Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture · Vol 4.1 · December 2010 · 57-80.

Consuming Fin de Siécle London: Female Consumers in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*

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ABSTRACT

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. 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. 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. This paper would thus examine 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.

KEY WORDS: Dorothy Richardson, Female Consumption, Fin de Siècle London, The Pilgrimage, Urban Narrative

* Received: March 31, 2010; Accepted: September 21, 2010
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消費世紀末倫敦：《朝聖之旅》裡的女性消費者

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摘　要

作為新興的消費場域，十九世紀末的倫敦西區特別標記出女性在城市公共消費空間裡的流動性。隨著世紀末倫敦西區的主要街道上，商店、百貨公司、戲院、俱樂部、電影院、餐館如雨後春筍般出現，中產階級女性也逐漸掙脫傳統家庭私領域空間的束縛並湧現於城市異質空間裡。在城市裡購物、享樂、休憩或走逛瀏覽，這些新興的女性消費大眾享受了前所未有的公共設施與服務。然而女性消費者同時也成為前述各種消費機構的標的—所有的消費設施與服務都是包裝過的商業招攬，目的在吸引女性消費者金錢上的投入。在《朝聖之旅》（*The Pilgrimage*）裡，英國女性小說家桃樂絲・理察森（Dorothy Richardson 1873-1957）再現了女性於十九世紀末城市裡的消費行為。小說裡關於女性消費的豐富敘述正適合作為研究世紀末女性、消費與性別空間跨越之文本。本篇論文因此擬探討《朝聖之旅》裡所呈現的女性在商品文化裡複雜的涉入，聚焦於世紀末女性身為新興的消費者之角色，並探究消費活動對於女性主體與日常活動空間造成之影響。

關鍵詞：桃樂絲・理察森（Dorothy Richardson）、女性消費、世紀末倫敦、《朝聖之旅》（*The Pilgrimage*）、城市敘述

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Introduction

The rise of commodity culture and the concomitant development of commercialized public spaces in the late nineteenth-century paved the way for women to claim their rights to the city. Before this period, public spaces in the city had been mostly male-dominated. With the taverns, pubs, cafés, and clubs catering to men exclusively, there were few resting places for women visiting the city, except for the ill-provided pastry-cook's. Thus, catering to a particularly female clientele, spaces like department stores, lavatories, cafés, restaurants, and female clubs emerging in the fin de siècle city contributed remarkably to an increase in 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 homes 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 recent years when scholars have started to challenge the construction of a largely male, bourgeois public realm endorsed by 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*.[1] Habermas famously argues that the

[1] 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 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 been in decline due to the intervention of government regulation and the rise 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 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 of 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 cultural approaches have indicated that Habermas's theory fails to address the many alternative public spaces catering to people who do not fit into the category of a white, male, bourgeois subject. 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 to participate in the increasingly enlarged, egalitarian public sphere.[2] Spaces like

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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.

[2] Feminist scholars in recent years have worked to indicate that women were 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 spaces 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. 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.

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 latter 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.[3] Browsing through the tantalizing commodities displayed in the windows, women as shoppers are the subjects of desire, claiming their rights to commodities, 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 anything.

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 often risk being objectified through their association with spectacles and 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 an 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

[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) 56-91. See also 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.

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."[4] 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."[5] Since the latter 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 shopping area, where sumptuous boutiques, innovative shops, and department stores began 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 found 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 meant that women as consumers were more than catered to 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 space joined by entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, and feminists.[6] While

[4] 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).

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

[6] 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,

male entrepreneurs built up these amenities mostly out of the commercial considerations, feminists performed the same task to map out a wider women's sphere. The establishment of lavatories, teashops, restaurants, cafés, and clubs catering particularly to women by feminists around the turn of the century provided female consumers with decent and inexpensive venues to rest, dine, and socialize and thus promoted an image of women's consumption positively associated with female freedom and emancipation.

The following sections will thus explore female consumption in fin de siècle London, as is observed and embodied by the heroine Miriam Henderson as consumer in Dorothy Richardson's *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 the city their home as shoppers, diners, or pleasure-seekers. And the West End is the very site where Miriam finds herself catered to by the shops, cafes, restaurants, and female clubs booming in fin de siècle London.

The Female Shopper in the West End

Writing about late-Victorian London, Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957) portrays a female rambler enjoying exploration of 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, commodified spaces.[7] In *Pilgrimage*,

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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 for commercial purposes. Devoted to enhancing the ease and pleasure of female consumption, these male capitalists and their department stores 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.

[7] 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

London embodies spaces of freedom and adventure for the heroine Miriam Henderson, who comes to the city to make her living as a dental assistant. *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 at Mrs. Bailey's in Tansley Street abutting Bloomsbury Square. Driven out of a necessity to support herself by her 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.

In *Pilgrimage*, the first narratives about shopping are unfolded through juxtaposing Miriam's past and present experiences of buying hats. A memory is triggered 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

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Bryher recommends people abroad read *Pilgrimage* if they would know England as it really was between 1890 and 1914 (168). 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 rekindled interest in re-reading Richardson's novels, which represent women's streetwalking and visibility in fin de siècle London's public spaces.

> 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 desire-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 that prompts 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, for 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 of 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. Besides, 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 with a brief window-shopping done by Miriam alone, who has the liberty of walking 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 *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 herself hard pressed to swagger down the shopping streets where both the commodities and the shoppers appear to mock 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 walking 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 is not derived 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 *Pilgrimage* mostly for their own sake corresponds to a transition in the fin de siècle period from 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 and a smart obliging driver 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).

In her letter replying to a friend inquiring about the social position from which the heroine observes her world in *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. *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)[8]

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).

It is also notable that Mrs. Corrie's shopping experience is typical of many upper- and middle-class women in 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.[9] Besides, walking the shopping districts of fin de siècle

[8] 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 pitiable, those indoors having marvelous things to play with from which she was excluded, while those in gardens & stables had things still more marvelous" (Richardson 1995:304).

[9] 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).

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 their attire.

On the contrary, the walking 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 attend to 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, 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 access to the emerging cafés, restaurants, or tea shops.

Women in Cafés and Clubs

In *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's visits to an ABC,[10] 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)

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

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, 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 *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 businessmen, who are largely male professionals or semi-professionals who aspire to upward mobility. The appearance of businessmen in the public dining space highlights 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 to 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.[11] 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

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

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 a 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 (III, 427). On the contrary, her companion 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 judging 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 to the emerging consuming masses constituted significantly, though not exclusively, by 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 access to social and intellectual lives which had long been the male privilege in previous decades. Before the 1880s, club life was known almost only to the gentlemen who found the club a venue of entertainment, society, and intellectual discussion.[12] 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

[12] 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 to 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.

male-dominated public space. The development of London's female clubs in the latter half of the nineteenth century has since its beginning had subtle liaison with 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 institutions 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 commercial considerations.

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 during their visit to the city, when most of the eating places cater to men exclusively and the services open to women are limited and poorly provided. In her 1871 article urging 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."[13] 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 provided "facilities for improving their minds."[14]

Such comments 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 argued for establishing clubs as facilities catering to women navigating the city, the Victorian woman poet and novelist Amy Levy in her 1888 article "Women and Club Life" was able to celebrate fin de siècle West End as the terrain of female clubs and their wholesome effects on women playing active roles in an enlarged public

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

[14] Ibid.

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, "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 "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 for 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 number of 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 *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 the 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 exclusively to 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.[15]

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 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 to both men and women, yet not all of them open their doors to women navigating the city

[15] 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.

unchaperoned or in pairs.[16] In this sense, a female club like the Belmont 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,[17] 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.

Conclusion

Throughout *Pilgrimage*, there are a lot of examples of women melting into the walking public in their strolls around London streets, indicating that females strolling the streets have become increasingly acceptable since the last years of the nineteenth century when Miriam and her female contemporaries assert their visibility amidst the jostling crowds. Women are recognizable as making their ways to schools, work places, cafés, theaters, cinemas, clubs, shops, on foot or via the help of public transportation. 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 combining female pleasure and desire.

Previous studies often focus on the experience of the well-to-do middle-class women as buyers shopping for their families. Though such

[16] 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.

[17] 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 Girton girl in the 1888 to serve women workers, students, and "weary" shopper.

shopping invariably enables middle-class women to take part in a much wider women's sphere of the fin de siècle city, such experiences nevertheless distinguish them from their economically embarrassed sisters. In *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 are, Miriam has to budget her spending. Unlike the well-to-do middle-class women shoppers having more flexible budgets and able to afford 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 *Pilgrimage*, female consumption thus practiced is mediated through the lines of gender and class against a highly commoditized urban pageant embodied by late-Victorian London's West End shopping ambience.

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