminine observation on cinematic pleasure and spectatorship.

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Since the invention of cinema at the fin de siècle, cinema-going has become one staple entertainment especially catering for the needs of a swarming crowd accompanying the rapid progress of urbanization and industrialization. As a means of mass entertainment culminating in popularity from the 1920s to the 1940s, cinema does not meet as much applause from the contemporary cultural critics as from the

general public. Along with the development of mass consumption, commodity culture, and public space in the early twentieth century, cinema and cinema-going register not only the booming of popular, commoditized pleasure but also the dwindling of a high-brow culture privileging only a selected minority. As the above has indicated, throughout her film criticism Dorothy Richardson argues for an alternative measure for cinema as an art form and popular pleasure. Observing that cinematic spectacles have contributed and corresponded to a renewed modern spectatorship, particularly on the part of the urban cinema-goer, Richardson, an urban rambler and spectator, develops alternative views on cinematic spectatorship and the mass cinema-going in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. In many ways, Richardson's views on cinema, cinematic spectatorship and cinema-going challenge and even reverse the implicitly gendered assumptions held by the critics of cinema in her time. Unlike those criticizing cinema for producing the uncultivated mass spectatorship and the passive, "feminized" spectator, Richardson unearths the many positive aspects of the mass's cinema-going, which is, for her, a matter of visual, spatial, and aesthetical significances. Predicated on her observation of the mass spectatorship, Richardson's view of women's cinema-going re-appropriates femininity traditionally associated with passivity, exhaustedness, and being-looked-at-ness, rendering women's viewing a powerful look at the already enlarged and transgressed visual and urban space.

Chapter Three

Touring the City: Virginia Woolf's *The Years* and London Essays

The previous chapter has examined female consumption as manifesting fin de siècle women's complicated involvement in the city's consuming spaces and commodity culture, which is represented by Dorothy Richardson in her fictional narratives about female consumers emerging in fin de siècle London, a phenomenon historically experienced by women of the 1880s and 1890s who increasingly found London's West End a site of consumption and female pleasure, and by the authoress herself in her "ethnographical" writings on cinema as popular pleasure appealing to a wider spectrum of mass consumers, of which women constitute a significant part who seek fantasy and entertainment in the seemingly anesthetic form of pleasure. Yet if the West End shopping and entertaining places of London provided an urban space inhabitable by respectable women in the fin de siècle period, then East End philanthropy provided another opportunity for the modern women to make a claim on the city's public space.

One crucial way for middle-class British women to navigate with relative freedom and independence the open streets of London in the last years of the nineteenth century, especially those more chaotic, dangerous and poverty-ridden parts of London, is as charity workers and philanthropists. Apart from engaging in a religious and humanitarian service, ladies doing philanthropies were considered to occupy themselves with a respectable profession, since most charity work had been non-remunerative throughout the century.[108] By the end of this century, a woman

[108] See F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) 5-8.

from the upper- or middle-class who did not perform some kind of charitable work would have been an anomaly among her friends. In 1893 it was estimated that some twenty thousand women were maintaining themselves as paid officials in works of philanthropic usefulness in England, while at least twenty times that number, or about half a million, were occupied more or less continuously and semi-professionally in similar works.[109]

Women doing charitable works are considered as answering the calls for feminine nature and mission. During much of the nineteenth century there was very little employment suitable for middle-class women. Denied specialized training in an age that increasingly demanded it, they found it not easy to compete with men better qualified in trades and businesses traditionally open to them. Besides, there are ideologies about female work, which hold that it should enable women to live up to their calling and feminine traits and should be confined to the home ambience. Charitable work becomes thus a most compelling vocation to leisured women, who are traditionally skilled in caring for the young, the sick, the elderly, and the poor. Through performing such tasks, these women of the upper- and middle- classes exhibit also their capability as "compassionate" and "self-sacrificing" caretaker, which meets the expectation of what is deemed as duly feminine features.

The "non-invidious" nature of women charity workers enabled them to be more readily accepted into the homes of the working-class and the poor than their male

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[109] See Anne Summers, "A Home from Home—Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (New York: St. Martin's, 1979) 34, qtd in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 211-12

counterparts.[110] In addition to neighborhood charitable activities such as Sunday school teaching and mothers' meeting, women charity workers in late-Victorian England showed their greater mobility in scheming the household visiting of slums and the visiting of institutions like workhouses, orphanages, prisons, hospitals, asylums, and refuges. Through all these frequent contacts with "the other world," women charity workers were able to cross class lines to travel into farther territory.[111] In fact, such a mobility as practiced by female charity workers is especially associated with and ascribable to the greater freedom of public walking enjoyed by most ordinary women in the fin de siècle period. As Octavia Hill, the founder of Charitable Organization Society (COS), thus comments:

> There are comparatively few parents who do not recognize for their daughters the duty of sympathy and of rendering such service as other claims permit. With this different ideal of life, customs have altered in a marked manner; it used to be difficult for a girl to walk alone, and it was considered almost impossible for her to travel in omnibuses or third-class trains. The changes in custom with regard to such matters have opened out fresh possibilities of work. (Qtd in Vicinus 345)[112]

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[110] See Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 211-46.

[111] Ibid. Vicinus indicates that charitable work gave these women freedom to walk and move in areas that were previously forbidden. According to her, "[neither] teaching, nor nursing, nor even mission work permitted women so much spatial freedom. The streets of the slums, away from upper-class men's eyes, were theirs; no matter how much they might be teased by little boys or abused by drunks, they carried a kind of immunity along the streets of the drab slums they sought to uplift" (220). For more on the mobility of Victorian female charity workers, see Anne Summers, "A Home from Home—Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (New York: St. Martin's, 1979) 33-63; Jessica Gerard, "Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Class and Rural Philanthropy,' *Victorian Studies* 30 (1987) 183-211; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004); Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920* (Berkeley: California UP, 2007).

[112] Octavia Hill, "A Few Words for Fresh Workers," *Nineteenth Century*, 26 (1889) 454, qtd in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Chicago

The social historian Martha Vicinus also indicates that charitable work entitles women to walk and move in areas that were previously forbidden. According to her, "[neither] teaching, nor nursing, nor even mission work permitted women so much spatial freedom. The streets of the slums, away from upper-class men's eyes, were theirs; no matter how much they might be teased by little boys or abused by drunks, they carried a kind of immunity along the streets of the drab slums they sought to uplift" (220). Along with other female figures visible in the streets of late-Victorian London like protesting female workers, platform women, Salvation Army lasses, glamorized girls in business, women philanthropists are thus recognized as one of the new entrants to the urban scene who "produced new stories of the city that competed, intersected with, appropriated, and revised the dominant imaginative mappings of London" (Walkowitz 1992: 88).

Visiting the poor undoubtedly gave the well-to-do women a purpose in life. Philanthropic works are considered as producing a sublimiating effect upon the otherwise boring, tedious life led by most women of the middle-class. For single women such work presents itself as particularly a respectable alternative to idleness and a search of adventure, self-discovery, and meaningful work. Leading a life of independence during their service in the urban slum, many female philanthropists are aligned with the "Glorified Spinster," one of the New Woman stereotypes caricatured

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UP, 1985) 345. Looking to an army of female district visitors to carry out the tasks of social reconciliation and domestic supervision, Hill had advanced an ambitious project of female slum supervision since the 1860s. With the help of John Ruskin, Hill purchased London tenements and oversaw their improvement by the tenants, from which she collected the rents. She was also a founding member of the Charity Organization Society (COS), which was dedicated to the systematic coordination of charity giving and assessment of individual cases in the dispensing of alms to the deserving poor. See Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 54-55.

in fin de siècle periodicals for practicing voluntary spinsterhood.[113] They represent a small number of self-supporting or financially independent single middle-class women, who began to practice a new urban female style of being at home in the city.

Female philanthropists might also want to put into words what they observe when visiting the poor. Through narrating their experiences with the poor, women philanthropists align themselves with a group of social investigators or novelists of the slum life, who represent a spectrum of authors seeking writing as a form of social representation. As observers of urban poverty, female philanthropists depart from their male counterparts in giving more attention to the familial or the domestic scenes whose significances are largely overlooked in contemporary male writings of the urban slum that tend to have detailed and clinical descriptions of filth, squalor, child beggars or diseased bodies in the street.[114] Through narrating their personal encounters with poverty and the poor, women help to produce new and different "legends" about London and its people that "now would include factory girls and worn mothers, domestic interiors rather than street scenes, schoolchildren rather than child beggars" (Ross 13). Besides, while lacking the socially analytic perspective typical of male writers on slumming, these female philanthropist-observers nevertheless are, in many cases, capable of representing the poor sympathetically as

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[113] An 1888 article in *Macmillan Magazine* addresses the "Glorified Spinster" as women marked by their unwillingness to look forward to marriage as an ultimate destiny and to acquiesce in a position of despondence and subjection, their pursuits of intellectual pleasures.

[114] For a brief introduction to the striking contrast between London's two class zones of the east and the west, see Jane Rendell, "Displaying Sexuality: Gendered Identity and the Early Nineteenth-Century Street," *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity, and Control in Public Space* (London: Routledge, 1998) 77-78. See also Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992) 15-39, for her elaboration on London as a site of social extremes portrayed by a wide spectrum of late-Victorian writers including novelists, journalists, and social investigators.

individuals rather than as symbols of an alien otherness and dealing with women's topics as an oblique critique of the kinds of subjects that dominate male writings on the urban slum.[115]

Studies of female philanthropy have long focused on how Victorian women of the upper- and middle- classes perform their feminine, domestic duties though taking care of those in need. Few have touched upon how the everyday life and space lived by these wealthy women have changed because of their commitment to such an enterprise. As is indicated, their life and perspective might be enlarged by the cross-class and often cross-ethnic contacts their charity work brings, which would be otherwise impossible considering that these women of leisured classes are mostly "domesticated." A gendered difference is especially perceived in how the middle-class female philanthropist views her visit to the poor as a means of transcending the daily spatial and thus experiential limitations imposed by the gender-discriminated, separate-sphere ideology. While the life of the working-class which the female philanthropist comes to assist and improve might represent to the socially privileged, well-to-do woman misery and poverty, it nevertheless signifies also the vitality of the working-class people and thus the freedoms of public mobility and visibility that the woman of the leisured class observes with admiring eyes.

The Female Philanthropist in *The Years*

In *The Years*, the last novel Virginia Woolf published in her life, the heroine Eleanor Pargiter is a female philanthropist navigating fin de siècle London's slums.

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[115] For more on the uniqueness of the urban observation performed by female charity workers of Victorian England, see Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920* (Berkeley: California UP, 2007) 12-13

The novel portrays Eleanor who devotes herself to charity works as fulfilling a mission commonly expected of women of the leisured classes in Victorian society, who are supposed to feel rewarded spiritually, though not monetarily, in taking care of the poor and improving their living conditions. The feminine traits of Eleanor are emphasized from the opening pages of *The Years*, who as the eldest daughter has acted as surrogate mother to her younger sisters because the mistress of the Pargiters' household is on her deathbed. As well as performing motherhood, which ranges from administering to the three sisters in teenage to giving motherly care to her only child-sister Rose, Eleanor plays the role of the mistress and is praised "a good housekeeper" by her father for her dexterous management of domestic affairs.

The expertise Eleanor acquires through managing her own household undoubtedly fits her to the many tasks she undertakes in the homes of the poor. As is indicated, throughout the nineteenth century charitable work is thought most appropriate to women of the middle-class who could apply their domestic, feminine expertise to the superintendence of the poor. Implicit in such thinking is an endorsement of Victorian separate spheres ideology which maintains that women and their vocations should be domesticated. Eleanor's commitment to charitable work definitely meets the requirement of gendered labor propagandized by Victorian traditionalists throughout the nineteenth century. Her career as charity worker is sharply contrasted with the many masculine professions like college teaching, law practice, military service, and colonial exploration undertaken by her brothers.

In her original draft for *The Years*, Woolf intends this novel to be a story about the sexual life led by three generations of British women from the 1880s onwards,

whose unfairly treatment by patriarchal society is accusingly laid bare by the spatial limitations imposed upon female public walking. Eleanor's charitable work is especially addressed as an excuse legitimating her exploration of the city's public spaces when all her younger sisters are barred from walking publicly and unescorted:

> Eleanor and Milly and Delia could not possibly go for a walk alone—save in the streets round about Abercorn Terrace, and then only between the hours of eight-thirty and sunset. An exception might be made in favor of Eleanor, when she went to Lisson Grove; but even she, whose mission was charitable, was expected either to take a cab, or to get one of the girls at the Settlement to see her into the omnibus, if she went to a meeting or concert after dark. For any of them to walk in the West End even by day was out of the question. Bond Street was as impassable, save with their mother, as any swamp with crocodiles. The Burlington Arcade was nothing but a fever-stricken den as far as they were concerned. To be seen alone in Piccadilly was equivalent to walking up Abercorn Terrace in a dressing gown carrying a bath sponge. A large radius of the West End indeed was closed to them, whether by day or night, unless they went with a brother or their mother; and even the hansom cab, in which they were forced to make the transit of the dangerous area, had to have both flaps of its door shut. (Woolf 1977: 37)

This is obviously an exaggerated narrative of the restrictive urban typology mapped out for Victorian women of the upper middle-class like the first-generation female Pargiters, highlighting the fact that female unaccompanied public walking is deemed

as improper and dangerous throughout the nineteenth-century England.

In contrast with the stifling, domestic life led by her younger maiden sisters, the slum experience enables Eleanor to claim her difference from the conventionally home-bound, middle-class women whose vision of life have been exceedingly restricted. Unlike her sisters, who "stay home too much," "never see anyone outside their own set" and are "cooped up, day after day" (32), Eleanor as charity worker presents herself to be a woman capable of transgressing the gendered spaces of late-Victorian London. While still subject to a male-dominated, separate-sphere cartography prescribing that women be kept from public spaces, Eleanor nevertheless makes herself an exception to this strictly observed regulation on female public walking by working as a philanthropist, whose charitable work enables her to have definitely greater accesses to the street and many other public spaces than her domesticated sisters.

Like Richardson, who invests the mind of Miriam with heightened sensibilities in *The Pilgrimage*, Woolf renders Eleanor receptive to the stimuli generated by the city life. Employing the skills of "stream of consciousness" in probing the mentality of Eleanor, Woolf shares with Richardson a breakthrough of the narrative perspective that conveys the reality through the subjective yet fragmented perceptions of a heroine who is an observer of the city. Such an innovative way of approaching the reality has been identified by Woolf as feminine in her review of Richardson's *Pilgrimage*[116] and used by Woolf in her many novels to register the subtle and complex workings of the mind of the characters. As with Richardson, who conflates the socio-cultural with the

[116] For more on Woolf's review of Richardson's masterpieces, see page 69 of this dissertation.

aesthetical and the ontological in her presentation of Miriam as an urban observer, Woolf in *The Years* portrays Eleanor as unfolding her observations from the perspective of a social actor, or more specifically a social worker in the fin de siècle city. Yet despite their shared celebrations of the urban pageant, Eleanor is entitled to a more detached view of the city and its inhabitants, which results from her socially privileged position as the well-to-do female philanthropist. Unlike the much more plebian spectatorship exercised by the white-collar worker Miriam, who has affinity with fin de siècle Lodnon's working-class, Eleanor's slum work and her travelling around the city as leisured rambler represent thus largely the upper middle-class women's experience of the city.

Her mobility around the city is made possible by the routine visits to the poor she does on a weekly basis. When carrying out her task, Eleanor has to employ the omnibus to commute between Abercorn Terrace, her bourgeois residence in the West End, and the slums in the East End. The bus ride around the city thus registers for Eleanor a significant spatial and visual experience:

> Among the other traffic she singled out one bulky form; mercifully, it was yellow; mercifully she had caught her bus. She hailed it and climbed on top. She signed with relief as she pulled the leather apron over her knees. All responsibility now rested with the driver. She relaxed; she breathed in the soft London air; she heard the dull London roar with pleasure. She looked along the street and relished the sight of cabs, vans, and carriages all trotting past with an end in view. This was her world; here she was in her element. The streets were crowded; women were swarming in an out

> of shops with their shopping baskets. There was something customary, rhythmical about it, she thought, like rooks swooping in a field, rising and falling. (94)

As with Gertrude in Levy's *Romance of a Shop*, Eleanor climbs on top of the omnibus, presenting herself a passenger intoxicated by the urban pageant. Thus entitled to a mobile view of the teeming street, Eleanor, who finds London "her world" and is "in her element," acts out an alternative form of female flânerie through the help of the modern mass transport in which Gertrude takes also a particular interest. Like Gertrude, whose public visibility in the city is ascribable to her practice of independent livelihood as female worker and writer, Eleanor is also the very picture of the "Golden Spinster" increasingly visible in the fin de siècle city practicing a self-supporting life style. In her bus ride, Eleanor is recognized by her fellow passenger as typical of such New Women practicing voluntary spinsterhood:

> The man on whose toe she had trodden sized her up; a well-known type; with a bag; philanthropic; well nourished; a spinster, a virgin; like all the women of her class, cold; her passions had never been touched; yet not unattractive. (102)

As well as offering an occasion to explore the bustling fin de siècle London, Eleanor's visit to the slum is presented as a journey into the darkest of the city. The ambience of urban poverty is represented through a perspective that sees degeneration in the space and those inhabiting it:

> The smoke blowing through Peter Street had condensed, between the narrowness of the houses, into a fine grey veil. But the houses on either

> side were clearly visible. Save for two in the middle of the street, they were all precisely the same—yellow-grey boxes with slate tents on top. Nothing whatever was happening; a few children were playing in the street, two cats turned something over the gutter with their paws. Yet a woman leaning out of the windows searched this way, that way, up and down the street as if she were raking every cranny for something to feed on. Her eyes, rapacious, greedy, like the eyes of a bird of prey, were sulky and sleepy, as if they had nothing to feed their hunger upon. Nothing happened—nothing whatever. (96)

A sharp contrast with the glittering urban pageant of the West End, with which wealthy, leisured women like Eleanor definitely feel more comfortable and familiar, the slum in the East End is represented as a space of shabbiness, unattractiveness, and sameness. The woman looking out of the windows for the approach of Eleanor looms large especially in the picture and is rendered all the more a representative of those poor, hunger-stricken people inhabiting the space.

Representing an encounter with the classed other, Eleanor's slum experience generates for her a double consciousness which is accountable in terms of class and gender, both factors being particularly pertinent to her newly public subjectivity acquired through working as philanthropist. On the one hand, Eleanor patronizes those living under the poverty line in her visits to the slum. A condescending gaze is especially perceived in her interactions with the slum residents. Yet the vitality of those working-class people, who are far from being yoked and disciplined by the stifling social decorum which the middle-class is supposed to observe, makes Eleanor

envy them. This provides a starkly contrasting experience to the upper-middle-class women like the female Pargiters, who lead a life of bourgeois tedium and confinement, as perceived in the many limitations upon their social and public life. That was why Eleanor says to her sisters after her visit to the slum, "The poor enjoyed themselves more than we do" (32).[117]

Virginia Woolf and Her London Essays

Eleanor's exploration of London streets may have impacted strongly on her construction of subjectivity, but in the 1890s, wherein the story is set, many women still experience restrictions on their spatial movement and charity work often has to be used as an excuse for greater spatial freedom. By the first few decades of the twentieth century, however, with the increasing loosening of gender boundaries expressed in spatial restrictions on women, more and more women are able to derive greater pleasure from freely meandering around London and moving their footsteps to hitherto unexplored corners of the great city. Such pleasure and its resultant impact on the construction of self are well captured in Woolf's own London essays.

As well as representing in *The Years* fin de siècle female mobility practiced by the woman charity worker, whose exploration of the city is legitimated and excused by the caring services she volunteers, Woolf herself embodies a flâneuse strolling and observing the modern city that welcomes women walking publicly as contributing to and making an essential part of the increasingly democratized urban crowd in her

[117] Reflecting that the middle-class women live a leisured yet pathetically enclosed life, Amy Levy once wrote to her friend Vernon Lee, "[s]omehow those girls from the streets, with short and merry lives, do not excite my compassion half as much as the small bourgeoisie shut up in stucco villas at Brosdesbury or Ishington," adding that their enforced respectability seems to her "really tragic."[117] It is a perspective from a woman of the middle-class like Levy, which is obtainable only through looking at the life of those socially inferior to her yet exempt from the enforced respectability she is supposed to suffer. In *The Years*, such an envy of the working-class life is also found in Eleanor.

London essays, a series of urban sketches produced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Into the 1920s and 1930s, female public walking is mostly accepted, and Woolf has indicated throughout her observations of modern London's growing egalitarian city spaces that the major concerns of her tours around the city might be further associated with aesthetical, socio-cultural, and historical reflections on the city space, though her mobility and spectatorship practiced against the backdrop of the even more spectacular, commodified urban spectacle unmistakably also bring her into line with the previous two women writer-observers of the fin de siècle city. This section then seeks to explore Woolf's "Street Haunting," an 1927 article on her one-hour sauntering in London, along with her collection of five articles in *The London Scene*, as manifesting her observation on the city as a site registering modern experience of transience, the movement of the urban crowd, and various monuments of the past.[118]

Streets of Modernity

The faculty of sight dominates Woolf's London essays. The sight as a visual capacity is repeatedly associated with an urban, aesthetical experience of modernity throughout her essays. In her 1927 article "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," Woolf records her navigation of London streets in a winter's evening. Embarking on streetwalking, Woolf describes herself as stepping out of her house and indulging in an exploration based merely on a form of superficial viewing:

[118] Of these essays, Woolf notes in her diary from 1932: "I'm being bored to death by my London articles—pure brilliant description—six of them—and not a thought for fear of clouding the brilliancy" (1978, 301). These words acknowledge the restrictive frame for her essays, intended as they were for a primarily North American and European bourgeois readership of the magazine. Susan Squier (1985) and Pamela Caughie (1991) have not taken Woolf at her word about the superficiality of these essays, and have underscored their significance as social critique delivered through anti-patriarchal revisionings of the city.

> But when the door shuts on us, all that vanishes. The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye. How beautiful a street is in winter! It is at once revealed and obscured. How vaguely one can trace symmetrical straight avenues of doors and windows . . . . We are only gliding smoothly on the surface. The eye is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure. It floats us smoothly down a stream; resting, pausing, the brain sleeps perhaps as it looks. ("Street Haunting" 22)

Such a journey is indicated as beneficial to the soul excreting "shell-like" covering as a shelter and mark of individuality. Walking into the street, as Woolf indicates, our individuality gives in to an enormous perceiving eye, "a central oyster of perceptiveness." The eye as such is marked by Woolf especially for its breaking from a necessity to see into things under observation. The predominance of a superficial viewing over other faculties and especially over a penetrating, meaning-probing viewing is highlighted by Woolf as flâneuse and urban connoisseur, who delights in an aesthetical appreciation of the city pageant. The street is thus revealed as a site for the play of the dallying eye, which is "not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure."

Woolf's is an experience of urban modernity traceable to Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. In his analysis of modern life as distinct from that lived by people of previous ages, Baudelaire indicates that the visual experience of modernity

is featured especially by the transience characterizing urban life. Baudelaire highlights these qualities of modernity in “The Painter of Modern Life” when he says: “By *modernité* I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and immutable” (36). This appreciation of the ephemeral and fleeting constitutes what Baudelaire terms *modernité*. And these elements of transience and ephemerality which Baudelaire finds typical of the ever-changing patterns of modern city life are further related by Walter Benjamin to numerous phantasmagoric manifestations of an urban culture increasingly visualized and commodified. The arcade of the nineteenth century is identified by Benjamin as featuring such a dominantly visual and commodified culture. A new invention of industrial luxury, the arcade, which is marble-paneled and glass-covered so as to receive its light from above, becomes the very setting for the display and exhibition of commodities. The arcade is thus described by Benjamin as “a dream-house,” “the temple of commodity capitalism,” and “a theater of purchases” (1973: 86-87).

With the introduction of large sheets of glass and new lightening technologies, the department stores, along with cafés and restaurants emerging in the fin de siècle city, are sites replacing arcades through offering even more amplified physical and phantasmagoric spectacles which characterize an emerging form of urban visuality. Soliciting the gaze of the passer-by, the shop window becomes “a proscenium for visual intoxication, the site of seduction for consumer’s desire” (Frieberg 1993: 65). The use of display windows by shops and department stores since the later half of the nineteenth century also testifies to the burgeoning of a commodity culture that increasingly courts upper- and middle-class women shoppers, who are held as prey to

the enticing show of commodities by those founders of emporia.

Similarly, Woolf finds these emporia a site registering the ephemerality of modernity. With its swarming people, vehicles, and commodities, the street of Oxford provides a most suitable site for the dallying eye. Those shops and department stores are held as domes of pleasure for the window-shopper, whose browsing and contemplating capture all the beauty of those on display. The effortlessness of such a gaze is ascribable to both the inherently imaginative faculty of the eye that "creates, adorns, and enhances" out of what it seizes on and to the modern, democraticizing way of window-showing that makes one "under no obligation to possess it":

> Passing, glimpsing, everything seems accidentally but miraculously sprinkled with beauty, as if the tide of trade which deposits its burden so punctually and prosaically upon the shores of Oxford Street had this night cast up nothing but treasure. With no thought of buying, the eye is sportive and generous; it creates; it adorns; it enhances. Standing out in the street, one may build up all the chambers of an imaginary house and furnish them at one's will with sofa, table, carpet. Our merrymaking shall be reflected in that thick round mirror. But, having built and furnished the house, one is happily under no obligation to possess it; one can dismantle it in the twinkling of an eye, and build and furnish another house with other chairs and other glasses. ("Street Haunting" 27)

In "Oxford Street Tide," the street of Oxford is further acclaimed for exemplifying these qualities of modernity. The department stores are revealed as modern palaces replacing their ancient, aristocratic counterparts in that the former

serves as a better vehicle of modern experience of transience. With its glassy, glamorous appearance, the department store becomes an emblem of the modern that Walter Benjamin also finds in the emporium of Paris of the Second Empire:

> The charm of modern London is that it is not built to last; it is built to pass. Its glassiness, its transparency, its surging waves of coloured plaster give a different pleasure and achieve a different end from that which was desired and attempted by the old builders and their patrons, the nobility of England. Their pride required the illusion of permanence. Ours, on the contrary, seems to delight in proving that we can make stone and brick as transitory as our own desires. The palaces of Oxford Street stretch stone fantastically . . . and boldly attempt an air of lavishness, opulence, in their effort to persuade the multitude that here unending beauty, ever fresh, every new, very cheap and within the reach of everybody, bubbles up everyday of the week from an inexhaustible well. The mere thought of age, of solidity, of lasting for ever is abhorrent to Oxford Street. (24-25)

Not only is the department store held as emblems of transience and fleeting beauty typical of modern times, but it is also praised for offering a demotic pleasure enjoyed by the consuming masses. The modernity this modern palace emblematizes thus is highly contrasted with a preference to permanence and endurance perceived in those stately architectures that had been occupied exclusively by the dominant class centuries before.

The Urban Crowd

The crowd is definitely a significant constituent of the streetscape, one that

gives off a tidal, engulfing collectivity whose impact has been ambivalently explored by a wide spectrum of critical observers since the nineteenth century. On the one hand, studies of the urban crowd by theorists like Gustave, Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde represent a bourgeois conception or construction of the public walking masses as threatening presences.[119] The anonymity of the masses embodies a liable, chaotic, undifferentiated force that threatens to disrupt the boundaries of autonomous individuality. Their theories often associate the crowd with the working-class poor, savages, and the insane. Theories as such might arise out of an urgent need to explain the conditions of chaos and anomie commonly perceived in the fin de siècle city.[120] Assuming a male, bourgeois, and rational perspective, Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde thus address the features of the crowd emerging in the nineteenth-century city:

> It will be remarked that among the special characteristics of crowds there are several—such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others beside—which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior form of evolution—in women, savages, and children for instance. (LeBon [1895] 1995: 35-36)

On the other hand, the crowd might present itself as intoxicating and forming an integral part of the cityscape. The crowd as such has figured significantly as object of contemplation in urban sketches by the nineteenth-century writers like Edgar Allan

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[119] Gabriel Tarde, *On Communication and Social Influence*, ed. Terry Clark (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1969). Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* was translated into English as *The Crowd* in 1897 and into thirteen other languages by 1913. That it achieved such great popularity indicates exactly the widespread interest in the crowd throughout Europe.

[120] See Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Heaven: Yale UP, 1981) for an excellent discussion of social anxiety as manifested in studies of sociology, psychiatry, criminal anthropology, and crowd psychology in fin de siècle France.

Poe and Charles Baudelaire. For instance, the flâneur, the rambler in the street of the nineteenth-century city, is represented as delighting in observing and seeking anonymity amidst the jostling crowd:

> For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (Baudelaire 90)

Departing from the above-mentioned bourgeois observers of the city who treat the urban crowd as an engulfing, threatening, and degenerate presence, the flâneur, who makes home "in the heart of the multitude," is a man of the crowd, which not only offers a shelter-like protection but also registers aesthetically the ephemerality of modernity by producing "the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite."

Despite its implicitly gendered viewing position, which has been recently debunked by feminist scholars, the flâneur, "the man of the crowd," to whom Baudelaire himself and those numerous candidates he indicates throughout his sketches, essays, and poetry on urban public life give a lively form, is nevertheless entitled to the anonymous and intoxicating experience when he places himself amongst the jostling pedestrians in the cityscape of the mid-nineteenth century. This experience, largely pleasurable and based upon a plebeian spectatorship, is shared by

many female ramblers increasingly visible in the street since the later half of the nineteenth century. As is indicated in the previous chapters, women have revealed themselves as capable users of the fin de siècle city's public spaces, and the swarming crowd provides the very camouflage, protection and anonymity they need when entering the conventionally male-dominated public spaces of the city. A similarity is thus perceived between Woolf's delight in the anonymity of the crowd and Levy's and Richardson's celebrations of the freedom emblematic of the jostling pedestrians they encounter in the public walking in the street of late-Victorian London.

It is obvious that when writing her series of London essays, Woolf engages in a dialogue with these discourses prior to or contemporary with her observations of the urban crowd. Writing about London in the early decades of the twentieth century, Woolf is attracted also by the walking public masses that have previously engaged much critical attention from a wide spectrum of urban observers. Her observations of the urban crowd are, however, more confident and assured about a conglomerate of urban population which is becoming increasingly democraticized. Viewed in this light, Woolf obviously departs from the late-Victorian male observers of London manifesting cityphobia or assuming more or less a bourgeois perspective upon the urban crowd as the mob or the unruly and contaminating force.

In "Street Haunting" the urban crowd is recognized as aesthetically constituting the spectacle of the bustling city. At the end of her one-hour sauntering in the street, Woolf observes the passing of those getting off from their work:

> But the main stream of walkers at this hour sweeps too fast to let us ask such questions. They are wrapt, in this short passage from work to home,

> in some narcotic dream, now that they are free from the desk, and have the fresh air on their cheeks. They put on those bright clothes which they must hang up and lock the key upon all the rest of the day, and are great cricketers, famous actresses, soldiers who have saved their country at the hour of need. Dreaming, gesticulating, often muttering a few words aloud, they sweep over the Strand and across Waterloo Bridge . . . . (32)

Woolf's representation of the commuters as a dreaming collectivity thus highlights the aesthetical manifestation of the urban crowd, which makes up an intoxicating presence indigenous to the cityscape.

As well as presenting itself to be the object of aesthetical contemplation, the urban crowd as observed by Woolf constitutes significantly the masses of a democratic era that increasingly takes shape in the early decades of the twentieth century. Enamored with the massive presence of her fellow citizens, Woolf represents them as the modern crowd, whose humble existence serves to indicate exactly the advancement of the political regime from an aristocratic era into a democratic one. In "Abbeys and Cathedrals," for instance, the eras of aristocracy and democracy find their contrast in the nobles of the past and the masses of nowadays respectively. The essay begins with a description of the undistinguishable crowd of modern London before embarking on the tours around those ancient, prestigious churches like St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, where those of the highest ranks were buried. In contrast with the "Kings and Queens, poets and statements" who still seem to "act their parts and are not suffered to turn quietly to dust," (49) these men and women walking in the street seem to "shrank and become multitudinous and minute instead of

single and substantial" (43-44). Taking the form of "a million Mr. Smiths and Miss Browns," they seem "too many, too minute, too like each other to have each a name, a character, a separate life of their own (44).

A crowd as such might appear to be outweighed by the greatness and splendor of those lying quietly inside the cathedrals and abbeys, whose "high-pitched voices," "emphatic gestures," and "characteristic attitudes" dominate even those spaces nowadays (49). Yet for all its humbleness and obscurity, this crowd nevertheless constitutes the democratized city pageant, which, despite its seemingly chaotic manifestation, embraces people indiscriminately. The significance of the city and its swarming crowd registering an egalitarian space is particularly unfolded through the contrasting images Woolf discerns when entering Westminster Abbey, a resting place for those of the noblest:

> One feels as if one had stepped from the democratic helter skelter, the hubbub and hum-drum of the street, into a brilliant assembly, a select society of men and women of the highest distinction. (47)

These men and women from "a brilliant assembly, a select society," of which only a few are chosen as representatives contrast sharply with those anonymous, obscure urban masses of "the democratic helter skelter," accommodating to "the hubbub and hum-drum of the street."

Monuments of the City

The city also presents itself as a site of ruins, where the past and the present merge. As urban archeologist, Woolf evokes the past not a world she longs to return but as a world symptomatic of aristocratic, individualist splendors that the modern

democratic system finds increasingly repellent. In “Abbeys and Cathedrals,” the churches in London are represented by Woolf as burying grounds evoking contrasts of the past and the present, the former registering a space of resourcefulness and luxury enjoyed especially by the noble whose deaths are prior to the processes of modernization and democratization, whereas the later an obscure yet generally egalitarian cityscape occupied by the masses. As Woolf indicates, the space that the dead enjoy is especially brought home to us when we step into St. Mary-le-Bow, a city church where even a man of obscurity enjoys “a whole wall covered with the list of his virtues”[121] and occupies space that might in our day “serve almost for an office and demand a rent of many hundreds a year” (44). Thus one leaves the church marveling at “the spacious days” when even the unknown citizen “could occupy so much room with their bones and confidently request so much attention for their virtues,” while nowadays a man of equal obscurity “would be allotted one slice of white stone of the regulation size among a thousand others and his great and godlike virtues would have to go unnoticed” (44-45).

If these tombs in the church of St. Mary-le-Bow mark the resourcefulness that even the common people were entitled to in securing their resting places, Woolf then pinpoints that even more luxury of space is enjoyed by the privileged classes who find in St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey their reposing room. The majesty of St. Paul’s perceived from outside, which “swells like a great grey bubble,” and “looms

[121] As Woolf reveals, in the year 1737 a man called Howard died and was buried in St. Mary-le-Bow. A whole wall is covered with the list of his virtues: “He was blessed with a sound and intelligent mind which shone forth conspicuously in the habitual exercise of great and godlike virtues. . . . In the midst of a profligate age he was inviolably attached to justice, sincerity and truth.” See Woolf “Abbeys and Cathedrals” 44.

mountainous and immense," (43; 45) finds its expression in the interior where the tombs heaped like "majestic beds" lying between the pillars (46). These tombs are the dignified reposing room to which "great statesmen and men of action retire, robbed in all their splendor, to accept the thanks and applause of their fellow-citizens" (46). Westminster Abbey is another resting place for those of the highest ranks, where their greatness and virtues have been kept intact for hundreds of years. Like St Paul's, Westminster Abbey with all its grandeur evokes a contrast of the privileged classes and the democratized masses, who are separated in terms of the time, space, and social position they have occupied.

> Everyone in this brilliant assembly has a mind and a will of his own. The Abbey is shot with high-pitched voices; its peace is broken by emphatic gestures and characteristic attitudes. Not an inch of its walls but speaks and claims and illustrates. Kings and Queens, poets and statesmen still act their parts and are not suffered to turn quietly to dust. (49)

While these cathedrals and abbeys as historical sites mark the privilege entitled to those of highest social ranks, there are places registering the privilege enjoyed by the dominant sex. In "Great Men's House" Woolf shows us around a largely male-dominated space. Woolf begins this essay with a resounding outcry: "London, happily, is becoming full of great men's houses, bought for the nation and preserved entirely with the chairs they sat on and the cups they drank from, their umbrellas and their chests of drawers" (31). The narrator then proceeds to name places like Dickens's, Johnson's, and Carlyle's houses as sites commemorating these "great men" who found London their lodging places. As with many other tourist sites of London

Woolf marks as male-dominated, these residences of “great men” map out a gendered cartography of the city. Taking a tour around Number 5 of Cheyne Row where the Carlyles inhabited decades ago, Woolf first introduces us to the kitchen, whose importance to the couple is particularly rendered in details:

> Go down into the kitchen. There, in two seconds, one is made acquainted with a fact of incalculable importance—they had no water laid on. Every drop that the Carlyles used had to be pumped by hand from a well in the kitchen. All through the mid-Victorian age the house was necessarily a battlefield where daily, summer and winter, mistress and maid fought against dirt and cold for cleanness and warmth. (32-33)

Such is the effect of a pump in the basement that Mrs. Carlyle’s cheeks turn “hollow,” and bitterness and suffering “mingle in the half-tendered, half-tortured expression of the eyes” (35). This mentioning of the chores done in the kitchen by Jane Carlyle and her maid contrasts with Woolf’s rendering of the daily work performed by Mr. Carlyle. The historian is portrayed as occupying himself with the production of his works:

> Up in the attic under a skylight Carlyle groaned, as he wrestled with his history, on a horsehair chair, while a yellow shaft of London light fell upon his papers and the rattle of a barrel organ and the raucous shouts of street hawkers came through walls whose double thickness distorted but by no means excluded the sound. (33)

While the attic-study is presented as a male-dominated space where Carlyle commits himself to works of history, an act marking male involvement in public sphere and matter, the drawing-room, as well as the kitchen, is depicted as the very place the

mistress occupies herself with tedious domestic works: “The horsehair couch needed recovering; the drawing-room paper with its small, dark pattern needed cleaning; the yellow varnish on the panels was cracked and peeling—all must be stitched, cleansed, scoured with her own hands” (33-34).

The suffocating domesticity characterizing the life of Jane Carlyle has been addressed earlier by Woolf in her 1923 article “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.” Mrs. Carlyle is depicted as a victim to her married life and a domestic tradition that insists on female confinement to the private sphere and prevents a woman of genius like her from making any literary pursuits.[122] The reconstruction or re-imagination of Mrs. Carlyle as housekeeper could be thus interpreted as Woolf’s indictment of the infamous Victorian ideology of separate spheres discouraging women’s involvement in public spaces and affairs.

In “This is the House of Commons,” Woolf introduces us to still another site registering a male history of power politics, whose development is nevertheless interpreted by her not through the lens of gender but of the political regime. Entering the House of Commons, Woolf reminds her reader what it signifies through its commonness:

> Vague though our history may be, we somehow feel that we common people won this right centuries ago, and have held it for centuries past, and the mace is our mace and the Speaker is our speaker and we have no need of trumpeters and gold and scarlet to usher our representative into our own House of Commons. (56)

[122] See Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” *A Woman’s Essays: Selected Essays, Volume One* (London: Penguine, 1992) 69-87.

This parliament hall thus heralds the rule by the people practiced centuries ago, a democracy contrasted by the ancient regime of oligarchy for which trumpeters, gold and scarlet were employed to boost an individualist, ceremonious aura to aristocratic rulers. Unmistakably Woolf as narrator identifies with those common people who fought for democracy before. Marking the origin of British democracy, this hall of parliament is revealed a plebian space, since from inside it is "not in the least noble or majestic or even dignified," as palaces or cathedrals might evoke a past of individual splendors (56). Rather, there is nothing venerable or ceremonious and it is "as shiny and as ugly as any other moderate-sized public hall," where an untidy, informal-looking assembly meets to dispute the issues of national importance (56-57).

These representatives holding sessions in the House of Commons are thus presented as disrupting authority and dictatorship characterizing those who previously governed with their scepters:

> It is an untidy, informal-looking assembly. Sheets of white paper seem to be always fluttering to the floor. Even the central island of control and dignity where the Speaker sits under his canopy is a perching ground for casual members who seem to be taking a pee at the proceedings at their ease. Dipping and rising, moving and settling, the Commons remind one of a flock of birds settling on a stretch of ploughed land. (57)

The Commons are mockingly compared to "a flock of birds" feeding on sheets of white paper. Despite the untidiness and informality manifested by the Commons, as Woolf has noted, their presence in the hall of democracy nevertheless heralds the end of "single men and power":

> Now no single human being can withstand the pressure of human affairs. They sweep over him and obliterate him; they leave him featureless, anonymous, their instrument merely. The conduct of affairs has passed from the hands of individuals to the hands of committees. Even committees can only guide them and sweep them on to other committees. The supreme need is dispatch. A thousand ships come to anchor in the docks every week; how many thousand causes do not come daily to be decided in the House of Commons? Thus if statues are to be raised, they will become more and more monolithic, plain and featureless. The days of single men and personal power are over. Wit, invective, passion, are no longer called for. Mr. MacDonald is addressing not the small separate ears of his audience in the House of Commons, but men and women in factories, in shops, in farms on the veldt, in Indian villages. (62-63)

While the statues of individual heroes might signify the reign of aristocracy centuries ago, these modern halls of the parliament are not built to worship these heroic figures but to shine out the anonymity of the increasingly democratized crowd. As Woolf observes, Westminster Hall raises its immense dignity when one passes out as "little men and women moving soundlessly about the floor" and appears "minute, perhaps pitiable, but also venerable and beautiful under the curve of the vast dome, under the perspective of the huge columns" (64). Democracy and aristocracy thus find their emblems in the halls and statues respectively, the former signifying an embracement of the undistinguishable urban crowd by the democratic institution taking shape in the very age Woolf writes her London essays, whereas the latter memorizing the glories

of individual powers characterizing the British before democracy dawns.

Conclusion

This study has examined the numerous roles played by women entering the public spaces of London in the half century from the 1880s to the 1930s as workers, shoppers, diners, clubbers, cinema-goers, philanthropists, and tourists, a wide spectrum of active female social actors that until recently have not attracted enough attention from scholars of late-Victorian and Edwardian literature. The neglect of these newly pubic women in the fin de siècle period, who are distinct from their home-bound Victorian predecessors, is largely ascribed to an uncritical acceptance of or surrender to the long-held, dominant assumption of separate spheres in the nineteenth century. Through examining the writings of Amy Levy, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf, who portray the multifarious pictures of women rambling the streets of modern London, this study has demonstrated that female public visibility and mobility have at least since the fin de siècle period been commonly practiced by a conglomerate of middle-class women.

The city of the fin de siècle plays a significant role in shaping the emerging public subjectivity of these middle-class women, who have long been confined to the private, domestic sphere throughout most of the nineteenth century and have been represented as the “angel in the house,” an image marking not only female chastity and moral excellence but also the stark spatial demarcation of separate spheres imposed on the female sex. Along with the development of commercialism, mass consumption, and public transportation, the city emerging in the late nineteenth century has transformed into a spatiality actively interacting with the swarms of these newly public middle-class women, whose presences in the fin de siècle city’s public

spaces signify the very fact that the disruption of conventional bourgeois gendered order and spatial hierarchy is taking place in this period.

Mobility and spectatorship are thus two significant tropes applicable to women's spatial and visual explorations of the fin de siècle city, the former underscoring their meandering footsteps threading through the increasingly egalitarian public space while the latter their roving eyes casting glances at those enticing urban spectacles which are already a phantasmagoria of commodity display, jostling crowd, and bustling streetscapes. Through writing about fin de siècle female streetwalking, the three women writers have demonstrated that those seemingly passive women of the middle-class may indeed be capable, through their public presence and their incessant footsteps, of pushing at the established boundaries. The massive presence of the New Woman in the fin de siècle city, an appellation employed by those applauding or repudiating her public visibility, heralds the disruption of a gendered, separate-sphere spatial demarcation observed by the upper- and middle-class women throughout most of the nineteenth century. Women are perceived to take part in the increasingly commodified and democratized city that provides more and more legitimate venues for female users of the city's public spaces.

Female workers of the fin de siècle period pioneer in claiming an equal standing in the city's working space and a life of independence which most Victorian women of the middle-class have long been denied. The opening up of white-collar work to women during the late-Victorian period provides new opportunities for women in fiction as well as in life. Both Levy and Richardson in their novels portray self-supporting women from the middle-class, who are forced to work because of the

sudden loss of family fortunes. Laboring in shops or offices, these white-collar worker-heroines nevertheless are invigorated rather than enervated by their routine jobs because they provide the very possibilities of independence, of rejecting conventional feminine roles, and even of rejecting marriage as the only fulfilling female destiny. Marking the experience of female independence, work as such has liberated these heroines from the protective yet stifling cocoon of conventional middle-class femininity and contributed to active women's participation in public spaces, which is especially manifested by their public walking in the streets of fin de siècle London.

As with female workers who increasingly occupy the city's public spaces, women writers embody female self-assertion and independence through claiming her rights to the fin de siècle literary profession and urban public life. In *Romance of a Shop*, Levy portrays Gertrude the very image of such a self-assertive, independent New Woman writer, who negotiates the city's gendered and increasingly commodified spaces. In her life and London poetry, Levy represents also the female poet as urban writer-observer, strolling, watching, and eulogizing the city while making her claim to a life of independence that the city brings her to.

As well as presenting themselves as capable producers, fin de siècle women assert also their rights to the increasingly commodified cityscape, in which female consumers play an unprecedentedly significant role. As an emerging site of female consumption, the West End of London in the fin de siècle period registers especially women's greater mobility in public consuming spaces. Apart from its private aristocratic residences, the Wes End has traditionally been the center of politics and

power throughout most of the nineteenth century. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, facilitated by the development of commodity culture, the West End has transformed into sites of commodity display, shopping, and pleasure, its public spaces becoming hetero-social and increasingly feminized, where shopping ladies of the upper- and the middle-classes, female clerks of the lower-middle-class, shopgirls, female actresses, and female audiences constitute a large bulk in the jostling urban crowd.

Along the central streets of the West End, with its mushrooming of shops, department stores, theaters, cafés, female clubs, and cinemas around the turn of the century, women increasingly manifest their visibility as purchasers, pleasure-seekers, and window-shoppers on the public street and the hetero-social urban space. Women's clubs, ladies' lavatories, female dining rooms, and tea shops emerging rapidly in fin de siècle London's West End represent the joint efforts by the public and private sectors to improve the city and to satisfy the physical needs of an increasingly mobile female population. Established during the same time, situated in the same neighborhood, and courting the same consuming public, these institutions address middle-class women as target customers and, through inviting them to purchase goods and services, contribute to the disruption of the long-held Victorian separate spheres and to the increased female public visibility at the turn of the century.

Throughout *The Pilgrimage*, there are a lot of examples of women melting into the walking public in their strolls around London streets, indicating that female streetwalking has become increasingly acceptable since the last years of the nineteenth century when Miriam and her female contemporaries assert their visibility

amidst the jostling crowd. Women are recognizable as making their ways to schools, work places, cafés, theaters, cinemas, clubs, shops, on foot or via the help of public transportations. The female shoppers and diners in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* provide the very picture of women consumers in fin de siècle London. The West End is portrayed as a site where commodity culture, female consumption, and urban public spaces converge to produce a unique women's experience of the city, one paradoxically combined of female pleasure and desire.

Previous studies often focus on the experience of the well-to-do middle-class women as buyers shopping for their family. Though such shopping invariably enables middle-class women to take part in a much wider women's sphere of the fin de siècle city, such experience nevertheless distinguishes themselves from their economically embarrassed sisters. In *The Pilgrimage*, the heroine Miriam, who has to live on "her pound a week," represents an alternative experience of the working woman conscious of her subordinate position as a consuming subject. Rather than being supported by the income of male breadwinners, as most married middle-class women do, Miriam has to budget her spending. Unlike the well-to-do middle-class women shoppers having more flexible budgets and affording to frequent expensive shops, Miriam needs to economize the use of her humble salary and make sure every penny was spent on the right things. In *The Pilgrimage*, the flâneuse as a shopper has a distinctive experience of modernity, which is mediated through both gender and class against a highly commoditized urban pageant embodied by late-Victorian London's West End shopping ambience.

Since the invention of cinema at the fin de siècle, cinema-going has become one

staple entertainment especially catering for the needs of a swarming crowd accompanying the rapid progress of urbanization and industrialization. As a means of mass entertainment culminating in popularity from the 1920s to the 1940s, cinema does not meet as much applause from the contemporary cultural critics as from the general public. Along with the development of mass consumption, commodity culture, and public space in the early twentieth century, cinema and cinema-going register not only the booming of popular, commoditized pleasure but also the dwindling of a high-brow culture privileging only a selected minority.

Throughout her film criticism Dorothy Richardson argues for an alternative measure for cinema as an art form and popular pleasure. Observing that cinematic spectacles have contributed and corresponded to a renewed modern spectatorship, particularly on the part of the urban cinema-goer, Richardson, an urban rambler and spectator, develops alternative views on cinematic spectatorship and the mass cinema-going in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. In many ways, Richardson's views on cinema, cinematic spectatorship and cinema-going challenge and even reverse the implicitly gendered assumptions held by the critics of cinema in her time. Unlike those criticizing cinema for producing the uncultivated mass spectatorship and the passive, "feminized" spectator, Richardson unearths the many positive aspects of the mass's cinema-going, which is, for her, a matter of visual, spatial, and aesthetical significances. Predicated on her observation of the mass spectatorship, Richardson's view of women's cinema-going re-appropriates femininity traditionally associated with passivity, exhaustedness, and being-looked-at-ness, rendering women's viewing a powerful look at the already enlarged and transgressed visual and urban space.

This study has thus examined female consumption as manifesting fin de siècle women's complicated involvement in the city's consuming spaces and commodity culture, which is represented by Dorothy Richardson in her fictional narratives about female consumers emerging in fin de siècle London, a phenomenon historically experienced by women of the 1880s and 1890s who increasingly found London's West End a site of consumption and female pleasure, and by the authoress herself in her "ethnographical" writings on cinema as popular pleasure appealing to a wider spectrum of mass consumers, of which women constitute a significant part who seek fantasy and entertainment in the seemingly anesthetic form of pleasure. Yet if the West End shopping and entertaining places of London provided an urban space inhabitable by respectable women in the fin de siècle period, then East End philanthropy provided another opportunity for the modern women to make a claim on the city's public space.

The urban topologies of West End and East End had reinforced the social contrasts. Ownership and government legislation, as well as the status and wealth of the residents, affected the kind of urban spaces produced in both areas. While the west was populated by members of the aristocracy, nobility and wealthy bourgeois class who migrated from the city westward to new residential areas, the city and the eastern districts surrounding it were commercial and industrial zones, inhabited by the working-class and large numbers of immigrants. These movements created thus a growing gulf within London between the racially mixed and working-class east and the fashionable and upper-class west. The female philanthropist's slum work thus offers a most contrasting experience to those experiences by women walking and

observing the largely pleasant, entertaining, and civilized central London. The East End or these slums in central London represent an alternative urban cartography which female philanthropists map out through their walks into the homes of those in need. Representing an encounter with the classed other, Eleanor's slum experience in *The Years* generates for her a double consciousness which is accountable in terms of class and gender, both factors being particularly pertinent to her newly public subjectivity acquired through working as philanthropist.

By the first few decades of the twentieth century, however, with the increasing loosening of gender boundaries expressed in spatial restrictions on women, more and more women are able to derive greater pleasure from freely meandering around London and moving their footsteps to hitherto unexplored corners of the great city. Such pleasure and its resultant impact on the construction of self are well captured in Woolf's own London essays. As well as representing in *The Years* fin de siècle female mobility practiced by the woman charity worker, whose exploration of the city is legitimated and excused by the caring services she volunteers, Woolf herself embodies a flâneuse strolling and observing the modern city that welcomes women walking publicly as contributing to and making an essential part of the increasingly democratized urban crowd in her London essays, a series of urban sketches produced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Into the 1920s and 1930s, female public walking is mostly accepted, and Woolf has indicated throughout her observations of modern London's growing egalitarian city spaces that the major concerns of her tours around the city might be further associated with aesthetical, socio-cultural, and historical reflections on the city space, though her mobility and spectatorship

practiced against the backdrop of the even more spectacular, commodified urban spectacle unmistakably also bring her into line with the previous two women writer-observers of the fin de siècle city.

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學生　　王瀚陞　　生於中華民國　陸拾貳(西元1973) 年　捌　月　貳拾柒 日

在本校　外國語文學院　　英國語文學系　文學組

修業期滿成績及格准予畢業依學位授予法之規定

授予　文學博士　學位

院長

校長　吳思華

中　　華　　民　　國　　九十八　年　　六