

**Women, tactility and consumption: middle-class female
sensory participation in Victorian shopping environments**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted in any form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. Where my published work has been used, it is referenced, for example (Loxham, 2013).

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11 January 2016

Abstract

This thesis questions the priority that has been afforded to sight in academic analyses of modernity at the expense of the other senses. This has not only had the effect of producing poor knowledge of the multi-sensory understandings of life, but it is also a theory that has been developed by focusing on the experience of white, elite males. As increasingly shown by anthropologists and sensory historians, when this model is transposed onto other segments of the population, this produces inadequate and partial understandings of life. Nowhere is this truer than in studies of nineteenth-century consumerism, which have primarily characterised the female shopping experience as orientated around new visual spectacles.

This thesis aims to rebalance this sensory bias and analyses how the sense of touch was used by female shoppers. Drawing on the theories of Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology throughout, it is claimed that the use of any sense must be understood in the wider context of an individual's life, and the sensory habits that are formed through this. For understanding shopping, this means first attending to the primary female activities within the home, namely needlework, and how these affected the development of the sensorium. Following on from this, the study analyses how those habits of touch were used when shopping. This involved assessments of fabric quality, the marketing of 'hygienic' clothing on the basis of its relationship to the skin and the ways in which women related to the new spaces of the department stores through their bodies.

In addition to showing the importance of touch for shopping, focusing on tactility brings other issues to light. Understanding tactile habits allows for a re-evaluation of the public-private division. Rather than shopping representing a break from the home, habits of touch allowed the two environments to be strongly interlinked, each influencing the other. This raises important questions about how we conceptualise female experiences of modernity and progress.

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Abbreviations

BL – British Library

EDM – *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*

NAL – National Art Library

WA – Westminster Archives

WDTJ – *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal*

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

'The staff at Jessops would like to thank you for shopping with Amazon'

Sign placed in Jessops' camera shop window, Liverpool, shortly after the firm entered administration.

Look but don't touch?

The sentiment expressed by Jessops could not have been clearer: the Internet is killing the high street. Jessops is far from the sole casualty in this carnage, with 987 shops permanently closing across Britain in 2015 alone (net) (*The Guardian*, 16 March 2015). For several years now, newspapers have been filled with articles lamenting the decline of the high street as consumers, put off by the higher prices in shops, have turned to the internet to fulfil their desires (*The Guardian*, 1 February 2013). Yet so prominent is the place of the high street in the British social imagination, and so strong are the fears of deserted urban cores that grassroots campaigns to save Britain's high streets and initiatives such as free parking have flourished in the midst of this (*The Daily Telegraph*, 17 July 2015). Retail consultant Mary Portas has hosted a string of BBC documentaries following her fight to save embattled shops, and in 2014 George Osborne announced a range of measures worth £130 million in order to inject life into the British high street (www.gov.uk, 12 December 2014).

Yet, towns and shopping centres (which, once the menace of the high street, are now themselves victims of the internet) are far from deserted. One only has to venture within a twenty-mile radius of Manchester's Trafford Centre at the weekend to experience this first hand. Provincial town centres seem to be bustling too. If people are buying goods at the click of a button, what are they doing in shops? The research and data organisation Kantar published a report in 2013 confirming that, while the rise of Internet shopping seems to be unstoppable, the purpose of the high streets is being transformed, rather than them being abandoned. Kantar identified this as a phenomenon called 'showrooming' (Kantar, 24 April 2013). This is the process by

which consumers go to a shop in order to handle and ‘roadtest’ a product that they are interested in buying (Kantar, 24 April 2013). Once satisfied that they want to part with their cash, they leave the shop empty handed, only to buy the product through an online retailer at a much lower price. The staff at the Liverpool branch of Jessops did not want for visitors to their shop but their message was a sarcastic slight, aimed at those shoppers who handled the goods and then purchased their chosen items online, leading to declining profits and, ultimately, store closures.

The implication of Kantar’s article was clear: we may have entered an age of online commerce, but the fundamental relationship between bodies, material objects and shopping spaces has not evolved at such a quick pace. Surely, the instruction of, ‘look but don’t touch!’ given by every anxious parent to their child when entering a shop stems from the recognition that the subject desires embodied experiences. In today’s world of e-commerce, a wish for low prices has not removed the desire for the body to enter shopping spaces and to enjoy an embodied experience with products, before the point of purchase.

Kantar’s findings made national headlines, as if this were a novel phenomenon (BBC, 25 April 2013). From reading many histories of consumerism, however, one would imagine that the need to do anything other than look at goods disappeared from the shopping experience long ago. Academic studies of shopping have located the nineteenth century in particular as the moment when mass consumption took off. In the process shopping became a question of the wandering eye enjoying the sight of immense piles of goods on display, intensified by new technologies, such as plate glass, lighting and mirrors (Abelson, 1992; Lysack, 2008; Rappaport, 2000). Such visions of novel abundance were so impressive that it was thought that buying would almost take care of itself as shoppers fell under the spell of the spectacle.

The reality suggested by Kantar would seem to be a reversal from these accounts of Victorian consumerism. It may therefore be appropriate to question when it was that we rediscovered the need for bodily involvement when shopping, and when sight alone stopped being enough. Instead though, a more useful question, and one that will be asked in this thesis, is whether the Victorian consumer environment really was reduced to a feast for the eyes, and whether the nineteenth-century consumer ever

stopped using the other senses when shopping. Shopping has always revolved around buying physical objects with which the body will subsequently be involved. Moreover, the movement of bodies to, from and within shopping environments is very much a multi-sensory experience. Owing to this, dominant understandings of consumerism in the nineteenth century need to be reassessed. This forms the initial motivation for the thesis.

There is a further reason for re-examining the use of the senses in nineteenth-century commerce. The dominance of vision has not only come to characterise nineteenth-century consumerism but understandings of modernity in general (Levin, 1993). Certain assumptions are made in this though. The privileging of sight within modernity derives its roots from an elite, white male understanding of experiences of life and, in particular, the senses (Smith, M. M., 2007). This had its genesis in the Enlightenment, where vision was increasingly considered to be the rational sense for scientific knowledge (Smith, M. M., 2007). These arguments will be addressed more fully in chapter 2. Despite the fact that vision was largely associated with male spheres of life, this model of sensory experience has been transplanted onto understandings of modern life for all people, without accounting for the differences that factors such as gender, race, age and culture can make.

These considerations are important when discussing shopping because during the nineteenth century shopping was very much associated with women. Instead of simply assuming that women deployed a male sensory apparatus when shopping, the cultural formation of their sensorium must be attended to. Men and women are equipped equally when it comes to the physical, sense organs of the body. However, the way in which the use of these is encouraged has to be accounted for in terms of society and culture (Howes, 2006; Young, 1990). In the nineteenth century, the ways in which women were encouraged to use their bodies and their senses differed greatly from men. This started in childhood in the home and at school, with the activities to which they were directed, such as Classics for boys and sewing and music for girls. Therefore, to understand how shopping was approached requires an analysis that seeks to understand the specific ways in which women formed and used the senses in this period and the effects of this, rather than importing male models of sensory understanding.

Key questions

The use of the senses in nineteenth-century consumerism and the gendered aspect of this form the motivation and the focus for the thesis. In line with this, two main questions will be addressed throughout the work as a whole. The first is simply, how did nineteenth-century, middle-class women experience shopping through the sense of touch? There is no attempt to replace an unrepresentative ocular paradigm with one that is equally biased towards the tactile, nor to claim that hearing, smell and taste would not merit analysis. However, one of the reasons for focusing on touch is the matter of handling stock and buying physical goods that was mentioned above. In addition, despite the nineteenth century being characterised as primarily visually-orientated by many authors, such as Crary (1993) and Jay (1994), women were associated with very fine tactile skills in this period, something that will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4. In shifting the emphasis from sight, the aim is to uncover a richer understanding of middle-class women's experiences and the use of their senses in modernity. It will be argued that touch played a significant role in this and this will be explored through issues such as needlework, judging quality in goods, the feeling of clothing and embodied experiences of shopping space.

There is the potential for works that fall under the heading of sensory studies to do little more than reveal how all the senses have been and are used in multiple areas of life. A study that discussed how women handled goods and experienced shopping spaces with their bodies would show that touch mattered for nineteenth-century women. This would be good in itself because sensory studies are still growing (Smith, M. M., 2007). Yet a focus on the senses can reveal so much more than simply how a particular sense was used. This thesis makes a strong contribution to the field of sensory studies, which will be outlined more fully in chapter 2. As culture dictates the importance attributed to the senses (Howes, 2006), taking the use of the senses as a starting point can reveal information about social values, gender and class divisions, and changes in these over time. The growth of sensory studies, as shown in work of Smith, Howes and Classen, among others, is revealing that the ways in which the senses are used are shaped by society and cultures. This means that no encounter with the world is ever neutral.

The focus on how women used the sense of touch when shopping will therefore provide an entry point for the second main question: did shopping represent a break from the private sphere of the home or did the sense of touch connect the two? This is an important question because the same studies which accept the triumph of vision in shopping frequently claim that women gained tentative steps towards freedom and independence from the home through commerce. Shopping is linked to various forms of liberation because it is seen as giving middle-class women some freedom to go out alone, exercise some economic independence and, crucially, to enjoy the shops because of the visual entertainment that they offered. Women, like men could become *flaneuses*, and sight is said to have played a key role in this (Bowly, 2010; Lysack, 2008)

However, if the importance of sight has been overemphasised then this must have repercussions for understanding the place of women and the division between the public and private spheres. To argue that women experienced forms of liberation when shopping and that this was aided by vision carries with it the implication that the sensory experiences in the rest of their lives, namely the home, were somehow different and that shopping represented a complete break from the normal life and routines of middle-class women. This means that there is also a need to study middle-class women's sensory experiences within the home, in order to ascertain if they really were so different to those of the consumer sphere. The risk with focusing on shopping alone is that its connection to the rest of life is not properly understood. Shopping has been fitted into the 'public' side of the public-private dichotomy (Rappaport, 2000). Yet the middle-class woman spent the majority of her time in the home. In addition, shopping was an act that involved buying goods for the home. The thesis seeks to analyse how these two spheres were connected through commerce. A focus on tactility provides a fruitful way of doing this; by examining how sensory modes of comprehending the world that were developed in the home were deployed in public, an understanding of the connections between the two spheres is furthered.

A further reason for asking how the use of the sense of touch connected both the 'private' sphere of the home and the 'public' sphere of shops stems from the theoretical underpinnings of the work. This thesis has been strongly influenced by the

writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a key thinker in phenomenology. His work focuses on how modes of perception are formed through repeated use of the senses, which in turn create habitual and enduring modes of interacting with and sensing the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Using a phenomenological approach will show that shopping should not be considered without examining other areas of life, nor should it be viewed as offering something that was completely new for the senses. Despite the focus of this work being consumerism, it is because of the desire to understand the sensory connection between the public and private that analyses of female domestic life are also included. This is crucial if a rounder and more comprehensive understanding of the middle-class female experience is to be gained. Rather than seeing shopping as representing a break from the home and an entry into the public sphere therefore, efforts will be made to understand how shopping fitted into the wider lives and sensory experiences of women. If a ‘total history’ of women’s lives is not possible, this work at least makes a contribution to showing that no aspect of life can be understood without reference to the whole.

Structure of the work

Due to the motivation for this study, and the questions that will be addressed throughout, the thesis will be structured in the following way. Chapter 2 will outline the growth of sensory studies, the reasons behind their development and the work that has been conducted to further understandings of the senses in various academic disciplines. This will help to contribute to the argument that the exclusive focus on sight has been misfounded, and it will highlight the wealth of knowledge that can be produced in a range of fields when multi-sensory approaches are adopted. However, it will also stress that there are still many areas in which sensory studies have made little impact and that further work is needed, especially in modern history. Nineteenth-century, English consumer history in particular offers a great deal of potential because of the aforementioned focus of the literature on sight. The second part of chapter 2 will therefore review literature and clarify the gaps in existing scholarship in this area.

The methodology, theory and method section will make up chapter 3. Outlining the theory is important because the thesis combines rigorous historical research with social theory. Despite a growth of interdisciplinarity, this approach sometimes still

meets with scepticism and so the reasons for the use of theory here, the potential problems, but also the numerous benefits will be explained. A strong case will be made, both for how social theory can inform and improve historical research, and how an understanding of history can refine social theory. In line with this, the use of Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology and the reasons for its deployment in the thesis will be discussed. Next, the possibilities for multi-sensory research methods will be expanded upon, and the use of archival, written sources will be explained. The benefits and limitations of archive work will be considered, followed by a more specific explanation of the sources used for the research, and their status.

This will lead on to the main body of research for the thesis, which is split into four chapters. The first two (chapters 4 and 5) are focused on tactility as a capacity located within the hands, while the second two (chapters 6 and 7) centre on bodily tactility as a whole. Owing to the desire to understand how sensory experiences of shopping were affected by the wider life of women, chapter 4 analyses the activities of the middle-class Victorian woman in her home. The main focus will be on needlework which, it will be claimed, formed one of her main occupations. How girls learnt various forms of needlework from a young age and the particular training of the tactile sense will be explored. Using phenomenological theory, it will be shown that this helped to develop a middle-class woman's tactile sense, creating in her embodied habits of perception and influencing the way in which she approached the world. To explore the detail of this form of tactility, attention will be paid to her various needlework activities and the skills deployed.

Chapter 5 will analyse how these habits functioned when they met the marketplace. In this chapter, it will be argued that the focus of much of the literature on nineteenth-century consumer culture on vision and larger shops has been at the expense of the embodied experience of the process of buying material objects. As middle-class women spent much of their time within the home sewing, one of their chief purchases was fabric. It will be argued that, rather than being overwhelmed by visual displays, the tactile habits formed in the home were deployed once in the shops. These perceptual skills that were developed within the home were used in public because of their influence on habit, but also because of wider socio-economic circumstances, namely the limitations of visual technologies within shops and *laissez-faire*

economics, which allowed commercial fraud and adulteration to flourish. Relying on sight in the face of such risks could lead to bad decisions and so tactility was increasingly turned to. In this way, a sense that was developed for use within the home for particularly feminine activities was mobilised when entering the public sphere. However, what this meant for the place of women is complex as the goods that were bought were ultimately intended to be taken home and to be used for domestic purposes.

The next two chapters will move on from focusing on the hands to bodily touch. Chapter 6 will centre on the hygienic clothing movement of the final quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Like those on commerce, studies on science, medicine and public health in this period have attended to the eye. This chapter argues that the skin was considered to play a fundamental role in the body, as shown by the many nineteenth-century medical works that discussed the importance of the skin for health and the sense of touch. It will be shown that this was linked to the public health concerns of the time and the related interventions that were made. Connecting these anxieties over health to the prevailing liberalism of the period, it will be claimed that, despite its importance, the state struggled to intervene to secure the health of the skin because of a reluctance to interfere with the private body. Yet it will be demonstrated that commercial companies, being premised on consumer choice, could profit from discourses on health to sell clothing. Using the Jaeger Company as a case study, it will be shown how attempts were made to sell clothing to women on the basis of its relationship to the skin. This will reveal that public companies could work to influence the private person. However, because of the tactile habits that a woman possessed, the feeling of clothing was always a factor with which any company had to reckon when attempting to market clothing.

The final data chapter (chapter 7) moves away from the products bought and sold when shopping to the space of the department store. The department store is conspicuously absent from earlier parts of the thesis because of a desire to focus on material objects and bodily interactions, rather than display. The focus in literature on department stores has, for too long, been at the expense of material goods, 'ordinary' retailers and embodied shopping experiences (Benson and Ugolini, 2003). This does not mean that department stores should be ignored; however, here they will be

analysed in a different manner by focusing on the relationship of the body to space. Just as the thesis started in the home, this chapter returns there first, to analyse the ways in which middle-class women's sensory experiences of domestic space were created. The watchword here was comfort and this contrasted strongly with conceptions of the public sphere as a place of sensory 'nuisances'. Therefore, the public-private division was a question of embodied understandings.

Rather than women being desperate to leave the home, the public sphere was considered to contain many discomforts. In the midst of the inconveniences of the urban, the department store neither offered something that was entirely new, nor a visual overload for women but instead it presented a comfortable space that echoed the middle-class home. This meant that the transition to the public sphere was eased by the facilities of home being available, therefore enabling women to deploy the sensory habits developed in the private sphere. This chapter will finish by considering what this use of the department store ultimately meant for the place of women in society. While helping them to gain greater public visibility, the replication of domesticity in both public and private spheres served to reinforce a woman's place and the appropriate sensory activities for her. In addition, if middle-class women can be said to have made some inroads into the public sphere through the department store, this in turn rested on the labour of shopgirls, whose embodied experiences of the space of the department store were very different. Although this study is focused on the middle classes, analyses of the implications of consumer culture for women should recognise that the embodied enjoyment of the department store for one meant long hours and poor conditions for another.

Aims and limitations of the study

As noted, one of the main contributions of this work is to further understandings of the multi-sensory nature of life and to provide a corrective to the literature's almost exclusive focus on sight. There is no attempt though to claim that sight was insignificant. Rather, sight has so long been at the centre of attention and this study aims to demonstrate that the other senses are worthy of attention and to rebalance the state of the field. That being said, hearing, smell and taste receive scant attention here. They have not been forgotten; quite possibly they played, and continue to play a role

in consumerism today. The focus on tactility here results from the emphasis placed on cultivating a sense of tactility in middle-class women in the nineteenth century. The role of the other senses would, of course, make a worthwhile study.

Just as the sensory experiences of men should not be transposed onto women, the experiences discussed here should not be assumed to have been shared by all women. The focus is on the middle classes, and working-class women (who did also increasingly start to take part in the consumer economy) quite possibly had different experiences. As noted, they increasingly worked in the shops but their own shopping practices likely differed too. This is a limitation of the work. The middle classes have been chosen, as will be explained in more detail in chapters 4 and 5, because this sector felt the benefits from the expansion in the economy most keenly and therefore had greater levels of disposable income. As the work analyses sensory formations that endured across public and private spheres, it is very likely that working-class women had completely different sensory experiences of shopping, linked to their different sensory experiences of life as a whole. Although the role of the senses in forming a particular, classed body is alluded to throughout the work, particularly when discussing the department store and shopgirls, this work primarily attends to the experiences of middle-class women.

In addition, despite this focus on women, and with some notable exceptions, the thesis does not engage strongly with contemporary gender theory. This is a deliberate choice, with theories of phenomenology being drawn on instead (although some feminist interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's work are discussed). It is my belief that a crucial way of serving women's history and the cause of women more generally, is simply to lift the cloak of invisibility from their pasts. The aim should be to normalise the study of women to the point where the experiences of men will not be examined without instinctively asking, what about women?

Although these points represent limitations to the work, this thesis can be said to make a strong contribution to both historical and sociological knowledge in several ways. First, the combination of the two disciplines demonstrates the wealth of knowledge that can be gained by being open to any and all fields. For phenomenology, which is largely theoretical, the thorough use of historical material will help to demonstrate its

workings in practice and its applicability to real situations. Most importantly though, analysing the place of touch in nineteenth-century consumerism is novel as this area of study has been focused on sight for so long. More than this, the thesis will show that experiences of commerce can neither be understood without reference to the consumer's life as a whole, nor without examining wider society. As well as the domestic situation of women (chapters 4 and 7), issues including economic policy and fraud (chapter 5), health, public policy and liberalism (chapter 6) all influenced the way in which women shopped. The study spans the long nineteenth century and this is a deliberate choice, in order to show continuities in this respect rather than change, and the influence of wider life in shopping practices.

By moving the focus to the embodied use of the senses, the work will show that the division between public and private was far more fluid than has often been claimed because the use of the senses spanned and influenced experiences of both. Although some works on the department store have alluded to the existence of the private within the public through the provision of feminine spaces (Rappaport, 2000; Walkowitz, 1992), the focus on the senses shows even this division to be somewhat misplaced. The sensory habits formed within the home informed the bodily experiences of shopping, and the experiences of shopping and the objects bought fed back into the home. Analysing tactility therefore reveals the relationship between public and private to be extremely tangled and complex, because the public and the private actually became embodied experiences within women.

This therefore raises questions concerning what it means when we speak of modernity. Modernity has frequently been described as representing a break with the old and the ushering in of a new form of rationality. The literature's focus on vision has been a strong part of this. Yet, because this work analyses the sense of touch and women, it simultaneously asks whether we can really speak of one 'modernity' in the nineteenth century. The sensory experiences of men cannot be grafted onto women and so the modernity lived by men should also not be equated with women. To discuss female experiences as different is certainly not to equate them with being backwards but to show the rich diversity of understandings that the senses can bring.

Chapter 2 - Sensory studies and consumer histories. A review of the literature

Introduction

Many studies over the years have argued that comprehension of anything that lies beyond the self necessitates the senses. While it is the brain that processes information, the stimuli that prompt this are first absorbed through sensory receptors. The senses are therefore fundamental for knowing the world. Without them, comprehension of life is impossible. It is the sensorium that allows the expansion of an individual's horizons. While they can be enhanced through prosthetic technologies such as x-rays and microscopes, anything that lies wholly beyond the senses cannot be known (Ackerman, 1995). This means that it is the senses that take the chaos of what we encounter and reassemble it so that life possesses meaning. Only by existing as sentient beings do humans possess the ability to live in the world. As Ackerman (1995) argues, it is in the sensory receptors and not the head in which we first find the mind.

The functioning of the senses can be studied in biological terms, as receptors along which electronic impulses travel. As important as this is, this must be tempered with the observation that the ways in which the senses are deployed are not simply 'natural'. Instead they are shaped by history and culture, thereby revealing the values of a society (Classen, 1993). The senses can thus be said to have a social life, evolving across history and cultures. The scientific basis of their functioning has altered little over time but changing cultures, ideologies and practices have played, and continue to play, a major role in influencing how the senses are used. The first part of this literature review will therefore be devoted to surveying sensory studies as a broad and multidisciplinary field, explaining its importance, its origins and evolution, and its directions. It is important to survey this literature in order to demonstrate why the senses merit studying, to outline the current state of the field and to explain what an approach that has been influenced by sensory studies can add to understandings of nineteenth-century consumer culture, a discussion of which will form the second part of the chapter.

The important role of all of the senses and their formation was neglected in most fields for a long time, as it was taken for granted that vision was the most important sense for knowledge (Howes, 2006). How this belief in the importance of the eye came about will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The effect, however, was to limit understandings of the other senses in academia. In recent decades though this situation has started to be redressed and we are the midst of a sensory turn. David Howes (2006), an anthropologist and pioneer in the field of sensory studies, makes it clear that the study of the social life of the senses matters because their use is a key area of cultural expression. It is a fundamental way through which the values of a society are played out. Through instruction on how to use the senses (whether directly or subconsciously), social roles and divisions are inculcated. Because of this, claims Howes, ‘sensual relations are also social relations’ (Howes, 2006: xi). Robert Jütte (2005), whose work surveys changes to cultural understandings of the senses from antiquity to the present day, concurs and he notes that the priority afforded to each sense and their social meanings have little natural foundation. For an improved understanding of any society, sensory studies are vital.

Sensory histories of premodernity

Howe’s and Jütte’s arguments concerning the social basis of the use of the senses have wide implications for how societies are understood. Social attitudes to non-visual senses have interested scholars of premodern, western civilizations, where scepticism towards the visual paradigm has become ever more apparent. A growing body of work illustrates this by pointing to the number of senses that have been considered to exist at different points in time. While now generally accepted in the West that there are five senses, this has not been static; Philo, a first-century interpreter of the Old Testament, claimed that there were seven senses, fitting in with an allegorical, Biblical interpretation of Creation. Yet in the third century, Origen insisted on multiple spiritual senses that corresponded to the physical ones, for example, the ability to taste the sweetness of God’s word (Classen, 1993).

The Christian climate clearly affected such beliefs on the senses and it also influenced the importance attributed to each sense. The senses often provided popular themes for

plays and poetry, represented by embodied figures who fought to be crowned the noblest sense. Bartolomeo del Bene's philosophical poem *Civitas Veri Sire Morum* of 1609 explores the ethical nature of the senses (Harvey, 2011). Del Bene was particularly concerned to analyse how the five senses acted as portals for the soul to enter the body and furnished it for life, both for itself and in relation to wider, civic society. While religion structured beliefs on the senses, such debates concerning the social role of the senses possessed roots in antiquity; in this regard Aristotle was the first to rank sight as the highest sense, followed by hearing, smell, taste and then touch (Classen, 1993. See also Jay, 1994 and Jütte, 2005).

No sense was neglected in this Christian atmosphere though, which held that God could be experienced through the whole sensorium. The value accorded to each sense depended on the spiritual function that it fulfilled. Hearing was afforded great significance because of the emphasis placed on listening to the Word of God (poor literacy meant that culture remained predominantly oral) (Classen, 1993).¹ Vision also aroused suspicion because of biblical prohibitions on idolatry (Jay, 1994). Likewise smell, rarely valued today (deodorants illustrate the desire to create a bland olfactory environment), was held in high esteem (Ackerman, 1995). Perfumes could signify the personal values of the wearer, such as the sweet smell of the lily representing virginity (Classen, 1993). This was, again, connected to the religious saturation of life, which lent importance to smells because of the references made to them in the Bible, such as the gifts presented to the baby Jesus (Classen, 1993).

The importance of tactility also bore the mark of religion. Marc Bloch's seminal work, *The Royal Touch*, describes how medieval kings were endowed with a sacred status, having been 'touched' by the hand of God at their anointing (Bloch, 1973: 35-36).² By virtue of this, kings were considered to possess healing powers, including being able to 'touch for scrofula', meaning that, by their hands, a victim could be cured of the disease (Bloch, 1973: 3). God could also be accessed through tactile contact with the relics of saints. This was believed to be so powerful that it could even restore a lost sense of smell. This notion had roots in classical culture where it was believed that the

¹ See Eisenstein (2005) for discussions on literacy.

² 1 Kings chapter 1 details the anointing of Solomon as king by Zadok the Priest, a ceremony which provided the justification for the anointing of medieval kings.

gods exhaled the sweet scent of Ambrosia to heal subjects, but this idea took on a deeper significance in the medieval period where relics abounded (Classen, 1998).

The practical concerns of life also helped to elevate multiple senses. Again, smells had a strong social role. Food was frequently prepared with the addition of scents and at banquets perfumes were distributed throughout the air (Classen et al., 1994). Before the early modern period, gardens were arranged, not on a visual basis, but according to the scents of flowers. Even in 1661 John Evelyn suggested that the diseases of London could be combatted by surrounding the city with fragrant gardens (Classen, 1993). Touch was esteemed for its practical uses too. Constance Classen (2012), who has done the most to promote the study of histories of touch, argues that the corporeal triumphed over the visual in medieval society simply because it was often more useful. For instance, a lack of artificial lighting meant that touch was required for knowledge in the dark, narrow streets of urban spaces (Classen, 2012). Daily work was also corporeal, with the majority of occupations such as crafts, field labour and fighting being embodied practices. Only the clergy was associated with the written word (Classen, 2012).

Yet religious and social understandings were often intertwined. O'Rourke Boyle (1998) has discussed this through Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' fresco, noting that, in the meeting with Adam's finger, God commanded him to work in His image, an ideal that resonated in a society in which work was still concerned with the hands. Likewise, when the sufferings of Hell were discussed, reference was made to bodily pain because this was a daily reality in the Middle Ages. This made such analogies easier to relate to, as opposed to the psychological parallels that dominate today (Classen, 2012).

Religious and social changes to the sensorium

Such examples reinforce the claim that the use of the sensorium is socially and culturally structured. Yet despite such work, the importance placed on the use of all five of the senses in the West was forgotten, due to social changes which seemingly allowed vision to triumph. In what has been termed the 'great divide', society is said to have moved from being multisensory to relying on sight alone (Smith, M. M.,

2007: 38-39). The Protestant Reformation has been viewed as a crucial turning point, changing understandings of the senses that were necessary for accessing both God and the wider community. For instance, an increased import placed on rational thought and contemplation meant that even the use of incense was considered to be not just unnecessary to invoke the Holy Spirit but an interference to worship (Classen et al., 1994).

This 'new' Christianity involved a denial of multiple forms of sensuality. In pre-Reformation Europe, there was a belief that the sensorium was damaged at the Fall, but was restored through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Yet now Calvin argued that touching God, for instance, was a sin. Doubting Thomas should not have desired to touch the risen Christ and faith was to come only from reading the Word of God (O'Rourke Boyle, 1998). The earlier belief that God could be accessed through all of the senses evolved to the principle that personal prayer and contemplation of the Word were sufficient. This was reflected in the apparatus of religion. Whitewashed walls, clear windows and the spoken word replaced the multi-sensory splendour of the pre-Reformation churches (Montagu, 1986).

However, alterations to religion were not enough to wring the weight of changes that have been cited as ushering in a new reign of sight. Furthermore, the Reformation left many European countries, such as Italy and Spain, largely untouched.³ A greater development, and one which was to begin the process of toppling Christianity itself from its epistemological supremacy, was the Enlightenment. Inroads towards this had been developing for some time. During the Renaissance, currents of humanism started to associate God with rationality rather than sensuality. The Italian Renaissance philosopher, Pico della Mirandola's *On the Dignity of Man* of 1486 advised the shunning of sensual pleasures in order to reach God. Indulging base pleasures, he argued, was to become an animal. The 'higher' senses that helped to elevate of the mind were to be favoured (Mirandola, 1998).

³ The Counter-Reformation also tried to retain the faithful by specifically emphasising the multi-sensory experiences that Catholicism alone could now offer. See Jütte (2005).

The triumph of vision

While its full effects remain a source of debate, the Enlightenment has been cited as accelerating the collapse of the old order – politics, economics, religion and society were all subjected to critical thought.⁴ The Enlightenment philosophers also exposed the sensorium to unprecedented examination, discussing the senses as media by which information could be transmitted to the brain, rather than them bearing any connection to religion, as indicated in the work of Locke and Descartes (Classen, 1993). Science was increasingly valorised and this changed the ways in which the senses were valued. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sight gained its status as the correct sense for understanding scientific matters, exemplifying detachment and objectivity. With the arrival of ‘the great divide’, diagrams of the world, the body and the city, along with observational experiments, proliferated and sight was privileged as the means by which to gain the best understandings of the world (Smith, M. M., 2007).⁵

It seems that this sensory trajectory has been unstoppable, and vision has been cited as one of the key constituents of modernity by many writers.⁶ Technological developments over the following centuries have been pointed to as repeatedly promoting the use of the eyes over the other senses, especially in the nineteenth century. In her classic, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag (1978) argues that the camera started to teach a novel visual code by promoting a particular model of sight and indicating what is worthy of attention. Photography as a practice and a set of discourses produced the idea that the whole world was visually accessible (Sontag, 1978). In this way, photography was part of the development of scientific realism, whereby the camera and vision were framed as providing objective knowledge. Barthes (1993) takes up this theme, arguing that the photograph verifies the presence of the subject, providing an unquestionable proof of events and objects. Technology has been viewed as helping to promote the eye as the best organ for knowledge and

⁴ For discussions concerning the effects of the Enlightenment on wider society see Outram (2005). Porter (2001) discusses this in a specifically British context.

⁵ Paterson (2006) does examine the unity of the senses discussed by philosophers during the Enlightenment.

⁶ See collection of essays in Levin (ed.) (1993).

verification. John Berger (2008) echoes these sentiments and contends that an abundance of images educates how we see and what we notice.

Of course, there are debates about the precise technologies that caused or accelerated this change. Jonathan Crary (1993) has similarly examined the growing dominance of vision through the reorganisation of knowledge and social practices. However, he argues that it was not the camera that caused this shift, as this was a marginal practice for a long time. Instead, Crary (1993) locates key changes as occurring between 1810 and 1840 with the *camera obscura* because this altered previously stable relations of vision. This technology prevented the self from being seen in the representation created, thereby detaching the eye from the observer and permitting a ‘God’s eye’ view from which one could perceive the world as separate from the self (Crary, 1993). Subsequent inventions, such as the stereoscope and the camera, he argues, reinforced this denial of the body by further detaching the observer from the observed (Crary, 1993).

Martin Jay (1994), meanwhile, places particular emphasis on the development of mechanical reproduction, such as lithography, which encouraged the dissemination of photographs and paintings. These expanded the visual field, creating an exhibition of the whole world and prompting the feeling that one could know it and yet remain distinct from it. Bruno Latour likewise makes the case for a ‘great divide’ being prompted by technologies of vision that allowed reproduction across time and space, meaning that one could ‘see’ absent objects and, ‘optical consistency was made possible’ (Latour, 1986: 7). This means that visual technologies allowed non-subjective information to be transmitted to multiple groups in a consistent fashion. The other senses, for Latour, were made all but redundant (Latour, 1986).

The attention paid to the influence of technology on vision has been vast; Sara Danius claims that modernist literature also indicates a ‘technologically-mediated crisis of the senses’ in which the internalisation of sensory technologies changed the aesthetics of perception so as to privilege the eye (Danius, 2002: 1-2). While aesthetics and ‘high culture’ are rarely associated with technologies of mass production,⁷ Danius argues

⁷ For example, see Adorno (2001).

that technology was vital to the reproduction and dissemination of art and literature and also to the perception of aesthetics. *Pace Crary, Jay and Sontag*, she uses three novels, *Ulysses, The Magic Mountain and Remembrance of Things Past*, to claim that vision was concerned less with knowledge and more with aesthetic gratification (Danius, 2002). Machinery was internalised by the mind so that the world was increasingly viewed in a way that was made possible by new technologies, allowing for a renegotiation of the visible and the invisible (Danius, 2002). This is a theme taken up by Schivelbusch (1986) when he uses the example of the technology of the train to claim that there was a fundamental change in how the world was perceived on an aesthetic level because of how transport framed the various landscapes through which the traveller moved.

Whether concerned with science or aesthetics, such works show that there has long been a consensus that technologies have changed the perception of the world in modernity, privileging the eye. The effects of such technologies have not always been viewed positively though. Friedrich Kittler (1986) claims that technologies of reproduction have created a bland, meaningless sensescape (here he focuses on the typewriter), which allows individuals to see only symbols as no trace of the individual is left. In addition, T. J. Clark (1999), in his analysis of the art of Manet and his contemporaries in nineteenth-century Paris, argues that this period was concerned solely with representations, the city being recreated to construct a façade of imperial grandeur and to offer a spectacle in order to further capital.

The sensorium resuscitated

The modern dominance of sight in the West and the social and cultural developments that aided it have been the focus of much work, both lauding and lamenting the changes. David Michael Levin (1993) sums up the general consensus when claiming that sight became the dominant sense of modernity. However, in recent years sociologists, anthropologists and historians have started to question this simplistic division of a multi-sensory premodern period and a visually structured modern age. Classen and Howes argue that, whether condemning or celebrating it, sight has long triumphed in academic study, with the alternatives scarcely being questioned (Classen, 1998; Howes, 2006). Ironically, Classen notes, this focus on sight has led to

sensory blindness and an inability to recognise that other modes of sensing may be worth studying (Classen, 1998). Although the preceding examples demonstrate the progress that has been made in studying the whole sensorium in pre-modern societies, similar developments in studies of modernity have been slower. Yet Smith (2007) adds that, just as sensory scholars have shown that vision was not absent in the pre-modern period, neither did the other senses disappear in modernity. The ‘great divide’ should therefore be seen as a created category of analysis, rather than representative of any real division.

The problem of ignoring the other senses in modernity is twofold: the first issue is simply that the uses of other senses are not fully grasped and so historical understandings remain incomplete. The wider implication though is that broader questions about society are ignored because the use of the sensorium, as part of the body, reveals much about wider culture and social values (Classen, 1993). For example, through studying touching for the King’s Evil, Bloch (1973) brings to light wider beliefs on the mystique of royalty during that period. If life is lived through the senses, when we ignore the place of four of the five of these in modernity we risk possession of a very limited understanding of society as a whole.

Some of the best attempts to rectify this have been undertaken in studies on non-western cultures. Sensory anthropologists are progressively revealing the fallacy of assuming that vision is the best way of comprehending the world. David Howes demonstrates that the interplay of the senses varies today because of differing cultural situations around the world, rather than some societies being ‘advanced’ or ‘underdeveloped’ (Howes, 2006: xxii). Gradually, there has been a realisation that cultures which have not established the hegemony of vision are not ‘backward’ but exhibit a different social and cultural order (Howes, 2006).

One example of this is found in examining alternative sensory hierarchies. The accepted five senses of the West appear alien elsewhere. The Hausa of Nigeria count only two senses, one being sight and the other being anything else because, for their purposes, further divisions are not necessary (Classen, 1993). In terms of use, the Ongee of the Audamen Islands in the South Pacific practise olfactory ordering to understand their world and priority is afforded to maintaining a good sense of smell

(Classen, 1993). Conversely, the Kula tribes locate status through the sounds of voices because they live in an auditory culture. They also decorate their bodies with shells that create noise with movement, to increase the presence of the body within space (Howes, 2006).

While such understandings of the senses have been more advanced in a non-western context, progress is now being made in studies of the West. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. Andrew Sparkes' (2009) research reveals that sports ethnography is incomplete when restricted to a focus on the ocular. Sport is physical by nature, involving the sound of breathing patterns and the noise of a crowd, the smell and taste of sweat, and the pain of muscles (Sparkes, 2009). Likewise, Loïc Wacquant's (2004) three-year ethnography of a boxing club in Chicago made him a firm advocate for 'carnal ethnography'; he stresses that there are many experiences in life which are comprehended by the body as a whole. The skin, nose, ears and mouth all serve as portals by which a full and rich experience of the world is gained, and by which the self is shaped.

Human geography represents another area in which sensory studies have flourished. Paul Rodaway attributes this to the need to understand, 'everyday life as a multisensual and multidimensional situatedness in space and in relationship to places' (Rodaway, 1994: 4). Tim Ingold, an anthropologist who has been influential in this field, has spearheaded some of the most significant work in recent years on the centrality of the body in experiences of the world (Ingold, 2011b; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). Joy Parr's (2010) work on perceptions of the Canadian environment also demonstrates how environmental changes are frequently understood in terms of the physical interaction between body and environment. In this vein, Gregg Mitman's (2007) research indicates how experiences of environmental allergies alter embodied perceptions of the environment.

Thankfully, the flourishing of sensory studies has at last also found its place in early modern and modern history and, if not fully rejected, then the 'great divide' is at least being increasingly questioned. This is connected to the approach of the *Annales* School, which highlights the importance of thinking about the *longue durée* and continuity. Alain Corbin's (1999) work stems from this and, in a French context, he

has shown the continued importance of a multitude of sensory experiences in modern society, for example, through his work on the social significance of village bells in the nineteenth century.⁸ Returning to Bloch (1973), who himself belonged to the *Annales* tradition, belief in the efficacy of the Royal Touch did not suddenly disappear with the Reformation; coins that had been touched by royalty and which were considered to have special powers were still handed down in the Shetland Islands in 1838. Similar findings have been revealed by Duffy (2003, 2005) in his work on the Protestant Reformation, indicating that orders from above did not necessarily change the sensory nature of worship so rapidly, there being a difference between official policy and the experience of the masses. As Classen (2012) argues, sensory patterns are complex and there is often a coexistence of practices.

At first glance it appears to be far easier for a historian to focus on sight-based topics, simply because the majority of archival documents for any pre-twentieth century period are in a text, picture or material format, which puts the emphasis on seeing, by virtue of the research methodology. The problems and possibilities of this will be discussed further in the next chapter on methodology. Yet progress is being made, and this is helping to reveal a wealth of social and cultural knowledge.⁹ Howes' and Lalonde's (1991) work on taste in the eighteenth century demonstrates that sensory hierarchies change in relation to the stability or confusion of social boundaries. Eighteenth-century English society was one in which class membership was changing with economic developments. The expansion of the middle classes made visual appearances deceptive. Taste therefore flourished as a way by which distinctions were evoked and it offered a medium for defining class membership, because food was becoming more refined (Howes and Lalonde, 1991). Smith (2006, 2008) details a similar situation whereby proximate senses became mobilised in times of social confusion in the United States of America. Before the Civil War, miscegenation was starting to render sight unreliable as a way of making racial distinctions. Therefore, differences were created on the basis of smell, hearing and touch. Such works reaffirm the need for scepticism when speaking of the sudden triumph of vision. While the

⁸ See Corbin (1995) on the senses in French history. Godfrey (2002) also provides a useful survey of Corbin's work.

⁹ Mark Smith (2007) provides an excellent survey of developments in sensory history.

traditional narrative of modernity is one of rupture, the pace of social change has often been much more complicated.

Touch

Historical sensory studies are clearly gaining ground, but each sense still tends to be studied in isolation, forgetting that they frequently work together (Howes, 2006; Smith, M.M., 2007). However, Mark Smith (2007) does admit that, with sensory histories still being in a relatively under-developed state there is a case for building up individual studies, with the hope that the senses will eventually form a natural part of any contemporary or historical work because they will be recognised as forming such a fundamental part of all experiences. With this in mind, attention can now be turned to the chosen sense for this study: touch. Despite the renewed focus on the senses in modernity, touch has remained neglected (Classen, 2012). Yet, as authors from multiple fields show, touch matters. From birth, it confirms existence and aids physical and psychological development. Being a proximate sense has led to its derision in modernity, but this proximity enables us to know the difference between ‘I’ and the ‘other’ (Ackerman, 1995: 79). Moreover, the use of touch involves the whole body because, unlike the other four senses, it is not limited to one small part of the body. This makes it everywhere and nowhere at once (Harvey, 2011).¹⁰ Touch is the first sense to develop in children, while sight is the last, and it is only culture that causes a reversal of this in terms of social importance (Montagu, 1986). In the West today touch is considered to be intimate and private, yet the skin is the largest organ of the body and it is a prime receptor of information about the world (Williams et al., 2011).

Although sight is often said to reign triumphant, touch has long been the sense used by those with visual impairments, and the information that this can provide is certainly not inferior.¹¹ Improving disability awareness means that paintings and delicate antiques are frequently converted into tactile boards so that the blind can interact with them (Hetherington, 2000; 2002). Even for the sighted, many museums

¹⁰ The skin has, in recent years, become the main focus of several useful works. See Jablonski (2006) and Benthien (2002) for two examples of this.

¹¹ See Millar (1978, 1997) on learning braille and the involvement of spatial and haptic cues, and Fulkerson (2011) on touch as an active, spatially located form of sensing.

now offer hands-on interaction to ‘bring to life’ a range of issues because it is increasingly recognised that relying on sight alone limits the potential for a fuller comprehension (Candlin, 2008; Loxham, 2015a). In addition, the body is now being recognised as a way to access the spiritual within Protestantism. David Chidester (2000) indicates that touch and bodily performance help some believers to navigate the untouchable nature of religion. He argues that touch allows one to situate the self in relation to the vastness of an invisible God. In a world which has become visually distracting, touch may offer permanence and stability (Chidester, 2000).

Touch, as a proximate sense, also possesses a social function. Tactility has long been acknowledged as vital for both physical and mental development. For example, massaged babies tend to be more active and aware of their surroundings (Ackerman, 1995). Williams’ (2011) research on the use of touch in psychotherapy and counselling also indicates that touch can make clients more forthcoming when talking about their problems. Towards the end of life, robots have even been introduced in Japan in caring for the elderly. However, they are given tactile qualities so as to stimulate ‘real’ relationships with patients (Stevens, 2011). Touch offers opportunities for shared encounters. Gabriel Josipovici (1996) argues that our relationship to others is built on a corporeal foundation, by virtue of sharing common bodily reactions to the world. Josipovici concurs with Chidester that touch brings reassurance through presence and bodily connection, alleviating the sense of solitude that looking alone brings. This is increasingly desired in modernity (Josipovici, 1996). Claudia Benthien (2002) adds that although the skin does act as a boundary for the self, it also works as an interface by which to know the world. It is this which leads O’Shaughnessy (1989) to claim that touch is possibly the most important sense, because it is the only sense that brings knowledge of one’s own body and the physical world, without reference to other experiences being necessary.

Although more attention is being paid to the deployment of touch today, its place in academic studies of the Victorians has remained marginal. This is because the nineteenth century has traditionally been characterised as a period in which ‘cold’ social relations became the norm. The middle classes came to be defined by distance; children were sent away from their parents to boarding schools, foreigners were disparagingly described in terms of vulgar tactility and there was disdain for displays

of emotions (Montagu, 1986; Munson and Mullen, 2010). An emphasis on the repression of sexuality has also been cited as making touch suspect. Crary (1993) argues that the new focus on vision required anything that hampered its primacy to be eradicated, including sexuality, which was to be subsumed under a mastery of the body. That there was some re-education of the senses in the nineteenth century is hard to deny. Certainly concerning sexuality there was a desire to create a veil of ignorance. Gay argues that much of this was not part of a coherent policy but that ‘the bourgeois century repressed better than it knew’ (Gay, 1999: 280). This had the seeming effect of side-lining tactility.

Yet research has revealed the deficiencies in such arguments. Touch never simply disappeared in modernity but, as a corporeal practice, its use has been constantly re-assessed and taught according to changing cultural practices (Classen, 2012). This was true in the nineteenth century. While sometimes hidden, sexuality and the body were never absent. Newspapers often contained stories concerning sexual cases, prostitutes filled the streets of cities and homes were not as sexually repressed as has been thought. For example, the diaries of the American Mabel Todd show a clear tactile sexuality in her marital relationship, as do many other journals of the period (Gay, 1999).¹² While sexuality is corporeal by nature, incipient research is highlighting other areas where the body remained alive to its surroundings. Smith’s work on antebellum America details how references to skin and touch were used to distinguish slaves and owners, with white touch being used to feel black muscle and black skin being considered to be less sensitive to pain (Smith, 2008). The so-called lower senses were lauded by some European groups of the nineteenth century, albeit socially marginalised ones. Hashish clubs of Paris, associated with the likes of Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier, emphasised sounds and colours fusing together, while much nineteenth century art evoked ‘lower’ senses, such as that of the Pre-Raphaelites, symbolists and naturalists (Classen, 1998). Even Berger (2008), who has predominantly focused on the growth of vision, notes that one of the attractive attributes of oil paintings in the nineteenth century was their texture, giving the impression that one could hold the objects depicted. Museums have been viewed as a site for vision *par excellence* in this period, yet nineteenth-century visitors to the

¹² Although Sweet (2002) focuses on quite unrepresentative examples, he does highlight some of the sexual proclivities of the Victorians.

British Museum delighted in touching relics of mummies, so as to create a link to a mystical past (Classen, 2015).

Whose senses?

A further motivation for questioning arguments that stress the dominance of sight is the place of gender, race and class. Smith makes it clear that sensory developments have often been gendered or racially specific: ‘Attending to the sensory components of gender suggests that the great divide theory, rather than having a broad applicability, seems to describe best the shift in sensory ratios among highly literate, elite men and hardly serves as proxy for the experience of large numbers of other people’ (Smith, M. M., 2007: 33). Clearly this statement can be applied to aforementioned discussions of vision’s rise in the Enlightenment, which centred on male scientists and philosophers. Roy Porter’s (2004) work on the Enlightenment acknowledges that this was the case. O’Shea (1996) describes vision as one of the key constituents of modernity. However, this is an exclusionary version of modernity because it does not account for women. Studies which have focused on the hegemony of vision have adopted a totalising approach, but have given little thought as to whether these arguments really can be applied when class, gender and race are brought into the equation.

This matters because understandings of the experiences of large swathes of populations are inaccurate when elite, white, male experiences are simply transposed onto other groups. Focusing on touch specifically, Laura Gowing (2003) has stressed that, even in the early-modern period, distinctions need to be made between gendered experiences of the body and the ways that they were imagined and sensed socially. Duden’s (1991) work on one doctor’s female patients in eighteenth-century Germany shows that the gaze did not reign supreme. Instead, the women in her research described very tactile, bodily sensations and pain and these feelings were used for diagnosis, rather than visible signs. However, much more work is necessary. Just as women and the lower classes were often marginalised in the nineteenth century, when researchers today apply the visual paradigm to their experiences of modern life, they compound the marginalisation of those experiences a second time.

The senses and consumerism

Although there are many fields in which sensory studies are now flourishing, nineteenth-century consumerism remains one area in which it is still largely maintained that sight triumphed. The dominant narrative is that the subject was educated in consuming through the interaction of the eye with new assemblages of technologies. However, considering that consumerism is an activity that is largely about the procurement of material goods, this attention on vision could very well be misplaced. This issue becomes more pronounced in light of concerns about the poor knowledge of sensory experiences among women; shopping, in the nineteenth century, was largely a female activity. The second part of this literature review will therefore consider some of the key discussions that have taken place around nineteenth-century consumerism, women and the senses, the shortcomings of vision-centred debates and the possibilities that this opens for research.

The world as a feast for the eye

Arguments that stress the dominance of sight in nineteenth-century commerce do not begin in the shops. Instead, we need to turn to the Great Exhibition of 1851. This has been cited as the crucial turning point in promoting a culture of walking around and looking at mountains of goods. In the Crystal Palace, new creations were amassed and the eye became the medium by which to educate the modern subject about the new culture of 'stuff'. In this vein, Paul Greenhalgh describes the world expositions, held between 1851 and 1939 as 'spectacular gestures, which briefly held the attention of the world...Millions of visitors strolled through the sites and were taught, indoctrinated and mesmerised by them' (Greenhalgh, 1988: 1). Greenhalgh's emphasis on teaching is important. The Great Exhibition imparted knowledge through the eye but this was a one-way passage of indoctrination, with information supposedly being absorbed unquestioningly. An important aim of this was to teach subjects about the technological and colonial progress of the nation, which would in turn promote trade (Greenhalgh, 1988). The eye was to be dazzled with categorisations of goods and the visible demonstration of progress, leading to understandings of national greatness and support for further expansion.

Jeffrey Auerbach (1999) similarly argues that the Great Exhibition served to form national identity amongst visitors. This would be achieved by the eye identifying with the country through objects, in a semiotic appropriation of identity. He discusses this less in terms of the overwhelming spectacle of ‘stuff’, but stresses the visual ordering that was present. By arranging industry in a clear way that could be taken in with a swift glance of the eye, the objective was to educate observers, showing them the importance of industry and commerce to the progress of the British Empire (Auerbach, 1999).

Auerbach’s focus on identity leaves little room to address commercial imperatives. Yet commerce mattered to the identity of a prosperous Britain, whose expanded manufacturing capacities required a market for consumption. Due to this, Beaver argues that the Great Exhibition was the ‘natural outcome’ of the Industrial Revolution, because mass production required mass marketing (Beaver, 1970: 12). It was important to showcase Britain and her Empire in world expositions because of the need for individuals to support the nation by consuming products (Greenhalgh, 1988). The catalogue for the 1851 exhibition alone contained 100,000 objects with which to tempt visitors (Beaver, 1970).

Thomas Richards (1990) has been influential in advancing this argument, and suggesting that expositions had longer-term effects on perception and commerce. He maintains that the Great Exhibition stimulated a visual culture that fostered desires for goods. He continues, noting that a new capitalist system was formed in the nineteenth century that relied on the signification created by a nascent commodity culture. The Great Exhibition was pivotal because it created a stable system of representation for commodities (Richards, 1990). It is therefore here that Richards claims that the reign of the spectacle began, with capitalism gaining a semiotic grip on the country (Richards, 1990). Richards goes so far as to claim that the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the first world fair, the first department store and the first shopping mall, showing people how to dream of and desire things (Richards, 1990). He adds, ‘the Crystal Palace both extended the sway of sight over all commodities and signalled the rise of a new imagistic world for representing them’ (Richards, 1990: 32). For Richards, the Great Exhibition was the crucial point at which commodity exchange lost its materiality and was replaced by the spectacle.

The goods on display at the Great Exhibition could not be bought in the Crystal Palace, yet its effects on nineteenth-century consumer culture have been considered to be vast. Walter Benjamin (2002) writes of the intoxicating effect of the world expositions in training subjects to consider everything in terms of exchange value. Analysing nineteenth-century Paris, he locates its exhibitions as part of a wider culture of arcades and shops (Buck-Morss, 1990). He describes the arcades as ‘dream houses’, and ‘temples of commodity capital’, whose impressive new architecture created ‘fairy halls’ (Benjamin, 2002: 37, 150-165). The arcades, he argues, were emblems of modernity and places of dreaming, where one could indulge the eye. They were the prototype of the department store, which elevated these forms of display to new levels (Benjamin, 2002). Although he does discuss materiality, for Benjamin (2002), modern consumption largely became a story of seduction, where the attention was arrested by distractions paraded before the eye, creating a passive mass of spectators.

Development of the spectacle

These discussions on the growth of cultures of vision have been influential in studies of nineteenth-century consumer culture. The department store has been a particular focus of attention, often considered to be the key commercial development of the time. Rosalind Williams (1982), who focuses on France, argues that expositions created a public who consumed passively through the roving eye. This caused a rupture in shopping practices because old skills became anachronistic with the advent of new technologies. The department store rose out of this, providing mountains of goods which surrounded consumers with the illusion that there was an endless bounty of merchandise available for all, even though the items that could be bought were, of course, limited by what shopkeepers chose to stock (Williams, 1982).

The growth of the department store and the new technologies that it deployed for creating the voyeuristic consumer now form part of a well-worn narrative in consumer history. For example, Carlson (2012) analyses the use of mirrors, arguing that these fashioned a theatrical atmosphere by reproducing displays and throwing reality into question with a demonstration of excess. The mundane activity of exchanging cash for

goods suddenly took on a spectacular dimension. In this sense, Carlson argues that the mirror was vital in the creation of the commodity as fetish, elevating it to a status beyond pure materiality and, again, imbuing it with a dreamlike quality (Carlson, 2012).

Elaine Abelson (1992), in her work on shoplifting among middle-class, American women also argues that electric lighting, mirrors and mountains of goods cast a magical spell over the customer. She cites plate glass, because it allowed items to be lit up and to be constantly on show, but it also permitted people to encounter goods in a dramatic and enticing manner. Yet, as Carlson adds, the magnificence to which mirrors alluded could never be realised. The visual spectacle was only possible in the stores and this ensured that women would keep returning to enjoy the entertainment, thus creating further desires that could only be fulfilled through the eye (Carlson, 2012).

Additional work on window-shopping has reinforced this argument. Ken Parker (2003) argues that shop windows started to create a visual narrative in the eighteenth century but that this was perfected in the nineteenth century. Rather than taking the Marxist approach of arguing that this had the effect of creating dreamworlds, Parker argues that window displays did not falsify or use abstractions. Instead, visual merchandising gave goods values of mystery and abundance. Department store windows fabricated shopping as an experience in which pleasure was derived through the eye because goods could be associated with desirable values of the self (Parker, 2003). In the department store visual merchandising became the main component of a shopping experience (Parker, 2003).

This focus on sight has also provided researchers with explanations for new configurations of space during this period. Proctor (2006) claims that the visual nature of shopping is obvious in the buildings that were created. Focusing on Paris, he discusses the monumental structures of glass and iron that allowed light to flood in, and classical forms that created environments akin to churches and theatres. He contends that these located shops as venues to visit and to see in their own right,

because of the visual pleasures that they afforded.¹³ The construction of these shops fitted in with the wider remodelling of urban spaces, such as hotels and railway stations, and this association meant that shopping was rebranded as a sociable activity in a visually pleasurable environment. Monumentality created a novel social representation of time and space and therefore conveyed the message that a new style of shopping had arrived (Proctor, 2006).

Effects on the consumer

These spatial and technological features are claimed to have shaped consumer behaviour. There is a general absence of discussion on any sense save vision in nineteenth-century consumer studies. For Abelson (1992), even shoplifting, which clearly involved handling goods, was linked to the spectacle and changes in visual culture. She argues that the new department stores educated middle-class women to want the objects that existed in an endless array of possibilities around them (Abelson, 1992). Department stores directed their efforts towards bringing people inside with the idea of just looking around, the expectation being that buying would take care of itself because women would succumb to the spectacle (Abelson, 1992).

The developments that have been discussed thus far posit the consumer as Debord's (2009) classic dope of modern capitalism, seduced by what is offered to the eye and unable to resist. However, Krista Lysack's (2005) study of Liberty's 'Oriental Bazaar', alongside her reading of Christina Rossetti's poem *Goblin Market*, argues for a re-conceptualisation of shopping. Lysack (2005) contends that women's participation was sought through creating modes of display similar to the imperial exhibitions, thus providing a spectacle that removed identification with labour value. However, she claims that, while shops aimed to entice women, they could use tactics to subvert such attempts and consume merely through window shopping (Lysack, 2005).¹⁴ Women could negotiate their desires by employing the gaze and profit from the unfolding spectacle, rather than having to spend money (Lysack, 2005). While such an argument provides an interesting reassessment of consumer empowerment,

¹³ See also Rappaport (2000) on the use of guides and tourist itineraries when visiting the shopping districts of London's West End.

¹⁴ Lysack (2005) draws on the work of de Certeau when discussing tactics.

her focus remains very much on vision. She does not question the claim that shops created solely passive spectators.

In a similar fashion, Kevin Hetherington (2007) has focused on the reception, rather than the aims, of commerce.¹⁵ Going back to the Great Exhibition, he argues that most were not overwhelmed but complained that there was too much to see (Hetherington, 2007). Queen Victoria even wrote of her visit on 29 April 1851 that she felt, ‘bewildered by the myriad of beautiful and wonderful things, which now quite dazzle one’s eyes’ (Gibbs, 1964: 16). The Great Exhibition then, while attempting to teach people how to envisage the future and themselves through sight, provided an unfamiliar way of understanding. However, Hetherington agrees that 1851 did contain the beginnings of teaching people how to see and this subsequently affected consumer culture. While differing from Lysack in his interpretation, he also focuses on subjectivity, claiming that looking made it possible to refashion the self through the spectacle (Hetherington, 2007). Capitalism became a question of the remaking of the self. For the Victorians, this was accomplished through sight (Hetherington, 2007).

Erika Rappaport (2000) has discussed what this meant for women, in terms of their freedom and empowerment. The creation of the West End as a shopping zone at the end of the nineteenth century involved a reinterpretation of public life, the economy, class and gender debates. Again, using vision, she agrees that women could form the self by taking part in activities such as window shopping, by which they assumed the role of voyeuristic travellers, consuming the city through their eyes and desiring the goods placed before them (Rappaport, 2000). While vision offered some empowerment, consumerism and sight also contained more sinister connotations as, not only were goods on view but so too were women. The sight of women in public had long connections with prostitution. Yet this was a time, argues Rappaport, of increased display and a greater focus being placed on appearances in general. Fears were stirred up because all was so visible and seemingly easy to understand (Rappaport, 2000).

¹⁵ Contrary to Richards (1990), Hetherington (2007) considers the Great Exhibition to be a spectacle of production, rather than of consumption, forming a stock take of what had been achieved so far in order to create the impetus to forge ahead.

This theme of women on display as part of the new consumer culture is also analysed by Dyer (1991) in relation to the Soho Bazaar of the early nineteenth-century, which evoked fears of men gazing at women and women going to the Bazaar merely to look and to mingle in what was termed a 'Vanity Fair'. These places were not considered to be markets for goods alone, but for women too. Likewise, Walkowitz discusses how the presence of women in London presented a large problem as 'French' shopping practices and 'Eastern' bazaars were perceived as very un-English and capable of corrupting women (Walkowitz, 1991: 2). As anyone could walk around and look in shops, this stirred up fears that women could become marketplace commodities. Walkowitz (1991) ties this into wider cultural forms, such as the camera and poster art, which transformed the female into a purely visual enticement.

Brave new world?

The seemingly unstoppable rise of visual culture in consumerism has been located in the world expositions and the new department stores of the second half of the nineteenth century. More recently, the break with tradition has been questioned. Stobart notes that, 'in searching for change and progress, we neglect important continuities that served to link shopping experiences and environments over the centuries' (Stobart, 2008: 15). Researchers working on the eighteenth century have probed the novelty of visual developments in the successive century, arguing that shopping was a sociable and visually structured activity in the 1700s. Helen Berry reasons that it was during this period when the middle classes started to enjoy 'just looking' (Berry, 2002: 377). Shopping was not only about buying goods but also the performance of polite social life. Berry claims that shops created an atmosphere that was visually pleasing to this end. Oxford Street, for example, had lighting that permitted browsing, shops mounted impressive fascia boards and bow windows allowed for displays (Berry, 2002).

Claire Walsh (1999) also notes that the focus on the novelty of the nineteenth century has led to eighteenth-century shopping being viewed as 'primitive'. To counter this, she cites examples of trade cards which depicted shops hung with mirrors and pictures, and silk curtains and sconces to visually entice the upper orders. Indeed, Walsh (2003) points to the luxurious London galleries as equivalent to the nineteenth-

century department stores. They were places for walking freely with no obligation to buy. Galleries were imbued with a sense of luxury and distinction, where one could walk, see and be seen. Stobart and Hann (2004) add to these arguments by citing evidence that shows that such trends were not only evident in London but in provincial cities. Certain streets in Chester became fashionable places of promenade from which to watch and to be watched. Stobart and Hann (2004) therefore argue that, while what occurred in the eighteenth century was not a revolution (such developments were spatially and class constrained), changes in nineteenth-century consumer culture need to be viewed from a longer-term perspective, being more evolutionary than revolutionary.

Time for a re-evaluation?

While works on the eighteenth century are interesting in terms of showing historical continuity rather than dramatic change, such research unfortunately offers little to rebalance the sensory bias on sight but instead confirms its penetration of academia. However, they have been included here to show the importance of questioning the revolutionary scope of nineteenth-century developments. Even where novel social and technological changes occurred in the 1800s, the extent of their impact should be questioned. For example, Purbrick (2001) warns against the view that 1851 was a departure point for new trends in design, class conduct and consumption, or a point of culmination, a moment at which to demonstrate the settled state of the nation. She argues instead that expositions are better viewed as occurrences outside of normal space and time, which interrupted everyday patterns. She provides the example of the modernist form of the Crystal Palace. This did not set a new precedent for architecture and the bourgeoisie reverted to their preferred styles of Neo-Gothic and Greco-Roman building (Purbrick, 2001).

It is Purbrick's timely warning that revolutionary changes are more often an invention of the historian than a historical fact that reminds us that exceptional events or innovations should never be taken as representative of more widespread change. It was often their very nature, occurring outside of ordinary space and time that earned them the attention of their contemporaries. In light of this Crossick and Jaumain (1999) note that, while the department store was the focus of much attention between

1880 and 1914, often this was because it embodied wider social fears, more than reflecting a new reality. The department store was the accumulation of many independent trends which symbolised the unfamiliarity of modernity, such as new architecture, lighting, sales techniques and women in public (both as sales assistants and as shoppers), which made them a 'child' of the period, rather than its progenitor (Crossick and Jaumain, 1999: 18). Bill Lancaster (1995) also cautions against accepting the view that the nineteenth-century, British department store was revolutionary. He accepts that the department store did profit from a coincidence of factors which shaped its development. However, he argues that the more spectacular shops were found abroad, such as the Bon Marché in Paris and Marshall Fields in America. Such geographical qualifications are important; it was only between 1909 and 1939 that Britain 'Americanised' its department stores, and even this was only on a partial basis. Ferry (1960) adds to this, writing that it was not until 1909, when Selfridge's opened in London, that other department stores started to think about modernising.

Furthermore, the attention that department stores and their visual delights received was not commensurate with their effect on trade; in 1910, these 'Cathedrals of Consumption' held less than 3 per cent of all trade in England (Crossick and Jaumain, 1999: 5-6). Not all shopping was undertaken in department stores and new shopping practices continued to coexist with the old (Lancaster, 1995). Benson and Ugolini (2003) concur that the focus on London department stores and the culture of the spectacle has been at the expense of the majority of retailers and ordinary experiences. Small-scale shops and mail order, for example, have been bypassed for being too quotidian but these authors argue that this ordinariness is precisely why they require attention (Benson and Ugolini, 2003). While unrepresentative but exceptional changes have held a strong attraction for academics it is often the more representative, yet unremarkable phenomena that exert the greatest social influence, by nature of their unnoticed but powerful repetition. This is especially true when a consideration of the senses, the means by which we comprehend the world and locate our place in it, is brought into the picture.

Summary

In this review, it has been shown that the academic focus on vision provides an unrepresentative account of the use of the sensorium in multiple societies and throughout history. When four of the five senses are marginalised, their use is poorly understood but so too are wider social and cultural issues. This is because the way that the senses are used and prioritised says a great deal about society itself. Sensory studies are now growing. However, in consumer histories attention is still being placed on sight, technologies that furthered this and the use of it among consumers. This picture limits our understandings of the rich varieties of commercial experience and also ignores the material aspects of consumerism.

In addition, because consumerism was so associated with women in the nineteenth century, there is an even greater need to rebalance the sensory focus. Where vision did triumph, it appeared to centre on elite, male experiences of life. When academics transpose this characterisation onto women, they commit the error of rendering female experiences of modernity almost invisible. This review of some of the key literature on the senses and nineteenth century consumer history has therefore demonstrated the need to re-evaluate the dominance of vision in studies of consumerism and to assess fuller female sensory experiences of shopping.

Chapter 3 – Methodology, theory and method

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed developments within the field of sensory studies, with particular focus placed on sensory history. Attention was then turned to explaining why the sense of touch in the context of consumer history merits further exploration. Having surveyed these fields, I will now discuss the theory, methodology and method underpinning the work. The structure of this chapter is as follows: first, the status of this work as both a piece of historical research and one that is strongly informed by social theory will be explained. Owing to the disciplinary disjunctures that still exist between historians and sociologists, the possibilities for increased dialogue between the two disciplines will be discussed, as will the benefits and pitfalls of such an approach. Following this, the work of Merleau-Ponty will be outlined, detailing why his work and a phenomenological approach have been used for this thesis.

In the second half of the chapter, and in line with the theoretical approach that has been adopted, the research methods will be discussed. This section will commence with a general survey of debates addressing the problematic issue of conducting research on the senses. Following this, the approach to archival research that has been adopted will be outlined. Finally, attention will be devoted to the particular sources drawn upon in this work, their specific uses here and their status.

Social history, historical sociology – does it matter?

This thesis is historical, with the timeframe being the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, as will become clear as the research unfolds, it is also a sociological study because it draws heavily on theory, notably that of phenomenology, in order to better understand the historical phenomena being analysed. Although this may seem straightforward, it is important to discuss the possibility for a fruitful relationship between the two disciplines, before the research methods used in this study can be surveyed. Despite the recent vogue within academia for greater interdisciplinarity, it is no exaggeration to say that history and sociology have long struggled to collaborate,

each citing irreconcilable differences and leading to what Fernand Braudel termed ‘a dialogue of the deaf’ (cited in Burke, 1992: 3). The historian and social theorist Peter Burke suggests why this has been the case:

Sociology may be defined as the study of human society, with an emphasis on generalisations about its structure and development. History is better defined as the study of human societies in the plural, placing the emphasis on the differences between them and also on the changes which have taken place in each one over time. (Burke, 1992: 2)

Burke’s comment reflects the misunderstanding between some historians and sociologists of what each discipline can offer to the other (Loxham, 2014). Although there are exceptions, many sociologists reject the historian’s focus on small details, while sweeping, albeit often justified dismissals of grand theories have had the effect of many historians rejecting any and all engagement with social theory (for example, see Thompson, 1978). This frequently results in missed opportunities that discussion and cooperation could stimulate.

When it comes to historians, not all are such purists. Patrick Joyce (1995) argues that the lack of engagement with social theory is unfortunate because social history especially is itself the product of modernity and its political and intellectual trends. The conditions of its production and articulation should therefore not be forgotten. ‘Traditionalists’, influenced by Ranke’s ideal of writing history *wie es eigentlich gewesen*,¹⁶ have called for empirical historical research that is based on accepted standards of methodology and writing. However, history has never been free from the context of its production (Tosh and Lang, 2006: 8; see also Mandler, 2004). ‘Purity’ is a much-lauded yet scarcely attainable ambition.

That much historical research has been driven by contemporary social issues and from debates arising within other disciplines is not *ipso facto* negative. For example, contemporary social and, in particular, class issues gave rise to social history, representing a desire to transcend the limitations that a purely political focus imposed

¹⁶ ‘How it really was’.

and an aspiration to analyse history 'from below'. Likewise, the growth of gender history in the 1970s and 80s was motivated by the women's liberation movements of the day (Hesse, 2004). The influence of the present on studies of the past is nothing new; the eighteenth-century origins of historical research had their roots in the Enlightenment quest to discover universal truths, and national concerns still exert their influence on the writing of history today (Appleby et al., 1994; Panikkar, 2013; Tosh and Lang, 2006). All historians, whether or not they recognise and acknowledge the use of theory in their writing, work with models and concepts. For example, terms such as 'feudal system', 'tradition', 'patriarchy' and 'capitalism', which have now become indispensable in historical writing, find their genesis in social analysis (Burke, 1992: 29). Since World War Two, no historian has been able to escape an engagement with Marxism, whether supporting or refuting it (Howell and Prevenier, 2001). The problem today though is that much of this borrowing and cross-fertilisation is being ignored within history, owing to disciplinary specialisation, and contemporary engagement with theory is once again being avoided (Joyce, 1995; Smith, 2014).

The use of theory among historians is often instrumentalised only when there is potential practical gain, rather than being deployed due to a belief that it adds anything to the analysis. Among their many effects, funding bids and REF assessments have turned research into exercises in academic 'efficiency' and many historians have outwardly embraced theory and interdisciplinarity in the pursuit of jobs and grants (Vernon, 1999). Yet, once grants are gained and jobs secured, rigorous theoretical engagement remains elusive. This is shown by Gunn and Rawnsley's research on the teaching of theory at universities; staff in history departments record general 'anti-theory' feelings which makes such research difficult (Gunn and Rawnsley, 2006: 380). Their conclusion is that history has been edging ever further away from the social sciences, with the discipline never moving forward but endlessly repeating its own history (Gunn and Rawnsley, 2006).

Of course, the combination of historical research and theory has potential pitfalls and the concerns of both historians and sociologists in this respect are worth attending to. E. P. Thompson (1978), in his famous essay directed against Althusserian Marxism, *The Poverty of Theory*, writes that the use of theory by historians ignores what he considers to be the facts of the real world. Idealism and theoretical constructions

obscure material existence from analysis because a conceptual structure dominates all. Thompson fears that this causes objective evidence to be perverted or even ignored (Thompson, 1978). In a more recent account, Tosh and Lang warn that those who employ social theory can develop ‘tunnel vision’ whereby they fail to see reality because all is viewed through the lens of a particular theory (Tosh and Lang, 2006: 138-139). Likewise Joan Hoff’s (1994) concern over the use of postmodern theory in women’s history is that popular ‘isms’ have had the effect of sidelining historical reality. This has made it difficult to focus on specific socio-economic realities because overriding theories and ideas that have been inspired by current concerns have taken precedence.

Sociologists can perhaps be said to have approached historical research with more openness, in the form of historical sociology. With roots in the early *Annales* work of the 1920s and 30s and strongly influenced by the work of Norbert Elias, historical sociology grew in Britain during the post-war era; for example, the 1950s saw studies conducted on social mobility over a long time-span at the LSE (Banks, 1989). Interest peaked in the 1980s and 90s, partly as a backlash against the Marxist-dominated 1960s when sociology was largely devoid of historical concern, and as a result of feminist developments in the 1970s which sought to uncover the historical roots of female oppression (Banks, 1989). In 1977 the Social Science History Association was founded, to create a space for different disciplines to meet and exchange ideas (Skocpol, 1987) and in 1988 the *Journal of Historical Sociology* was created because of ‘an appreciation that societies can only be made sense of in time’ (Corrigan and Sayer, 1988: 1). Historical sociology was increasingly seen as helpful for avoiding ‘chronofetishism’, whereby the present is viewed as disconnected from the past, but also ‘tempocentrism’ which constructs the events of the past as naturally and teleologically leading to the present (Hobson, 2002: 12). Stephen Hobden (1998), who argues for the use of historical sociology in the study of international relations, adds that this means that the researcher should not view times and places as disconnected. The domestic and the international, the past and the present are all part of a continuum. Hobson provides this succinct definition:

[historical sociology is] a critical approach which refuses to treat the present as an autonomous entity outside of history, but insists on embedding it within a

specific socio-temporal place, thereby offering sociological remedies to the ahistorical illusions that chronofetishism and tempocentrism produce.

(Hobson, 2002: 13)

These moves have reflected an increasing belief that disciplinary boundaries are unhelpful and a perceived need for a much longer-term focus (Corrigan and Sayer, 1988). Skocpol (1987), a leading figure within historical sociology, writes that, while historians and sociologists have come from different traditions, they can and should work together. Social historians provide a greater understanding of grand transformations and how people have reacted to these, while historical sociologists move beyond a focus on smaller groups, thus allowing a more integrated picture to be formed by using pre-existing explanatory and theoretical frameworks. This makes the approach different to traditional sociology because of the emphasis on both stasis and change, but it is also different to history because of the emphasis on overriding social structures (Banks, 1989; Hobden, 1998). This means that historical sociology is less concerned with small-scale or 'micro' relations than it is with 'macro' structures and social formations. Certainly, such approaches have produced some excellent work. A standout example would be that of Bauman (1991) on the Holocaust, whose sociological approach to history provides an extremely persuasive account that incorporates both events and structures.

However, historical sociology cannot be said to bridge the two disciplines equally. It is more deeply rooted in the sociological tradition, being concerned with understanding large structures and long processes of change that underpin present circumstances (Hobden, 1998). For example, a key concern has been to investigate and explain the emergence of modern, capitalist economies over a long time period, and spanning multiple nations (Hall, 1989; Cohen, 2015). Indeed, Banks (1989) is adamant that historical sociology must be driven by sociology, with theoretical concerns prompting the questions that will be asked and theories giving a greater coherence to the work as a whole. It is the sociologist's concern with theory that will allow more important questions to be asked because historians' work, he claims, is unscientific and parochial. Only with sociology can greater, non-specific claims be made because theory will enable a greater possibility of generalisations (Banks, 1989).

Can this thesis then be described as a piece of historical sociology? Certain elements of it are found here. It is very much influenced by the *Annale's* concern for a more macro approach; the time span is the entire nineteenth century and the study is not restricted to commerce but embraces the interlocking of other areas of life. However, this work stops in 1914. Historical sociology generally uses the past in order to understand the present. Or, at the very least, there is a strong element of both past and present in most work falling under that rubric. Hobson (2002) writes that the past should be used in order to problematise the present and inform the current research agenda. To continue this thesis until the present day would have been interesting but, for reasons of space and focus, 1914 has been chosen as an end point. In addition to this, historical sociology often has strong political aims, for example, the concern with using history to understand contemporary formations of capital. These issues are largely absent in this work, although there are discussions of class and the place and agency of women, which do have repercussions for understanding the present, which is always the sum of its pasts. In addition, contemporary matters have driven many of the original motivations behind this work, such as 'showrooming', which was discussed in the introduction.

A greater problem, however, is that historical sociology generally prioritises theory over evidence, something which Banks claims is permissible (Banks, 1989). Archival evidence is given a key role but in cases where evidence is scarce, theory is used to 'fill in the gaps'. Such a position cannot be endorsed here. The evidence from the archive must always come first. Theories have immense use for prompting important questions and interpreting evidence but they must serve the evidence, not vice versa. As Zemon Davis articulates, 'There is no substitute for extensive work in the historical sources' (Zemon Davis, 1981: 273). Theory and archival evidence should be balanced; historical facts should never be injudiciously deployed merely to bolster a theory, just as theory should never be used in a decontextualised fashion to give research a façade of interdisciplinarity.

Owing to these differences, this work may not fall under the traditional heading of social history or historical sociology. Yet, ignoring disciplinary terminology, what this work seeks to do consistently is to use theory to provoke new lines of questioning and interpretations of rigorous and extensive archival research. A strong, deeply engaged

use of social theory that is always measured against archival findings is used to prompt new insights and understandings of the past. By combining archival research with well-used social theory, both historical and sociological understandings can be strengthened (Loxham, 2014). Theory can provide clear ways by which to interpret findings from the archives, while archival findings should help to bolster, qualify or refine theoretical work (Burke, 1992). This is not necessarily simple; for all the problems with his arguments, Banks is right in warning that embracing history and sociology is hard as it requires the wide theoretical knowledge of the sociologist, as well as the historical knowledge and archival research skills of the historian (Banks, 1989). Nevertheless, it is an important task and so every effort is made here to do it justice.

Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology

As discussed in the introduction and literature review, this thesis has been motivated by a concern that existing scholarship on female consumption draws on a reductive sensory paradigm, ignores the potentially different ways in which women used the senses, focuses too much on unrepresentative innovations in commerce and provides little analysis of the wider life of women and the impact of this on shopping. As I discuss below, the theory used in this work, or in any piece of historical research, must be appropriate to the study being undertaken and the issues at stake.

Theory can prompt innovative questions with regards to historical research and many of the above concerns were prompted by readings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His work on phenomenology centres on perception and its role in forging the individual's relationship to the world. Merleau-Ponty was influenced by Husserl's later work on the subject's embodied relationship to the world, not in a psychological or intentional sense but in the way that the world appears to the individual (Matthews, 2006). At the centre of Merleau-Ponty's work is the argument that the individual experiences the world through a meeting of the self and the object (object here referring to anything – including other people – outside the subject). This does not mean that scientific and objective views of the world do not matter but a phenomenological approach allows personal engagement to be stressed (Matthews, 2006).

In phenomenology, both subjective and objective natures are crucial to the analysis because there is a refusal of pure subjectivity. As subjects we live in the world and so are composed of the relationship between self and object (Matthews, 2006).

Perception, for Merleau-Ponty, occurs when subject and object meet, creating an encounter between 'the sensible mass' and 'the mass of the sensible' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 136). He describes perception in this way:

It is our experience, prior to every opinion, of inhabiting the world by our body, of inhabiting the truth by our whole selves, without there being need to choose nor even to distinguish between the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true, because in principle they are one and the same thing – faith, therefore, and not knowledge, since the world is here not separated from our hold on it, since, rather than affirmed it is taken for granted... (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 28)

Perception therefore is a question of the individual inhabiting the world, not as an objective space but as a space of experience. The objective world does exist but personal experience and knowledge are finite, being limited to the individual's encounters. Anything beyond such encounters transcends the subject's perceptual world. This partiality is inherent to the spatio-temporal character of the world in which subjects dwell (Dillon, 1997).

This phenomenological approach is appropriate for a study of the senses because of the emphasis on how the body interacts with the world, balancing the attention given to the subjective and the objective. It constantly asks how the self is involved with the world, rather than empiricism which stresses that cognitive perception is the primary way of knowing the world, by the objective world acting on perception as sense data (Matthews, 2006). Such an approach emphasises the passivity of the subject and fails to provide an understanding of how knowledge is accessed by a relationship with the world. Phenomenology is also opposed to the intellectual position which stresses the role of the mind in ordering that which is encountered. This approach still assumes an objective world, and it does not account for the meeting of this and the self (Matthews, 2006). In phenomenology, how the subject thinks about the world comes after interaction and it is dependent upon a personal, pre-cognitive interaction with it

(Merleau-Ponty, 1968). The senses are crucial as they are the medium by which the world is encountered. In the context of a study on consumerism, this means attending to the sensory interaction of the individual, and the objects and spaces of shopping.

As noted, the emphasis on the pre-cognitive in perception does not negate reflection but this always comes after the initial embodied encounter (Dillon, 1997). Reflection follows the pre-personal encounter as a way of allowing us to take stock of the sensory world, and also of ourselves as subjects in relation to this world: ‘There is the tree becomes, “I see the tree” and a world of subjectivity grows up to mirror the world of things’ (Dillon, 1997: 110). This means that, for Merleau-Ponty, knowledge and experience of the self are intimately tied up with knowledge of the world, and a unity occurs through the two. It is not a case, as in Cartesian logic, of humanity being defined through the mind, but it is an intense and on-going relationship with the world, coupled with reflection, which confirms both experience of the self and experience of the world (Dillon, 1997).

Merleau-Ponty’s approach is also useful when considering the durable nature of sensory apprehension. This has strong implications for studies on commerce, by showing that the constant interaction between subject and object means that humans develop habitual ways of living in and relating to the world. How the body lives and reacts to anything new depends upon previous experiences. This is different to behaviourism which stresses that A causes B, because such an approach ignores the subjective self. Instead, how the world is lived and experienced depends strongly upon how we understand our place therein on a subjective basis, which is formed in our relationship with it (Matthews, 2006). What we consider to be significant, sense with pleasure, with anxiety or with desire depends on prior, embodied relationships, which form habit memories. Habit memories are based on the accumulation of sensory perception and they allow life to gain temporal coherence because the body draws on the past when comprehending the present (Matthews, 2006). Habits create certain ways of living in the world and durable, stable dispositions of sensing.

Concerning studies on commerce, this approach justifies the questioning of arguments that stress sudden innovative changes in shopping behaviour wrought by, for example, the department store and visual technologies. Merleau-Ponty’s work emphasises that

sensory comprehension does evolve but change is gradual, with innovations in the environment taking time to create habitual changes in the subjective response.

Crossley explains it in this way:

Habit is not the succession of discrete events, past and present, but their cumulative penetration in an unfolding process. And it is habit, as the sedimented effect of the past within the present, that allows this penetration and unfolding to occur. (Crossley, 2001: 116)

This means that the way in which the world is encountered throughout life depends upon the meaning that the world has on the basis of previous encounters and the pre-reflexive meanings that these have created (Matthews, 2006). The implication of these theories for this thesis is that works stressing changes in the environmental infrastructure of commerce have overestimated their potential to wring alterations in behaviour because they have ignored prior interactions and enduring dispositions. These insights support an approach to historical studies on consumerism which start outside the consumer world, as perceptions and experiences of commerce may have been affected by wider life. Women did not live in the shops!

This latter point is important to bear in mind as Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenological approach have received criticism among scholars of sensory research, notably Sarah Pink and David Howes (2010). They claim that Merleau-Ponty's approach is inappropriate to sensory studies because he assumes a body meeting the world without any social and cultural conditioning (Pink and Howes, 2010). However, their argument relies on a limited reading of Merleau-Ponty's work. Merleau-Ponty argues that understandings are formed by the individual's relationship with the world which then endures through habit memories. Yet he also stresses that the sensory meetings that sediment and affect future comprehension take place in a social framework. This will be explored more fully in subsequent chapters, but it does mean that the sensory experiences and embodied comprehensions that are likely to be formed are constrained by social factors (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Merleau-Ponty writes:

Far from opening upon the blinding light of pure Being or the Object, our life has, in the astronomical sense of the word, an atmosphere: it is constantly enshrouded by those mists we call the sensible world or history, the one of the corporeal life and the one of human life, the present and the past, as a pell-mell ensemble of bodies and minds, promiscuity of visages, words, actions with, between them all, that cohesion which cannot be denied them since they are all differences, extreme divergences of one same something. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 84)

Pink's and Howes' (2010) arguments against the use of phenomenology therefore require some revision. Moreover, the effects of social context on perception are a further warning against assuming the primacy of sight in consumption, as this position has been deduced largely in relation to male experiences and then transposed onto women. The sensory experiences of women and men may have differed owing to the differing social worlds in which they lived and which shaped their experiences.

This variation in perceptions between men and women matters all the more because the middle classes are the focus of this study. Social structures affect sensory experiences and comprehension but perception is also formed through classed groups. This is because the world of perception is a shared world. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Dillon argues, 'The transfer of corporeal schema, the immediate (that is, reflexive – but unreflected) perceptual linkage through which we recognise other beings as like unto ourselves, is the phenomenal ground of syncretic sociability, pathetic identification or in a word, intersubjectivity' (Dillon, 1997: 122). We start to perceive our own bodies and the world in relation to other things but also to other bodies (which in phenomenology may also be termed objects). A sense of community and of linkages with other subjects comes through that transfer of corporeal schema (Dillon, 1997). We can recognise others because we identify their experiences of subjectivity with our own (without actually feeling their subjectivity) which allows a connection to be made. Conversely, an absence of shared feelings of subjectivity can create distance (Dillon, 1997). It should be noted that Merleau-Ponty's work has received some criticism from feminist scholars, who have claimed that he focuses on the male subject and the male gaze, which has the effect of positing women as objects alone (Olkowski, 2006). While Merleau-Ponty does tend to refer to the subject as male, a

growing body of work is demonstrating the use of his theories for understanding the female experience and the formation of the female subject (Olkowski, 2006; Weiss, 1998; Young, 1990). This thesis contributes to that project.

Merleau-Ponty's work has therefore raised questions for me about existing scholarship on sensory and consumer history and, as will become clear throughout the following chapters, it provides useful ways of interpreting the evidence. Yet it should be noted that Merleau-Ponty has not received a great deal of attention among either sociologists or historians. With some exceptions, the work of Bourdieu has been favoured when approaching habits. Nick Crossley (2001) though explains how Merleau-Ponty solves certain problems and fills gaps within Bourdieu's work. Habitus is described by Bourdieu as the sediment of the past that functions in the present, creating 'structured structures'. For Bourdieu these dispositions are very much rooted in class. There are clear similarities with Merleau-Ponty here. However, as Crossley points out, Bourdieu puts habitus before the agent. Crossley states:

We need a more substantive account of the agent or 'creature' of habit, however, if we are to account, for example, for the formation and acquisition of habitus. Habits are sedimented effects of action, indeed of repeated actions, and any account of them therefore presupposes an account of action, such that action cannot be reduced to habit in the manner that Bourdieu sometimes suggests. (Crossley, 2001: 95)

Bourdieu is useful for analyses of society, taste and class, but he has not been used here because of the need to get back to agency and subjective action within the social world, and the initial formations of habit in the individual. Bourdieu does not concentrate sufficiently on the purposeful and meaningful engagement of the body with the world and the processes by which habits are formed, something that is crucial in understandings of the senses and consumption. Habits do not emerge without individual engagement, something that Merleau-Ponty attends to more fully.

Researching the senses

A frequent question that arises in relation to sensory research is, how is it possible to research and understand the senses when so much research material is visual? As discussed in the literature review, much of the *raison d'être* behind the emergence of sensory studies in the 1970s and 80s stemmed from the belief that academia had for too long been preoccupied with sight. Yet, with this critique of sight as the object of study, criticisms of sight as a research method soon followed. Questions were asked about how touch, taste, smell and hearing could be investigated if researchers were solely to read about them. Could the engagement of the body with the wider world pass under the radar due to a reliance on traditional, written sources? (Parr, 2010)

This has not led to a complete abandonment of written sources but, in a contemporary context, attention has increasingly been turned to alternative approaches. Sarah Pink (2010) claims that multi-sensory methodologies can show how non-linguistic factors are experienced. This involves researchers using their own embodied senses to understand life. Tim Ingold (2011b) stresses that this can promote a better understanding of how humans dwell in the world through their bodies, moving and working with objects. Ingold uses the term 'meshwork' to describe how life is woven through the body inhabiting space (Ingold, 2011b: 71). This is also a space in which the researcher needs to be enmeshed for understanding the sensory experiences of others. Classen (1999) and Howes (1990) likewise make it clear that reading a culture, as one would read a text, is not suitable for understanding the sensory dynamics of non-visual cultures. The researcher must experience life in a similar, multi-sensory fashion.¹⁷

In contemporary studies, these arguments have led to impressive research experiments. Loïc Wacquant has called for, 'a sociology not only *of* the body, in the sense of the object, but also *from* the body, that is, deploying the body as tool of inquiry and vector of knowledge' (Wacquant, 2004: viii). As mentioned in the literature review, Wacquant showed his commitment to this through an ethnography

¹⁷ Although Pink, Ingold and Howes appear to be in agreement on this matter, Howes maintains that the subject and its senses approach the world in a culturally mediated way, something stressed less by Ingold and an issue which the three have debated (Pink and Howes, 2010; Ingold 2011a).

of a boxing club in Chicago, where he lived and trained for three years (Wacquant, 2004). However, when approaching a historical subject, this is problematic because the past is no longer with us. Anthropologists can be immersed in the sensory culture of the people they are studying, whereas historians naturally turn to written documents and material artefacts, not having the opportunity to make contact with any of the groups or individuals that they analyse (with the exception of very contemporary historical topics) (Howes, 2008). Although documents, buildings and objects may survive, taste, smell, touch and hearing are fleeting with the moment of experience, making them difficult to study in a past context as the traces of sensation immediately vanish (Parr, 2010).

Despite this seemingly insurmountable obstacle, attempts have been made to experience the past in a multi-sensory manner, albeit largely outside academia. For example, it is now possible to take part in historical re-enactment at living history sites and museums, involving dressing in costumes, preparing and eating food and even participating in battles. By doing this there is a conscious desire for the senses to be involved in absorbing the past (Robertshaw, 1992). These activities do offer some benefits and it would be wrong simply to dismiss them. As life in any period is experienced in a multi-sensory manner, re-enactment can allow for a sense of immediacy and understandings that books cannot offer (Goodacre and Baldwin, 2002). Living history can permit the exploration of different pasts as they may have existed, using the sounds, smells and objects of those periods (Goodacre and Baldwin, 2002).

Notwithstanding this potential, there are multiple problems with such approaches. In re-enactment a lot of the content is, at best, an educated guess; many details simply cannot be known because no evidence survives (Goodacre and Baldwin, 2002). When using the archive for research, there will always be gaps in the information available. Yet this takes on a new significance when attempting to 'live' in the past where such details have to be invented. Added to this, re-enactment is constrained by pragmatism; Goodacre and Baldwin (2002) cite the example of houses at the Black Country Living Museum which have been taken from their original site on a mining shaft and moved to a place of safety. While understandable, the effect of this is to remove both the bodily experience of living in that situation, and the psychological sense of fear that

likely would have been a prevalent part of life. Similarly, military re-enactment groups are constantly surrounded by controversy concerning the participation of women and black people, not to mention that death and physical injury are never included in war re-enactment (Hunt, 2004).

It is important to acknowledge the existence of these sensory research methodologies so as to understand what they can offer to the researcher but also in order to explain their rejection here. An even more troublesome problem with multisensory historical research comes in the form of how re-enactment practices are experienced and the evidence that they supply. However accurate the clothes or food may be, the researcher ultimately knows that this is an act and so the whole process inevitably will be experienced differently from the person who was living a particular past as a never-ending reality. Mark Smith (2007) is rightly critical of attempts to recreate lost pasts, because they ignore the historicity of sensory consumption. While we may be able to re-produce some sensory stimuli, we cannot replicate their consumption, and it is an easy step for the researcher to make comparisons with the world of today. This criticism can be levelled at any kind of sensory ethnography and it is one of the biggest drawbacks for re-enactment as a research method. In addition to this, the stress placed on re-enactment inevitably decentres the past and puts the researcher's feelings and experiences at the centre, instead of the sensory consumption of the individuals under investigation (Loxham, 2015b). This is also the reason why material objects and buildings have not been handled and visited in this work. While vital for certain types of historical research, the focus of this thesis on the senses renders such objects unhelpful, because they can reveal so little about past sensations.

Back to square one?

If visual sources have been criticised for preventing a full understanding of the senses, and multi-sensory methods suffer from numerous shortcomings, what sources can the researcher of the senses use? Visual material does form the basis of this research. However, this is not a case of reverting to the visual as a last resort and ignoring the aforementioned criticisms of this. Instead, this choice represents an alternative understanding of what visual material can offer to sensory studies, and the meaningful opportunities that it can provide for engaging with the sensorium.

One reason that sensory experiences can be researched using written material is because, though fleeting, past experiences frequently leave a written trace (Parr, 2010). This approach is again helped by a reading of Merleau-Ponty. He discusses language by noting that it does not refer to itself as a signifier but is instead the trace of past actions, understandable because of the embodied experiences to which it refers (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Language does not construct reality but refers back to the perceived world of experience, meaning that individuals can understand each others' language on the basis of the shared world of perception from which that language emanates (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Several notable works have successfully drawn on this potential of language: Coates' (2005) writings on changing historical responses to sound and noise rely upon cartoons and written sources that record ideas on auditory health hazards, the reception and criticisms of sound and their relationship to modernity. Jonathan Bate (1999) uses archival and literary sources to show changes in sensory understandings of culture and the environment over time, moving from the bodily, sensory dwelling of the eighteenth century, to a visual, aesthetic appreciation that came to characterise modern experiences. Barbara Duden, who analyses female experiences of the medical body, draws on texts to assert that understandings of the body have changed from a pre-modern focus on describing personal bodily sensations, to modern knowledge where all is filtered through the medical gaze (Hull, 1995). Still in a medical vein is Porter's (2004) excellent work on changing conceptions of the flesh throughout the Enlightenment, as is Bynum and Porter's (1993) edited collection of essays on the changing use of the senses in the history of western medicine. These varied studies represent the possibility of uncovering sensory experiences of the past through the linguistic, written traces that they have left.

Clearly, written documents can further historical sensory studies, but how is the researcher to understand the sensory experiences that are described in the written documents? On a basic level, it may be possible for the researcher to understand traces because of sensory resonances of, for example, pain. It is to this that Merleau-Ponty refers when discussing language. Sometimes, experiences can be understood by the researcher because they indicate a certain sensory reality. Roach and Richardson

(2000), when discussing the written account of Fanny Burney's 1812 mastectomy, note that the written account can be viewed as a recovery, commemorating a continuing absence. The writing forms an act of substitution, replacement or 'prosthesis' of the sensory experience for others (Roach and Richardson, 2000:53). This text can be understood on certain levels by the researcher because there is a sensorial reality of pain to which it refers.

However, universal sensory understandings of this sort should be approached with caution. While pain is universal, there are many sensations with which the researcher will not be able to identify. Indeed, even pain is experienced differently depending on the context of its reception and the social and cultural formation of the senses. This does not mean, however, that the written archive is of no use in bringing sensory experiences to light. Instead, it reaffirms the very different nature of the past. It is therefore perhaps advisable to welcome, rather than lament, the insights and feelings that elude the researcher because they remain as irretrievable traces and confirm an alternate sensory world. Barbara Duden (1991) remarks that, in using diaries and notes compiled by the doctor of eighteenth-century Eisenach, Germany in an attempt to reveal understandings of the body among the women of the town, she increasingly realised how differently they experienced their corporeality. Due to how the senses are conditioned by history and context, continues Duden, there would be a need to 'cross into a new territory' both as a researcher, but also as a sentient human being in order to fully understand this (Duden, 1991: 179). While Duden could read the texts and understand certain insights, some did remain totally 'other' because there existed no possibility for sensory connections.

It is important to recognise this issue of difference and otherness. In attempts to locate the origins of today's culture, there has been a tendency to search for similarities at the expense of differences. Conversely, Lucien Febvre argues that the issue for researchers should not be how the past was experienced on our own terms but how the people of the past understood their world: 'We instinctively bring to bear on these texts our ideas, our feelings, the fact of our scientific enquiries, our political experiences, and our social achievements' (Febvre, 1982: 5). Elton (1967) adds that the aim must be to understand an age on its own terms, which will then help the researcher to ask the right questions, and uncover the right answers. A lack of

empathy and, in this case, sensory comprehension on the part of the researcher can be positive because it highlights a lost sensory world that can be viewed for what it was then, rather than it being the inevitable forebear of the present.

Due to this, when statements regarding tactile sensations are encountered throughout this work, they should not be equated with sensations of today. There are instances in which tactile sensations, such as ‘soft’, ‘warm’, ‘or ‘smooth’ are referred to. These provide a wealth of knowledge for appreciating the multisensory understandings of the past, but comparisons to those sensations in a contemporary context should be avoided. It is all but impossible to know the relationship between the sensory consumption of the past and the present. However, what the linguistic (and sometimes pictorial) documents in this work do confirm is that much of life, and especially consumerism, had a very tactile dimension for women in the nineteenth century.

Using the archive and the sources for this thesis

Having explained the use of written sources in this work, this section will outline how the appropriate sources were chosen, and the opportunities and limitations of these for the research. For this work, the following documents have been used:

- Conduct books/advice books
- Women’s magazines
- The draper’s trade press
- Paintings
- Novels
- Individual shop records
- Memoirs and autobiographies
- National and local newspapers
- Periodicals
- Clothing and fabric catalogues
- Photographs
- Illustrations and cartoons

These documents were sourced from archives including the British Library, the British Library Newspaper Archive at Colindale (now closed), the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Westminster Archives. In addition, many sources have been taken from online databases including Nineteenth-Century Periodicals and Nineteenth-Century Newspapers. They are detailed in full in the bibliography.

The selection of documents was based on a number of considerations. First, there are factors which constrain the choice of material available to the researcher. The archive has traditionally been conceived of as a place where the necessary documents for research are housed, with little thought being given to the types of documents (and their concomitant memories and stories) that are kept and made available for research (Bradley, 1999). Yet the archive, as both a physical space and its associated system of knowledge collection and ordering, has more recently been the focus of critique. The archive is a human construction, with choices being made over what to keep and how to order it.

The evidence that has been used in support of this thesis represents only that which has been kept in archives. Pragmatic considerations of space mean that museums and archives do not keep all documents (Kabakov, 2006). Susan Hiller (2006), who has curated exhibitions at the Freud Museum, notes that even such a necessary choice creates some form of narrative. Decisions on what to keep are made according to valuations of importance, which then generate meaning. In doing this, archives give a context to items that would otherwise remain disconnected (Hiller, 2006). Therefore, what is found within an archive and what was used for this research is the product of choice. First, an individual chooses to leave a collection and then generations of archivists continue to sort and classify such collections, according to socially constructed systems. There is not a great deal that can be done about this limitation but its existence should be recognised. For the purposes of this work it means that, while the argument is as full as the sources permit, a ‘total’ history will never be possible because of the limitations of the evidence. Like any study relying on archival evidence, the work presented here comes with the qualification that its value is reliant upon the availability of the sources.

This point matters because the preservation of certain documents over others means that certain histories are more likely to be written than others. This has particular pertinence for gender history as male interests have long driven document keeping (Branca, 1979). How and why documents are chosen for safekeeping can depend upon the identity of a particular archive. The archive is an organised set of documents which traditionally came about through state activity, a tool of power to support a narrative in the interests of the nation (Ricoeur, 2006; Steedman, 2001). But along with this, the accumulation of documents that detailed peoples and territories provided an aid to the governance of these, both at home and in newly-acquired foreign dominions (Featherstone, 2006; Joyce 1999). Such extreme examples are rare in western archives today. However, there are still gaps in government files and laws which forbid the opening of more recent archives (Lynch, 1999). This has an inevitable effect on the histories that can be written.

For this thesis, questions of national identity and governance are of little relevance, and there were no necessary files which were not available to access due to security reasons. However, when using corporate archives, for example, those of the Jaeger Company, Whiteley's department store or Liberty's department store, similar concerns had to be attended to. All of these files are housed at the Westminster Archives (with the exception of some Liberty's files stored in the National Art Library in the Victoria and Albert Museum) but they were initially compiled by, and still remain the property of, their respective companies (apart from Whiteley's). While it is impossible to know whether this was the case, certain documents may have been preserved by each company at the expense of others, in the interests of maintaining a particular corporate image. Although not used for this work, H. G. Selfridge kept an archive from his shop's genesis for this reason. The researcher can do little about this, except for being constantly aware that the archive resources may be less than neutral. In addition, where corporate records have been used in this thesis, alternative sources have been drawn upon for verification. For example, if company records seemed to present a biased image, newspaper articles and letters from the public were used to confirm or refute the evidence. This has been done throughout the thesis, but particularly in the later chapters where individual companies are focused on more explicitly.

The ideologies that govern archives have received a lot of academic attention for the ways in which they influence research. Many classificatory systems are based on taxonomic systems of the nineteenth century which, Featherstone (2006) notes, divide neatly and do not lend themselves to inter-disciplinarity. Conversely, some archives are erratic in their classification systems (or, as is increasingly the case, are highly under-staffed), which means that important documents may lie undiscovered. More positively, this can lead to the discovery of unexpected, yet welcome evidence (Featherstone, 2006). For Foucault, questions of power arise: 'The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events' (Foucault, 2006: 28). The archive allows events to be grouped and formed according to certain relations and laws that endure (Foucault, 2006). It regulates that which can be said and prevents voice from being given to that which cannot.

A significant amount of material in this thesis came from the British Library. This is a legal deposit library but this principle was only enacted in law in 1911 and it is quite possible that books dating from earlier years simply were not kept as they were judged unimportant. This confirms Foucault's argument regarding the archive dictating what can and cannot be said. Yet a further problem that affected this research more, and which is connected less to power than to the ravages of time, was that some documents were occasionally in poor condition; books had pages missing or ripped out, while other documents had seemingly vanished from the archive. At other times, the possibility of viewing a document was dictated by the whim of the particular member of staff on duty, with some deeming certain documents to be too delicate to be accessed and others later agreeing that they could be viewed.

The constraints of research are not solely dictated by the archive. The archive is mined, claims Osborne (1999), because it gives the researcher's work epistemological credibility. The archive is considered to offer raw data, therefore it is seen as more authentic than secondary material. Yet the researcher (especially one focused on the modern period where the problem can be a profusion rather than a dearth of material) also makes a choice of what to examine and the status of these sources. This can be seen in relation to the incredible collections that Walter Benjamin compiled, suggesting that the 'archive' is not just formed by archivists, but also by researchers,

who make a further selection based on their particular interests and the perceived value of the sources (Marx et al. 2007). This means that the information reflects the author's own thoughts and perceptions, as much as it does the past. In this way, archival research is not a reflection of events as they occurred but of the researcher (Bradley, 1999). Making a selection from the already-ordered selection of the archive does not resurrect the past but gives the traces of the past within documents a decontextualised life that they were not intended to have.

Yet a choice concerning which documents to analyse is unavoidable if a study is ever to reach a conclusion. However, reflexivity must always characterise archival activities. Lucien Febvre recommends using as many sources as possible, taking as much time as possible, in order to answer a given question as fully as possible (Febvre, 1982). In line with this guidance, many weeks were spent in multiple archives. As shown in the above list, and as can be seen in more detail in the bibliography, a large number of very diverse sources have been drawn upon so as to diminish any potential for partiality. Dates of publication were attended to in order to ensure that the whole period was covered. This thesis does claim that sight has been stressed in works discussing female consumption in the nineteenth century to the detriment of the other senses. When we consider the non-visual, in particular the tactile, we are able to gain an understanding of the different experiences of consumers. Yet the diversity of the sources drawn upon, and the sheer number of these, helps to demonstrate that this is a credible claim. Of course, only a very small fraction of all the sources gathered could actually be deployed in the thesis. Attempts were made to ensure that such evidence was representative, and evidence which shows, for example, developments in visual culture, is not wholly discarded but is acknowledged and discussed.

The type of analysis used for the sources depended in part upon their format. For example, a publication such as the *Warehouseman and Drapers' Trade Journal* has not been digitally archived. This meant that the analysis of this publication was a simple case of systematically reading through each issue. However, I was particularly attentive to the presence of words that indicated tactile sensations such as 'soft', 'warm', 'rough' etc., and to articles on subjects such as shop furnishing, the buying and selling of fabrics and sewing. This focus on particular words was a particular

feature of analyses of publications that had been digitised, such as *Punch* or *Fun*. For these I was able to conduct keyword searches. This is helpful as it helps to cut down the time needed to survey the vast quantity of material available but it can have the negative effect of interesting articles being overlooked.

Status of the sources

Although a wide range of evidence was uncovered, the status of each source is not necessarily equal. This has been alluded to in the comments regarding company archives and the possibility of partiality, but attention to this problem should run through all archival work because not all sources share the same level of credibility. Specific comments on certain sources will be discussed in the relevant chapters but there are some general comments on the status of some of the sources used in this thesis to be made here.

First, newspapers and periodicals form an important source base for this work. Newspapers are useful for studies of the nineteenth-century because of the explosion in print culture, and the growth in communications technology (Vella, 2009). These documents can therefore provide a wealth of information on contemporary events and ways of understanding the world. In this thesis they are used for comments regarding companies, cartoons, reports of events and letters. However, such publications both reflected and shaped society (Vella, 2009). Pertinent issues to consider can include newspaper ownership, political orientation, funding (including advertising), local and regional affiliations (Vella, 2009).

Letters published in newspapers and periodicals have been drawn on. Letters can be written with various purposes in mind and, while revealing personal feelings, they can hide much. Content and writing style can also be intimately shaped by society. Letters therefore provide information in the form of their content but they can reflect wider social forms of thinking and acting as well. The letters used in this work are not generally those of a personal nature but correspondence to newspapers and periodicals. These speak little of personal feelings but they do illustrate social concerns and, for the purposes of this work, they can confirm public interest in the issues featured in periodicals, providing a way of gauging readership. Letters reflect

the complex interplays between individuals, publications and society (Dobson, 2009). Despite this usefulness, letters printed in newspapers or company literature would have passed through an editorial filter, with each publication choosing which letters to print. The researcher will never know what was contained within unprinted letters (Dobson, 2009).

Autobiographies bear a similarity to letters, by highlighting personal feelings and experiences, but they can be subject to similar problems. They too are shaped by the society in which the writer lives, sometimes with power relations influencing what is told and what is concealed (Carlson, 2009). In addition, while useful as witnesses to contemporary events, their accuracy depends upon the writer's ability to recall events precisely, their partial view and even the author's desire to tell the truth. Being focused on the self, an author may also have wished to create a certain self-image for preservation (Brundage, 2002). Autobiographies by drapers have been used here and they do paint an overwhelmingly positive personal image against a sea of immorality. This does not mean that all autobiographies are written with a deliberate intent to deceive but the risk of bias cannot be ignored (Howell and Prevenier, 2001).

Throughout each chapter, a variety of images are used, including paintings, catalogue diagrams, sewing diagrams, drawings and photographs of shop interiors and cartoons. The popularity of images for historical research grew in the 1960s but really took off in the 1980s with the increase of interdisciplinarity. Burke (2001), a strong advocate for the use of images, admits that they have drawbacks, being what he terms 'mute witnesses' whereby the researcher has to translate the message, leaving the possibility for mistranslation. When using images, concerns to anticipate include the reasons for creating an image, why decisions were made over what to portray and exclude and whether reality was distorted (Burke, 2001).

Connected to this, when analysing images the focus should be on what was significant to the creator and the intended audience (Jordanova, 2012). As Jordanova notes, this latter point can be difficult to ascertain as the 'quality of people's engagement with the past' is difficult to determine (Jordanova, 2012: 154). We do not know what people felt or saw when they saw images, or how they responded. Despite these problems, images reveal ideologies and mentalities (Burke, 2001). Their production

emanates from a particular culture and they were intended for viewers who were also inured in that culture (Burke, 2001). Whether pictures can be used as evidence on their own is a matter of some dispute. In this thesis, they are not considered to be second-best evidence but, like any other evidence, they are used alongside other sources.

Finally, novels are also drawn upon in several chapters as they offer interesting insights into nineteenth-century culture. As Reid (2009) argues, nineteenth-century novels possess a strong realist streak, which bolsters the argument for their utility. However, a novel is ultimately a piece of fiction. They do reflect society but they also create it and even influence it (Reid, 2009). This means that they must be treated with some caution, appreciating their potential, but recognising their limits. Here they are used to bolster arguments and reinforce other evidence for a wider social reality that they reflect but they are not used as evidence for real phenomena because of their fictional nature.

Summary

This chapter has examined and explained the combination of historical research and social theory that will be used in this thesis. Deployed together, they will allow a strong analysis of historical evidence, along with a theoretical underpinning. In addition, phenomenological theory has raised many innovative questions that will be discussed throughout the work. How phenomenology and the work of Merleau-Ponty will be used, and the key points of his work have been outlined. Following this, the possibilities for sensory research were discussed and evaluated, before my own approach of drawing on written sources was explained, and the sources and their status described. This has been a necessary step in order to show the epistemological underpinnings of the thesis.

Chapter 4 – Making the tactile woman

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies... She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands...She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff...She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple...She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Proverbs chapter 31, verses 10-30.

The house keeps fifty maids employed. Some grind apple-golden corn in the handmill, some weave at the loom, or sit and twist yarn, their hands fluttering like the leaves of a tall poplar, whilst soft olive-oil drips from the close-woven fabrics they have finished. For the Phoenicians' extraordinary skill in handling ships at sea is matched by the dexterity of their womenfolk at the loom, for Athene has given them outstanding skill in beautiful crafts and such fine intelligence.

Homer, *The Odyssey*, chapter 7: 103-111.

Introduction

Although the main aim of this study is to understand the place of tactility among middle-class women in nineteenth-century consumerism, the focus for this chapter takes a step back from the Victorian shop and into the home. As discussed in the literature review, work on shopping, and particularly that which attends to the visual pleasures of consumerism, frequently makes the tacit assumption that the female shopper entered retail environments as a sensory *tabula rasa* who took in the ocular pleasures of shopping just as they were presented to her. She is understood as falling under the spell of window displays and magnificent new buildings (Rappaport, 2000). If not completely enthralled by the visual, she is sometimes credited with being able to 'just look' and to enjoy the spectacle set before her eyes, without feeling compelled to spend (Lysack, 2005). While differing in the agency that they attribute to women, both arguments share the assumption that women were strongly affected by the visual

novelty of the shops, the effect being that the wider circumstances of their lives receive scant consideration.

Such arguments align poorly with understandings of sensory behaviour that maintain that the senses have a broader social formation (Howes, 2006). Merleau-Ponty (2002) stresses that perceptual understandings are largely based on the accumulation of sensory experiences that build up into habit formations over time. These then affect subsequent sensory encounters. This suggests that attempts to understand the experiences of commerce should start by analysing the sensory schema that a woman took shopping with her. This schema was formed through the wider experiences that were particular to her gender and social position. Comprehending middle-class, female sensory formation in this period must begin with the home, which was by far the most influential sphere in her life, and her main activities therein.

By examining this first, an understanding will be forged as to how women's domestic situations and daily interactions trained up the development of certain sensory habits, the formative experiences of which affected how women approached other areas of their lives. Only by first appreciating how these sensory habits were formed, through the meeting of each subject with her world, can a thorough understanding of how middle-class women experienced the various facets of consumerism be attempted. In claiming that the sensory experiences of commerce were shaped by prior activities within the home, this will also help to show that the increasing entry into the public sphere did not represent a total break with the private sphere for middle-class women, as bodily behaviour and habit modes of sensing formed a connective bridge between the two.

Current work on the place of the middle-class Victorian woman at home has focused on questions of what she spent her time doing and the effects of this on her agency. This chapter will engage with these debates to some extent but will go further, in order to argue that her activities, while existing as a visible sign of her membership of a particular socio-economic class, had the more potent effect of directing her sensory engagement. This created sensory habits and enduring modes of perceiving the world within her. More than the activities that she undertook symbolising her identity, the middle-class, feminine self was actually formed in the sensory habits she developed,

as these became a stable part of her. As will become clear in the subsequent chapters, these persisted and affected her life and activities well beyond the four walls of the home. Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology, it will be argued that time spent in the home and, in particular, the emphasis that was placed on sewing therein, prompted the body to be constantly interacting with and perceiving its environment in a tactile fashion. This then created a durable, tactile bodily schema that was transferrable to other environments.

In order to make this argument, the structure of this chapter will be as follows. First, there will be a short discussion of the existing work on the ideology of separate spheres and the implications of this for the physical location of middle-class women and their daily employments. Sewing was one of the key occupations of women but, as will be shown, there is little work on how this was taught, the effects of this training, and its impact and use throughout life. The second section will therefore focus on this, using paintings, instruction books and conduct guides to highlight how needlework was imparted from an early age, both at home by the mother and in school environments. Interwoven throughout this will be Merleau-Ponty's writings on subject-object interaction and the formation of perceptual habits. This will help to explain how these activities, and the way in which they were taught, affected habits of perception and were intended to create enduring sensory modes of being for the middle-class female.

This discussion will be advanced in the third section of the chapter where it will be argued that training during girlhood was not an end in itself but a means to becoming the ideal middle-class woman. Attention will be paid to the importance placed on the general formation of habits, the particularly feminine understandings of tactility, and how sewing was considered to be the foremost means of achieving this (musical training will also be touched on briefly). This will be linked to phenomenological understandings of the transfer of habit skills in time and space and the 'intentional arc', which allowed basic sensory habits to be used in other areas of life. In the final section, the sewing activities of women, and the impact of periodicals and the sewing machine will be examined. Here it will be claimed that tactility remained important in adult women's lives, as sewing continued to be a strong preoccupation. Despite periodicals being cited as part of the new visual culture, and sewing machines being

linked to the decline of skilled sewing, it will instead be argued that both of these actually strengthened this activity and meant that more, not less time was spent on it. A middle-class woman's identity was not a question of appearances alone but was fundamentally bound up with the way in which she learnt to use her body, in particular her senses, because of how this created embodied habits of perception that would endure into later life.

Separate spheres and sewing

The Victorian ideology of 'separate spheres' is now a well-rehearsed theme. The traditional narrative is that middle-class women, who had always been implicitly associated with the home, became further disassociated from work and limited to the domestic sphere as industrialisation progressed in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (2002) trace the cultural origins of the separate spheres ideology to the evangelical revival of the 1780s, associated with such figures as William Wilberforce and Hannah More. Routine, work, self-discipline and self-examination were stressed as crucial for personal salvation and national regeneration. A man's role in this was to earn an income, while a woman's role was to propagate the ideals throughout the household. By the 1830s, such values had been absorbed as naturally 'English' and a new morality, which placed the daily fight against sin as a national good, assumed dominance. The place of the woman as the ministering angel in the house remained central to this rhetoric (Davidoff and Hall, 2002; Hall, 1979). Dyhouse (1981) has added that the male breadwinner and female homemaker ideology triumphed along the length of the social ladder because dominant middle-class values became all pervasive.¹⁸

¹⁸ This argument, while popular, is not wholly accepted and challenges to it should be acknowledged. Crossick (1976) argues that traditional bourgeois values did not simply originate among the middle classes and filter down to passive lower classes. Instead, the upper-working classes in particular had their own distinct values, which emphasised respectability, independence and thrift. These were autonomous, rather than thrust upon them. However, Crossick does concede that, while the working classes often transformed these meanings for themselves, the values were so dominant in society that they could be easily drawn upon. In addition, it is widely accepted that working-class women's work remained crucially important to the new factory industries of the industrial revolution (Berg, 1993). Rose (1986) argues that women were integral to the industrial revolution but the work they carried out was structured along pre-existing gender lines meaning that, while having to work, gender ideology still structured work, rather than work initially structuring gender.

These traditional accounts state that the result of these changes was that men, by leaving the house each day to work, came to be characterised in the popular imagination by their public life. Here they would compete in a brutal, Darwinian battle of business. This role found its opposite in women. While men spent their days in an economic race, a woman's province was the home, divorced from the taint of capital and competition and where beauty, love and peace were to be found in abundance. Victorian writers, such as Ruskin in his famous work of 1865, *Sesame and Lilies*, exalted the woman's role as that of a ministering angel, who would provide the space to which her husband could retire after work. The writer of *A Few Words on Women's Work* stated, 'in the Bible, women are told clearly to be keepers at home. She is to make the home comfortable' (Anon., 1859: 11). The home was to form the moral core of each family unit, regenerating men for their economic mission, and women were to be the protagonists in this, representing rest and serenity.¹⁹

Much has been made of this characterisation of the woman as Coventry Patmore's famous 'Angel in the House'.²⁰ However, despite being increasingly centred in the home and often depicted as little more than domestic embellishments, women were not idle. The contemporary portrayal of women as ornaments of leisure stood as a testimony of their husbands' ability to provide but the necessary reality was frequently far removed from this. Gordon and Nair's (2000) study of the middle classes in Glasgow between 1850 and 1914 highlights that there was a great diversity of incomes and a pervasive anxiety among all was that of falling down the social ladder.²¹ Women played a vital role in managing the family budget, dealing with servants and generally keeping up appearances, as well as offering business and domestic aid to their husbands (Gordon and Nair, 2000). Likewise, Lieffers (2012) has argued that a managerial ethos permeated the female realm and women were often responsible for the management of servants and finances. Despite their comic

¹⁹ The apparent simplicity of this division has undergone significant challenges. Gleadle (2007) offers a review of Davidoff and Hall's arguments to mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Family Fortunes*, which surveys its omissions, faults and continuing impact. Amanda Vickery (1993) also claims that Davidoff and Hall commence their analysis too late and that gendered divisions of life, particularly in an economic capacity, were in motion even before the eighteenth century.

²⁰ Patmore's narrative poem of 1862 is an exaltation of the ideal middle-class woman.

²¹ Rubinstein's (1977) study on the wealth of the middle classes reveals the concentration of money in London and in particular in the City, but it also highlights the huge income range that 'middle class' encompassed. Patricia Branca (1979) notes that, to merit the label 'middle class', a household income of around £100 a year was just enough, but ten times this amount could also place one within the bounds of the middle classes.

representation in novels such as the Grossmiths' *Diary of a Nobody* of 1892, husbands and wives within the oft-derided lower-middle classes frequently worked as a partnership, with women helping men to make key business and financial decisions (Hammerton, 1999).

Clearly, the model of a leisured lifestyle, made possible by the husband, was rarely attainable and women had to balance this ideal with the reality of a need to work. However, the pragmatic necessity of helping their husbands and managing the household generally did not remove women from the home. Undertaking work here was not necessarily problematic because the evangelical current that was sweeping through society and which was normalised into secular discourse also warned against the sins of idleness (Houghton, 1963). This is ironic considering that a woman's rest could symbolise her husband's achievement and financial provision. Yet, women's advice manuals constantly stressed the importance of keeping busy and working, albeit in the household. This was emphasised in the June 1852 edition of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, which warned, 'Leisure is a very pleasant garment, but it is a very bad one to wear' (EDM, 1852: 38).

The types of work with which women were supposed to be engaged bore a particularly feminine mark. Advice manuals and women's periodicals devoted attention to cooking, animal care, plant care and household maintenance. Above all though, sewing was valorised. As shown by the excerpts from the Book of Proverbs and Homer's *Odyssey* that were quoted at the beginning of this chapter, sewing and related occupations such as spinning and weaving have been the preserve of women since time immemorial. Wayland-Barber (1994) has argued that this has been the case because, like cooking, sewing has allowed for the maximisation of female productive capacity while simultaneously being interruptible, enabling women to look after children and the home as well. Such ideas have endured and evolved over time but, in the nineteenth century, when combined with the ideology of separate spheres, all forms of needlework came to stand as an indicator of a woman's femininity, of her attachment to the house, and as a testament to her diligence.

Crucially though, sewing provided a way to fill the potentially dangerous leisure hours of the middle-class woman who, without such pure and wholesome occupations to

engage her time, was feared likely to fall into harmful diversions (Morris, 1962; Flint, 1993). Serving the bourgeois work mentality, sewing was transformed from its eighteenth-century status of a leisure activity to useful work, something by which a woman could attain the middle-class industrial ideal of keeping her hands busy and producing practical and beautiful items, while not having to leave the home (Parker, 2011). Samplers made by the young stood for the progress that a woman-in-training was making with the needle, while embroideries and a myriad of creations such as slippers and cigar holders represented the advanced skills of a woman. The home, whose virtues were evoked in religious terms, was filled with the prolific sewing output of women, who bedecked these domestic temples with d'oyleys, antimacassars and tablecloths (Morris, 1962).

Given the amount of time devoted to sewing and its association with domesticity, it is no surprise that it has attracted the attention of feminist historians who have viewed it largely as a tool of repression. Mary Beaudry (2006) argues that skills with the needle have so long characterised women that sewing has become naturalised and has been appropriated as an integral marker of immutable gender roles throughout various periods and in multiple cultures. Rozsika Parker (2011), one of the main critics of the effects of embroidery on women agrees, adding that this naturalisation has been used to serve a patriarchal identity, which has allowed labour divisions to be constantly reinforced. Embroidery has been deployed to constrain women and maintain the interests of men (Parker, 2011). While she does provide convincing evidence for this, her contention that any enjoyment that women gained from embroidery was because they were blind to the subjection lying at the heart of it is rather more tenuous and difficult to substantiate (Parker, 2011).

Indeed, there are examples of needlework being used to access more public roles, thereby subverting its submissive connotations. Amanda Vickery (1993) points out that an absence of paid work for women in the past was not necessarily disempowering. Proving this argument, Barbara Morris (1962) discusses items that were produced by the 'New Women' at the end of the century, including banners for the suffragette movement. Osaki (1988) has similarly taken the case of American Antebellum women, who traversed the fine line that separated public and private through their sewing activities. These women sewed in groups for war relief and

temperance movements, thereby using the needle to assume a political and public role. In this sense, sewing can also be said to have strengthened social ties between women of different classes. Monica Cohen (1988), drawing on novels by Jane Austen, George Elliot and Charles Dickens, contends that domestic pursuits were given a vocational character that elevated the work of women by appropriating the same discourse of professionalism that characterised male employment. ‘Tory feminism’ emphasised the religious sanctity of women’s roles in the home, serving family and community through their pursuits, which allowed them to stress equality for women in a radical, yet non-threatening way (Cohen, 1998: 14).

Whether sewing repressed or was used by women as a tool of empowerment clearly remains a source of debate. Yet, this short review of some of the key literature on the topic shows just how important it was, and the amount of time that was devoted to needlework within the home. This was frequently acknowledged in nineteenth-century publications. Miss Lambert, in her 1842 work *The Handbook of Needlework* wrote, ‘Needlework appears to have been not only a positive for noble ladies, but the principal occupation, as a source of pecuniary advantage, for women from the most remote periods’ (Lambert, 1842: 1). Similarly, Mrs Beeton noted, ‘The art of needlework dates from the earliest record of the world’s history, and has, also, from time immemorial been the support, comfort, or employment of women of every rank and age’ (Beeton, 1870: preface). By the nineteenth-century though, sewing had attained such an elevated position among middle-class women that it could be termed the female default setting. As the items that now fill the stock rooms of English museums and houses attest to, sewing became a natural accompaniment to the rhythms of life.

Educating the body – mother as teacher

The process by which women gained their seemingly natural fluency with the needle and the effects of this on their sensory formation will now be analysed. As noted above, the visual aspect of needlework has received the most attention, whether in relation to making items, or to the finished product; Barbara Morris (1962) argues that the prime purpose of these feminine creations was to testify to the skill of the women in the home. Although finished items had an important visual quality, sewing involved

long hours of work and perceptual skill, necessitating constant interactions between the subject and object. This activity was primarily tactile.

The ways in which the female body was educated in sewing, and the senses formed through this, began in the earliest years of childhood. Attempts to understand gendered variations in norms and practices in adulthood start too late. It is during the formative years of childhood when the inculcation of societal values begins (Hunt, 1987a). For a long time, the education of girls throughout history appeared as little more than a footnote in works otherwise wholly devoted to the development of boys (for example, Ariès, 1962 and Gillis, 1981). Certainly the education of girls and boys has differed historically. Schooling and governesses for girls were often foregone when finances were limited and there were boys to educate (Branca, 1979). Yet many middle-class girls did increasingly enter schools as the nineteenth century wore on and this will be discussed later. However, even when girls were removed from the traditional school setting, they were still trained. In the nineteenth century, much of this learning took place at home.

Home, as the place where a woman was expected to devote her life, was certainly not considered to be an inferior environment in which to educate a girl, especially because the overriding aim was to socialise daughters into being marriageable. Formal education in letters and numbers was provided but it was not necessarily considered to be the most useful skill to develop (Dyhouse, 1981). However, sewing was highly rated. In addition to being an important talent for a good marriage and domestic bliss, increasing numbers of middle-class women faced the possibility of not marrying and having little choice but to work for money, so it was important to prepare for this.²² Sewing was viewed as one of the few occupations suitable for women who fell on hard times. Easton de Barras, author of *Home Dressmaking and the Art of Good Dressing*, advised that all families should have at least one woman trained in dressmaking and mending, whatever their financial position. He urged, ‘Therefore, mothers be wise in time, and see that one at least of your daughters is taught dressmaking in all its details’ (Barras, 1896: 14).

²² Middle-class women did increasingly enter the work force as the nineteenth century progressed (Holcombe, 1973). However the trend of single or widowed working women should not be overstated. Patricia Branca indicates that in the years 1850-52, 859 out of 1000 women married before the age of 50. By 1910-12 this figure had only fallen to 818 (Branca, 1979).

This sentiment was widely reflected. Mrs Humphry, author of *A Word to Women*, echoed popular opinion when warning against the effects of strenuous academic work on the health of growing girls and on the formation of good habits (Humphry, 1898). The preferred chief component of their education was sewing. *The Ladies Handbook of Knitting, Netting and Crochet* of 1842 outlined the reasons behind the priority afforded to this, noting that providence had ‘adapted women’s tastes and propensities to the station she was designed to occupy in the scale of being’ (Anon., 1842: viii). Women were considered to be biologically fitted for certain activities: ‘Amongst these, useful and ornamental needlework, knitting and netting, occupy a distinguished place, and are capable of being made, not only sources of personal gratification, but of high moral benefit’ (Anon., 1842: viii). There was a firm belief that sewing was a natural and correct occupation for women, having been ordained as such by God. Yet, although it was perceived as natural, it was also something that had to be cultivated. Owing to this, intense efforts were put into helping young girls attain that for which they had been made. Making a start in the earliest years of childhood was considered to be so important because, as the November 1853 issue of *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* warned, ‘You may bend the sapling but you cannot bend the oak. You may mould the clay but you cannot mould the pottery’ (EDM, 1853: 213). The clear sentiment was that, if not trained from a young age, efforts in later life would be too late.

This meant that the relationship between the daughter and the mother, who acted as her child’s chief pedagogue, was crucial. Mrs Humphry, in a work of 1898 explained that the chief duty of the mother was to help daughters to attain ‘their destiny in the good old womanly way as a wife and mother. And the best way to make a girl a good wife is to train her to be a first-rate daughter’ (Humphry, 1898: 14). Homes Dudden (1913) wrote in a similar manner when arguing that the main role of a woman was to ‘train’ her children. In the first ten years of life, claimed Homes Dudden, children are ‘amazingly receptive’ (Homes Dudden, 1913: 10-13). It was considered to be during this period when children would respond most positively to the influence of parents and obtain a firm training that would endure into later years.

In the middle-class home, a young girl typically first learnt to sew at her mother's side, through teaching and imitation. A large number of nineteenth-century artworks are a testimony to the association of women with sewing, and the importance placed on the bodily transfer of skills from the mother to the daughter. Many of these paintings do contain romanticised elements, such as the always close relationship of the serene mother with the cherubic child. These may well represent ideals more than they do absolute realities, reflecting the nineteenth-century idealisation of motherhood and childhood.²³ However, even with these caveats, the subject choice alone is a strong indicator that there would have been a strong cultural resonance among viewers, the mother-daughter teaching of needlework being a common theme in middle-class families. The paintings provide some information on how teaching was accomplished. First, girls were merely exposed to sewing from a very young age, watching their mothers and attending to how each task was accomplished, as evinced in figures 4.1 and 4.2. It should also be noted that figure 4.1 was painted in 1750, prior to the period of this study, while figure 4.2 was produced in 1869. This reflects the enduring nature of this method of teaching.

Mere watching was not enough though. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 confirm the mother-daughter method of teaching, but they provide additional information concerning the transfer of embodied skills. In Blacklock's *The Lesson* (figure 4.3), the mother deftly holds a piece of fabric in her hand, through which she draws a needle and thread. The small girl watches by her side but she is not merely observing. Just visible in her hands is a piece of fabric, which she holds in an identical manner to that of the mother. The mother's sewing does, of course, involve the eyes. However, it is clear that the hands are doing the work, feeling the threads and the needle. Similarly, the eyes of the daughter are fixed on the work of the mother while her hands mimic the way in which the mother handles the fabric. The painter has placed the mother's hands at the centre of the painting and their delicacy and light touch are emphasised.²⁴

²³ Gillis (1997) provides interesting reflections on the origins of these myths and their realities. See also Cunningham (2006).

²⁴ In all of the paintings used for this chapter, the hands are foregrounded and centred. Fromer (2008) and Vincent (2012) both discuss the sensual connotations of a woman's hands in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

The implication was that the daughter, by holding the fabric, needle and thread, would imitate the movements of the mother's body and so gradually develop the skills possessed by her, thereby producing work of a similar quality. Indeed, it was expected that, one day, the daughter would be sitting in the mother's place. This point was made in an article appearing in the June 1852 edition of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, where the future place of the daughter was outlined: 'On her devolves, under her mother's superintendence, the principal care of the domestic management of the household. By her skilled and industrious fingers is the needlework of the family performed; for she will not suffer her mother's failing sight and declining strength to be taxed by the labours so admirably performed in earlier years' (EDM, 1852: 56).

The Knitting Lesson, painted by John Thomas Peele in 1858 (figure 4.4), reinforces this point concerning the passing on of skills from one generation to the next through bodily imitation and practical involvement with materials. Peele's image represents a working-class scene. However, it shows a highly romanticised and clean version of working-class, rural living.²⁵ Owing to this, it was most likely intended to be seen by a middle-class audience with whom it would again resonate, because of the themes portrayed. It shows an older lady (possibly a grandmother) teaching a young girl how to knit. Here the method is even more direct than that depicted by Blacklock; as the girl focuses on her work, the older woman grasps her arms, directing her movements as she forms stitches.

These paintings represent just some examples of many similar artworks that confirm that the principal way by which habits of perception and the use of the senses for sewing were fostered was through imitation and through the hands practising with materials.²⁶ This involved mimicking the actions of another and the participation of the body was crucial. In a phenomenological sense, what was occurring was the early involvement of the body's sense receptors (which exist prior to perception) with the world (the world in this case being sewing materials). The effect of this is that the

²⁵ For information on changing ideals of the English landscape and the rural idyll that was so cherished by the middle classes see Burchardt (2002), Matless (1998) and Lowenthal (1991).

²⁶ As this work is focused specifically on England, only paintings from here have been used. Many artworks with similar themes are also available from Europe and North America, such as Auguste Renoir, *Children's Afternoon At Wargemont* (1884), Mary Cassatt, *Young Mother Sewing* (c. 1900) and Francis Day, *Mothers and Daughters* (1863).

body 'greet' the world and starts to create perceptions of it and understandings of the relationship between subject and object (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 87). Both figures 4.3 and 4.4 depict the girls' hands engaged with their materials. They affirm the phenomenological idea that the body never acts alone in a sensory experience, but is always in a dialogue with things and within a field of perception (Busch, 2008). The paintings thus highlight that, from an early age, the teaching of sewing imparted ways of interacting with, understanding and interpreting the world with which girls were presented. Knowledge can only occur once perception has first opened up the way for it (Cerbone, 2008). However, knowledge is specific and restricted to that which is encouraged through certain interactions. For a young Victorian girl under the tutelage of the mother, perceptual experiences started to present her with a strong knowledge of sewing, materials, tactile sensations and the place of her body in these interactions.

Educating the body – going to school

While the transfer of needlework skills happened on a one-to-one basis among girls when taught at home by their mothers, a more effective method was necessary in schoolrooms. Needlework had been taught as a main subject to girls in schools for a long time, but the issue of the Revised Code in 1862 made it formally compulsory (Kamm, 1965).²⁷ Legislation was hardly needed to instil ideas on the importance of sewing; Allen and Mackinnon (1998) note that even in the Quaker schools, which in their early years had railed against the teaching of typically feminine subjects, such as art and music, sewing was still taught widely throughout the nineteenth century. Girls needed skills that would equip them for life and sewing was one of the few skills upon which they could fall back (Allen and Mackinnon, 1998). Even in the supposedly progressive schools favoured by the wealthier middle classes, sewing was afforded a high priority. In her memoirs of a Victorian childhood, Molly Hughes (1991) records the dismay that she felt as a young girl when her place at the London Collegiate School was revealed to be dependent upon her ability to sew a buttonhole neatly, regardless of her academic prowess. In addition to this, Hughes recalls how Miss

²⁷ The teaching of domestic skills for daughters of the working classes was made compulsory in 1888, owing to fears of national decline and the need to create good 'Imperial mothers'. See Kamm (1965) and Davin (1978). Formal schooling grew in popularity among the middle classes after the passing of the Education Acts of 1870 and 1902.

Buss, often hailed as a trailblazer in female education, made sure to hold monthly ‘Dorcas’ meetings for the students.²⁸

For the middle-class girls who went to school (and among the working classes who attended) books could be used as an aid for teaching sewing. These books, while largely word-based, can help us to form a more detailed picture of the actual process by which girls, including those represented in the paintings and learning at home, gradually cultivated embodied skills. The information that the paintings can provide is naturally limited in this respect, but the immense detail that the books go into, and the bodily and sensory realities to which they refer, help to fill in these gaps.

In 1897, Agnes Walker published *Needlework and Cutting Out*. The purpose of this volume, which was to undergo numerous reprints, was to provide an aid for teaching schoolgirls how to sew in situations where groups were larger. Sewing was to be taught using what Walker termed ‘needlework drills’. Although serving as a practical method by which to instruct greater numbers, the system followed essentially the same format as that which is depicted in Blacklock’s and Peele’s paintings, only on a much larger scale. For example, when teaching stitching, Walker instructed that, rather than using the small piece of cloth, as in Blacklock’s work, or the guiding of the hands as depicted by Peele, the teacher should use a large demonstration frame at the front of the class to indicate how the work was to be carried out by pupils. The frame was to measure 20 inches square, with tapes crossing horizontally and vertically, representing the warp and the weft of the fabric, which would allow a whole class to observe the demonstration of various types of stitching before copying these (Walker, 1897).

Although insisting upon this visual instruction for the benefit of the teachers and pupils, Walker held that lessons should, above all, be practice-based. She noted, ‘Needlework lessons ought to be object lessons, and as such should be treated in as original a form as possible’ (Walker, 1897: 4). As with teaching at home, there was a

²⁸ Hunt (1987b) argues that the emphasis on sewing for girls increased with the formalization of education because it was actually written into the curriculum.

‘Dorcas’ meetings were gatherings of women for the purposes of sewing, often for charitable purposes. They take their name from the Biblical character of the same name, featured in Acts chapter 9. Dorcas was noted for her charitable works and her dressmaking abilities.

clear recognition that each girl required full bodily involvement with the object of comprehension, in order to develop her skills successfully. There was an understanding of the practical and sensuous nature of the work that required a bodily, physical meeting between object and self. Walker advised teachers to explain each movement with patience, and to give a demonstration of the task to be completed from a platform, but the central part of the drills was that of the children participating with their own materials (Walker, 1897).

It was not sufficient for this to be a one-off action. Although this cannot be depicted or seen in the paintings, Walker was adamant that practice was necessary for the development of each ability, adding that needlework ‘is really not a mere intellectual subject, but a domestic art requiring time to practice it’ (Walker, 1897: 4). The aim and the effect of repetitious exercise was to improve skills, only achievable by the training up of habits. Girls were instructed in handling materials and learning the requisite movements for sewing through the drills, which began with the most basic of skills. The first in Walker’s book is entitled ‘Thimble Drill’, which involved children, upon command, repeatedly putting the thimble on the finger, and then removing it, for up to 20 minutes at a time (Walker, 1897: 5). While all of the drills commenced with demonstrations, the emphasis always fell on these repetitious bodily movements. The ‘Needle Drill’, for instance, consisted of the teacher issuing orders, at which the girls would follow with the correct movements. At the command, ‘Thread in right hand’ the girls were to lift the thread half an inch from the end, between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand (Walker, 1897: 7).

Repetition was afforded the utmost priority in these drills, in order to foster durable habits of perception and practical skills. As mentioned earlier, sewing was considered to be the natural preoccupation of women but it was also understood that well-developed skills were not their birthright. In 1859, *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* wrote to its readers:

Perhaps too, you can recall the first stocking you ever darned, or torn dress that you learned to mend, and haven’t altogether forgotten the patch put on your petticoat... Well, after all, we suppose, if you recall these trials and ruminate over these difficulties now, you are thankful for the discipline they

afforded...it takes time – aye, and tears too – to conquer even the right use of the needle. (EDM, 1859: 231)

Sewing evidently took time to master and a lot of repetitious practice was recognised as important in this. As discussed in relation to teaching by the mother, the phenomenological framework can show how subject and object interaction influences the formation of perceptions. The greeting of the world that occurs within perception means that the world remains separate from the subject but, in its perceived form, it belongs to the subject, being bridged by what Merleau-Ponty terms ‘flesh’. This is the dialogic union between subject and object. Neither subject nor object precedes the other but perception occurs when there is an intertwining of the two, which involves the object becoming something for the subject, because the object solicits this response (Evans, 2008).

Through the subsequent repetition of perceptual practices, the dialogic union is strengthened and the subject forges durable ways of being in relation to the object. This is because interactions between the subject as perceiver and the object as perceived, when repeated, form structures for future perception due to their enduring effect on the sensorium (Toadvine, 2008). This results in future perception being measured against past perceptual experiences. Memory is important, but not in the traditional sense of a cognitive ability for mental recall. Empiricist understandings of memory, as situated in the *cogito* and functioning upon the basis of the subject’s choosing what to reconstruct in the present should be avoided here (Cerbone, 2008). Rather, recall is enabled and skills improved when repeated interactions between the subject and the world create memories that become embedded in the body, as physically situated past perceptual experiences. These then function as a horizon for structuring future perception. They do this because they continue to be present in the current body, which has been, and continues to be lived (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Such explanations of the perceptual process help to clarify the aims underlying the needlework drills. Walker stressed that drills needed to be repeated by the body, over and over again, so as to improve muscle strength but also in order to increase ‘habits of prompt obedience, accuracy, precision, and attention to details’ (Walker, 1897: 5). These habits of which she spoke can be described as habits of the body, whereby

skills were improved through the body learning how to move in union with an object. This training was therefore intended to help the body to learn certain habits of perception, forming structural relations to influence future perception, thereby meaning that needlework skills would become more fluent (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Habits of sewing need to be understood in relation to space. In perception, space is practical (as opposed to abstract) and it provides the arena in which the body operates and relates to other objects. David Morris (2008) provides the modern-day example of a car driver who moves his hand to the indicator. Through the repetition of this act, this becomes a practice of the body within lived space, rather than being an act involving a conscious, mental calculation of movement, because the body learns how to move with other objects in space. The same principle can be seen to be occurring when girls were learning to sew. Practising needle skills over and over again was intended to create a bodily schema, functioning within lived space with objects and relying on an embodied, habitual sense of touch. The deft execution of these skills would be achievable without the need for mental recall, because the body would have developed a schema, incorporating subject, object, space and movement, whereby intentional action could take place because of already-formed perceptual habits.

Each repetition, even those as basic as the thimble drill, would function so as to underpin certain moments in time and space, which would continue to exist in the lived body and which could be called up by new presents. In this sense, the body would retain the past, to provide a horizon for imposing a structure for future perceptions, interactions and understandings (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Some comments made by Mrs Beeton on knitting affirm this:

The wonderful sense of touch in the first or index fingers is so delicate, that an experienced knitter can work without ever looking at her fingers, by the help of this touch only – in fact, knitting becomes a purely mechanical labour, and as such is most useful. (Beeton, 1870: 291)

This quote reinforces the claim that memory is situated within the body; Mrs Beeton recognised that the repetition of knitting would eventually allow it to be practised in a ‘mechanical’ manner. In phenomenology this is described as the ‘intentional arc’,

which means that the body projects the subject forward, with its embodied memories of past perception intentionally seeking out similar new presents in accordance with this (Cerbone, 2008: 129). As the training for sewing relied so much upon the development of the tactile sense, this ‘intentional arc’ would ideally strengthen the individual skills that were being practised but would also provide a specific mode of perception and of sensing the world that would endure into later life.

Learning to live as a woman

It was important to succeed in training young girls in needlework because girlhood was not considered to be an end in itself. Despite the aforementioned idealisation of childhood, girlhood still represented the training ground for womanhood. Owing to this, the sensory and perceptual experiences which were being forged, and the sewing skills that were being developed mattered because they would exert an influence into later years. In the nineteenth century, a strong emphasis was placed on the more general cultivation of good habits, which owed much to the religious climate of society. On this subject, Mrs Humphry wrote that, ‘He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much’ (Humphry, 1898: 14). This biblical quote,²⁹ referring to the importance of good habits in the small details of earthly life as a preparation for heavenly works, reveals the prevalent belief that seemingly insignificant skills and habits learned in infancy would pave the way for more important activity once older.

As a girl grew into a young woman, she was not merely to repeat the same basic, childhood sewing skills. Instead, she was to refine and improve her abilities constantly. The ‘intentional arc’, formed through proficiency in the simplest of skills, would help her to go on to more advanced tasks. *The Ladies Handbook of Knitting, Netting and Crochet* included the following comment: ‘Our aim is not to make young ladies servile copyists, but to lead them to the formation of habits of thought and reflection, which may issue in higher attainments than the knitting of a shawl, of the netting of a purse’ (Anon, 1842: ix). Here, the habit skills formed in youth would be put to different uses (‘higher attainments’) and this would be possible because of the

²⁹ The Gospel of Luke, chapter 16, verse 10.

memories of tactile movement with objects, in time and through space, that the body could draw on.

In the needlework drills, once young girls had become proficient in threading a needle using large needles and thread, the size of the needle eye was to be decreased and the fineness of thread increased, before the drill was repeated. Threading a smaller needle with finer thread was a more delicate task, but the skills required were the same and the fingers would be able to complete this task successfully because they held memories of past comparable experiences and sensations, forming a bank of expertise which was brought to light with each new encounter. While the task was not identical, similar habits of movement and interaction could be drawn upon for it.

The growth of a store of the most basic perceptual knowledge through routine training would therefore allow more skilled activities to be accomplished and an even finer sense of tactility to be developed. The repeated, rudimentary skills formed a schema which helped the body to understand how to react when presented with more difficult tasks. One example of a 'higher attainment' that was pursued in order to be of use in the future was using tactile skills for understanding similarity and difference. This is connected to the structuring horizon and the intentional arc that early perceptual experiences could create, but the following example shows how this could be developed further. Walker created drills for learning to pick up and hold knitting needles and to pick up and hold materials. The aim of training the body was made explicit once more and Walker noted of the knitting-pin drill, 'Before beginning the drills, call the pupil's attention to their materials. Contrast their knitting-pins with ordinary pins and needles and compare the thick knitting-cotton with the fine thread used in hemming' (Walker, 1897: 13). When discussing how to hem material, the teacher was advised to make pupils aware of the smooth and the hairy sides of the fabric (Walker, 1897).

From a very young age then, a girl's body was trained and directed to create a repository of memories that would serve in tasks of differentiation, conducted through the tactile sense. This would mean that new experiences in later life would bring about a recall of former practices on the basis of present needs. The perceptual world that was fabricated from a young age can thus be described as a field of expectations,

based on that which had gone before. Tactile comparisons would be made possible (and likely) when something new was encountered because the body had had early experiences by which the new could be measured. Present perception would allow the body to call forth those memories of the past as a tool of comparison (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). *Sylvia's Book of Home Needlework* noted that pupils should learn how to distinguish between needles of good and bad quality. This was dependent upon their 'temper' and it was a skill understood only through tactility:

To find this out it is necessary to prove it. When trying to break a needle between the fingers, one ought to feel it resist strongly before breaking, and a certain elasticity should be experienced; when finally it breaks it ought to snap cleanly in two. (Sylvia, 1880: 60)

Sensation then, was not just pure feeling in the empiricist understanding of sensory units, but it was a way of making sense of something. Conscious reflection was used but this was based on embodied understandings of the world (Carmen, 2008: 52).

In a similar fashion, in order to find a selvedge on a piece of cloth when the selvedge weave was missing, pupils participating in needlework drills were told to hold their fabric and pull it.³⁰ By doing this, they would find that the selvedge way would not stretch, while the weft way would. The weft would also produce a dull sound while the selvedge would produce a bright, sharp sound (Walker, 1897). Such an activity, again, allowed for the formation of the 'habit body' whereby new experiences would bring about a recognition of past bodily experiences. These memories, although not brought up before the eyes, would remain present, and so make smooth existence of the body living in the world possible (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Being presented with new experiences would prompt some reflection in the body; there would be a recognition if the new jarred with the old because it would be impossible to replicate the same, past sensory experiences.

This explains why girls would be able to grow up and develop new tactile skills, without necessarily having to approach all situations afresh. The sensory experiences

³⁰ The selvedge refers to a woven edge of the fabric, produced during manufacture to prevent the thread from unraveling. It also indicates the direction of the weaving.

of youth provided the foundations for all subsequent development. Mrs Humphry advised mothers to patiently train their daughters with the future in mind, warning them that a house should not be built before the scaffolding is finished. Her clear implication was that time spent in training a girl would form the ‘scaffolding’ that would strengthen and uphold the rest of her life (Humphry, 1898: 23). It was the ‘scaffolding’ of basic training that helped girls to advance their skills as they grew into women.

For Mrs Humphry, and for so many others, there was no better training than sewing because of its uses in and of itself, but also because of how it developed the sense of touch more generally. Sewing mattered as a skill, but the wider tactile sense was generally perceived to be important for women, and sewing could serve as a means by which to improve this. It is worth quoting her at length, in order to demonstrate how much value was placed on the cultivation of the sense of touch among women, and how sewing was considered to be the principal means of achieving this.

One of the best and foremost reasons for teaching sewing to girls is the training it involves. Our wonderful fingertips have within them possibilities which oftentimes lie dormant throughout a whole lifetime for the want of education. The Great Genius who made them gave them a capacity of delicate sensitive touch, which is blurred and lost when not encouraged and promoted. The hands that can wield a needle with celerity and skill have necessarily received a training that tells for them in many another way besides mere sewing. The servant who sews well is the one who breaks fewest things. She has learned to use her fingertips. The clumsy woman who uses brute force in dealing with the most delicate articles, and is constantly smashing and damaging something or other is she who has never been brought to sew. (Humphry, 1898: 26)

Mrs Humphry’s comment brings together the understandings that sewing was a skill that God intended women to possess and that it was vital for the future life of any good woman. These skills would allow advanced needlework to be carried out but they could encourage skilled perception in a multitude of other areas. The impact of childhood training on a woman’s future was clearly understood. As all coming

experiences would be organised on the basis of the past structuration of a perceptual field, much attention was devoted to the training that a girl received (Busch, 2008). Proficiency with the needle, for Mrs Humphry, would allow ‘celerity’ and a ‘delicate’ touch, as opposed a woman being ‘clumsy’ and exercising ‘brute force’ (Humphry, 1898: 26).

All forms of needlework, and the ways in which they were taught, were undoubtedly very tactile. As is clear from Mrs Humphry’s comment, touch was a sense that was frequently selected for commendation among women. While it goes without saying that they did use the other senses, there was a strong belief in a fundamental division between the sexes, which resulted in divergent sensory capacities. The strength of these cultural beliefs meant that efforts were put into cultivating that which was considered to be natural in women, which then resulted in it being seen as more natural again. This observation is in stark contrast to the emphasis placed on the visual culture of modernity and the training of the eye that is stressed by so many scholars (Otter, 2008). In March 1862, *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* noted that women lacked the formal logic of men but instead were endowed with a ‘logic of feeling’ (EDM, 1862: 233). ‘Feeling’ can have different meanings but, for women, it was both associated with the emotions and also with a delicacy of touch. This becomes clearer when reading the article further:

In all her after-life, this same first intuitive and the reflective logic is being called into activity. She leans upon them in her individual, social, and domestic life. She rules her household by her logic; it trips out in her mandates and gives cunning to her finger-tips. (EDM, 1862: 233)

Women, of course, did not walk around with their eyes closed and ears blocked, but the importance that was placed on the development of a strong sense of touch cannot be over-stressed.

As the main focus of this thesis is tactility and consumption, particularly as pertaining to fabrics, the emphasis in this chapter is largely on sewing and how it helped to form a very tactile sense among women. Yet to reinforce the importance placed on habits and the priority afforded to tactility, a short diversion is of use. Like needlework, skill

in music was regarded as the result of diligent practice, but it was also considered to be particularly feminine, because of the stress placed on tactile abilities. Reverend Haweis wrote at length in his *Ideals for Girls* on how musicianship could be improved through refining tactile skills and constant interaction with the instrument. Using the example of ‘Jenny’ and the violin, he wrote:

your hand is happy, and always looks well on the finger board; your fingers are flexible; and your sense of touch at the tips, by use and cultivation, has actually increased just there that mystic nerve fluid which physiologists tell us is actually the same as the thinking grey matter of the brain. This throws a new light on the mystery of touch, of which violin playing is so perfect an example. Your touch is thought. The tips of your fingers think. (Haweis, 1897: 29)

Haweis’ comment echoes that which featured in *the Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* on the skills of the fingertips, their ability to ‘think’, and the aims underlying needlework drills. It also confirms Merleau-Ponty’s explanation of the formation of perceptual skills and the establishment of a bodily schema, by which the body moves intentionally upon its object, not requiring conscious thought because of learned habits of perception.

Many books were also produced to instruct girls on piano playing, increasingly the other *sine qua non* of Victorian femininity (Ehrlich, 1990; Loesser, 1954). Again much of this advice focused on the hands. While the final result of playing the piano was to be music that was pleasing to the ear, the quality of this depended upon excellent tactile training. John Blockley, whose *Pianist’s Catechism* was in its 80th edition by the 1880s, wrote that, ‘a proper position of the hands greatly facilitates a brilliant and graceful execution’ (Blockley, 1880: 21). Lindsay Sloper similarly recognised the importance of bodily habits in cultivating first-rate skills for piano playing: ‘Only by the careful and regular practice of finger-exercises can the student of the pianoforte cultivate the correct position of the hands in playing, the free and even action of the fingers, and perfection of touch’ (Sloper, 1877: 3). Just as was argued by Mrs Beeton and Haweis, Sloper added that, if this was performed well, ‘mechanical proficiency’ would result (Sloper, 1877: 3).

While not the main focus of this chapter, the discussion of music has not been mere digression. Rather, it has reiterated the importance that was placed on habits and tactility, and how this infiltrated multiple areas of a middle-class girl's life when growing up. Even when not sewing, much of a girl's time was occupied with activities that were of a tactile nature because these were considered to be especially feminine and their repetition was intended to create embodied femininity. Ideal middle-class femininity was not just a question of visual display but it had to be performed through keenly developed sensory abilities. The 'logic' of the fingertips was to characterise a middle-class woman, but this 'intuitive' ability in adulthood would only be made possible through the right training in childhood.

Through a good deal of repetition, girls would be able to use their delicate tactile skills without much conscious thought as they grew into women. Importantly, this would mean that a well-developed sense of touch would become part of the body and form a potent way of comprehending the world. By beginning to form basic skills in childhood, the ground would be laid for their use and development in later life. As she went through life, a woman would perceive and be likely to act in certain ways because present experiences would be linked and measured with past embodied encounters (cf. Cerbone, 2008). This stress on the body in a phenomenological perspective gives perception a higher place than intellectualism affords it, because the body becomes an intentional opening onto the world (Morris, 2008).

This intentionality must be stressed. The focus on developing tactile skills, including the time, effort and repetition involved in sewing specifically, meant that girls started to become narrowly focused in their perceptual activities at a very young age. It must be reiterated that they were not ignorant of anything beyond the world of the needle and thread. However, the examples discussed so far confirm that identification through perception occurs because one thing is focused on at the expense of others. Objects are perceived when they are differentiated from the remaining objects in space (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). In the needlework drills, and as depicted in the paintings, the concentration of girls and their senses became trained upon fabrics and understanding through tactility. This allowed them to comprehend large parts of their world by virtue of the body limiting its focus and curbing some of its remaining sensory horizon. Perception, while necessarily requiring openness onto the world, is

always limited because the subject can never be attentive to everything. Throughout life, objects, qualities and experiences make themselves evident and are approached intentionally, on the basis of past experience (Carmen, 2008). This means that the sensory orientation of the body in the future depends upon certain objects in the field resonating with the subject's embodied past (Carmen, 2008). Merleau-Ponty has been criticised for ignoring how assumptions surrounding gender, class and race affect how bodies are made through perception, yet it is clear that beliefs on gender did constrain a girl's perceptual field and affected how she came to use her body (Weiss, 1998). Due to the perceptual field in which young girls grew up and the time devoted to developing tactile skills it is no surprise that these continued to exert a strong influence and directed her time in later life.

A grown woman's needlework

The methods used for teaching sewing to both middle- and working-class girls shared some similarities. Yet as females from these two classes grew up, their lives diverged further. For the middle-class woman, needlework based within the home became more important. It was not only a necessity for mending and providing the basics for the household, as it was among the working classes (although these were important tasks), but the actual practice of needlework functioned as a default setting, a naturalised mode of operating which served to keep a woman occupied at any time. The proof of the strong formation of habits in childhood is that the middle-class woman was rarely far from her needle and thread. So common was this that these skills were frequently alluded to in novels, demonstrating that needlework was one of her chief occupations at all times and in all places. For example, seemingly profound engagement with the hands could allow a woman to conceal her deeper emotions in her work. In *North and South*, when Margaret wishes to hide her feelings from the dashing, if rather fierce John Thornton, Gaskell depicts her sewing: 'she neither looked nor spoke. Her round taper fingers flew in and out of her sewing, as steadily and swiftly as if that were the business of her life' (Gaskell, 1994 [1855]: 400). These words confirm the tactile, habit skills of sewing, with Margaret's fingers described as moving 'steadily' and 'swiftly'.

In line with the industrious spirit of the age, a childhood spent sewing meant that women learned never to waste a moment. In George Eliot's short story of 1857, *The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton*, the meddlesome Mrs Hackit goes visiting with her knitting: 'the click-click of her knitting needles is the running accompaniment to all her conversation, and in her utmost enjoyment of spoiling a friend's self-satisfaction, she was never known to spoil a stocking' (Eliot, 2009: 9). Eliot makes it clear that this was the occupation of even the best women. The long-suffering Mrs Amos Barton's skills, and importantly her trained fingers are praised in this way:

Wonderful fingers, those! They were never empty; for if she went to spend a few hours with a friendly parishioner, out came her thimble and a piece of calico or muslin, which, before she left, had become a mysterious little garment with all sorts of hemmed ins and outs. (Eliot, 2009: 18)

Although these quotes are not an exact witness of reality, they confirm the effects of childhood learning. In addition, the lines in these novels would have resonated with women, for whom sewing formed the accompaniment to the natural, daily rhythms of life. Bayles Kortsch (2009) discusses the prevalence of sewing within Victorian women's literature and notes that the incidence of this confirms the amount of time and attention that women devoted to sewing. Its inclusion in novels was based on women's ability to identify with this (Bayles Kortsch, 2009).

Understanding the needlework that was undertaken by women reinforces the claim that teaching these skills to children was a priority. In addition, it shows how these abilities were continually honed and developed throughout adulthood. Learning how to differentiate between materials on the basis of tactility was discussed earlier. This continued to be important for adults and was built on, for example, in choosing which materials to use. Easton de Barras advised women on the handling of fabrics such as crepe and velvet. Tactile involvement was needed in this. For example, the guide stressed the importance of ironing velvet on the wrong side with a moderately hot iron (Barras, 1896). While a seemingly banal observation, this comment confirms that pre-existing embodied knowledge was required, in order for the wrong side of the fabric to be recognisable. Reflection upon quality and technique was only possible because

of these prior experiences. Ellen Master produced a book with the aim of providing women with a good arsenal of stitches for their work. Yet again, previous knowledge was assumed. Concerning outlines, she noted that in bold embroidery, outlines should be heavier, being performed with tapestry wools on cloth of coarse twill (Master, 1899). Of running stitch, she counselled that a good appearance could only be achieved by ‘the tiny piece of fabric that is taken up with each movement of the needle’ (Master, 1899: 4). Meanwhile, twisted chain stitch was recommended for ‘coarse materials and thick thread’ (Master, 1899: 4). Degrees of thickness, and terms such as ‘running stitch’ only contained meaning because of childhood tactile encounters which allowed these differences to be grasped.

However, a major difference between the teaching of girls and the needlework practised by grown women was that women were left without the help of a mother or a teacher. Yet periodicals, a key feature of nineteenth-century female life, were an important medium for the transmission of new trends and advice on techniques.³¹ They provided entertainment through stories, verse and short anecdotes, along with items of interest. Crucially they also offered regular advice on how to become the ideal nineteenth-century woman, wife and mother. Hints were given on a range of topics but a significant part of these magazines, and a large proportion of books, were dedicated to sewing and needlework.

The existence of these publications again points to needlework as a popular and time-consuming activity among women; their continued publication would have been unlikely without the demand for them. Between 1870 and 1900 alone fifty new periodical titles were created just for women (Ballaster, et al., 1991). Growth in this sector was happening well before this though. The *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, created in 1852, could boast of 25,000 readers every month in 1854, and this had doubled again by 1860 (Ballaster et al., 1991). Needlework patterns were a frequent feature but the engagement of women with these is shown in the answers to reader’s questions that many magazines regularly included. These were often

³¹ See Ballaster et al. (1991) on the economic, technological and cultural changes which helped to develop the nineteenth-century women’s press. Branca makes the important point that, as the number of middle classes rose over the course of the century, advice manuals and magazine circulation grew concomitantly. Between 1803 and 1867 there was a 185 per cent increase in the number of professional families in the country (Branca, 1979).

concerned with where certain materials could be purchased in order to complete the sewing projects that the magazines contained. For example, the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* replied to 'Alicia' that, 'Short remnants of silk ribbon may be purchased at about any respectable draper's shop' (EDM, 1861: 190). This, and many similar responses, confirm that women were using the patterns and sewing.

The prevalence of advanced needlework skills among the middle classes is most evident through the style of presentation that was used for the patterns and projects within. The women's press has frequently been cited as forming part of a boom in visual distractions and contributing to a very ocular culture (Breward, 1994). In this sense, it has been strongly linked to concurrent developments in fashion and consumer culture. While the nineteenth century certainly did witness the development of a visual publishing culture, with lithographs and coloured plates being used to entice women, these were expensive to produce and their appearance and use have been overstated. For instance, although colour plates made their first appearance in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1860, there was only one per issue and that was of fairly poor quality.

Most magazines and books remained very wordy, well into the twentieth century. For needlework, a line drawing of a finished article was often included but there were rarely any working diagrams. Language therefore played a key role and its inclusion and use was based on the assumption of a woman's embodied knowledge. The role of language in phenomenology can, at first glance, appear problematic because of the emphasis on pre-reflexive bodily experiences. However, the phenomenological framework does give language a significant role. Language permits a development from a state of pre-reflexive involvement with the world to that of 'essences', allowing bodily experiences to be communicated. This means that language is always attached to experience but it allows movement from these pre-reflexive facts to a cognitive understanding of its salient features that can be shared with and understood by others (Toadvine, 2008). Meanings are reflected upon through language because they resonate with prior experience. In the case of needlework patterns, language formed a system of referring back to pre-reflexive and embodied habit memories and skills. Its use in magazines to provide guidance on needlework shows how extensive

female tactile understandings of sewing were because this language could be widely understood.

While Ballaster argues that the discourse presented within women's magazines was normative, aimed at shaping women and their behaviour (Ballaster et al., 1991), the presentation of sewing patterns shows that women had been formed in their activities and sensory perceptions before reading these publications. While no doubt reinforcing the appropriateness of needlework, the embodied behaviour of women was crafted long before their exposure to magazines. These publications addressed the many middle-class women of England who could already lay claim to the title of needlewoman. As opposed to speaking to a disembodied mind, verbal expression found meaning and comprehension among women because of the body which could match words to sensory habits (cf. Adams, 2008). This is shown in figure 4.5, a crochet pattern from the March 1853 edition of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, which was far from being a specialist sewing publication. A picture is provided of the finished item, but to one with no bodily knowledge of crochet, the commands have no meaning at all, with instructions such as '5 chain, turn, miss 2, 1 s.c. in next chain...' and so on (EDM,1853: 335).

The combination of these instructions and embodied knowledge meant that women were able to make increasing amounts of items for themselves and for their homes. The changes in sewing and needlework fashions over the course of the nineteenth century were so prolific that barely a week passed when some new style was not developed, both for clothing and domestic items. Mrs Beeton wrote of needlework: 'Day by day it increases its votaries, who enlarge and develop its various branches, so that any addition and assistance in teaching or learning needlework will be welcomed by the Daughters of England, "wise of heart", who work diligently with their hands' (Beeton, 1870: preface). Likewise, Ellen Master wrote that, when learning a foreign language there comes a time when the need for a good supply of words presents itself, even though one may have a thorough grounding in basic grammar and vocabulary. The same, she claimed, was true with sewing: 'for while she may be well familiar with the general principles of her work, she finds she has but a scanty repertory of stitches when she tries to put her theories into practice' (Master, 1899: v). This 'assistance in teaching or learning' to create these new fashions came in the form of

the written instructions that always referred to the ‘basics of grammar and vocabulary’ that were formed in the body during youth.

The aforementioned examples, spanning the course of the nineteenth century, show that middle-class women continued to draw on and develop their sewing skills and the tactile sense throughout their adult years and that magazines did not just turn women into spectators. Yet despite this, technological developments during the 1900s have been cited as causing a decline in sewing skills and related activities. The widespread adoption of the sewing machine among women from the 1850s has been cited as the prime culprit in this. Andrew Godley’s (2008) detailed research indicates that by 1914, 47 per cent of British households owned a Singer sewing machine.³² Marguerite Connolly (1999) argues that the sewing machine was hailed because of its ability to save labour among women from all walks of life.

This point needs to be addressed because Connolly’s argument seems to indicate that the sewing machine began the process of lessening the time spent on sewing, and concomitantly affected a woman’s embodied, tactile skills. Rather than saving labour and signifying any necessary decline in the time spent sewing, the dominance of the sewing machine in the home and the contemporary attention devoted to it testifies to the female preoccupation with the needle. *Sylvia’s Book of Home Needlework* (1880) noted that, while the introduction of the sewing machine had caused the art of needlework to become somewhat neglected, not even the most perfect machinery would be capable of performing all the processes necessary for achieving a finished item.

For example, while a sewing machine allowed clothes to be made up quickly, patterns for the clothes had to be created first. Although paper patterns started to take off in the Edwardian period,³³ women made their own patterns, following largely written instructions long before this development (Burman, 1999). Mrs Judd’s guide of the 1850s was just one of many that was produced to guide women in dressmaking. It

³² While other brands did exist, which means that far more than 47 per cent of households owned a sewing machine, Singer, aided by its highly-structured selling organization, controlled 90 per cent of the European sewing machine market in 1912. See Godley (2006). Despite Godley’s useful figures though, he claims that the main effect of the sewing machine was on industry (Godley, 1999).

³³ Spanabel Emery (1999) provides an account of the development of the commercial paper pattern industry, notably its American course.

informed them that, before a pattern could be made, unglazed brown Holland³⁴ had to be pinned to each part of the body in order to prepare it for drawing the final pattern out. Mrs Judd stated that, ‘after a little practice you will be able to fit any lady in five minutes’ (Judd, 1855: 5). Clearly, that ‘five minute’ endeavour took quite some practice and, while instructions were provided, there was an expectation that there would be a prior knowledge of sewing. In a similar work produced by Eliza Ann Cory (1849), the reader was instructed to carefully unpick a garment so as to draw a Holland pattern from this, rather than placing the Holland directly on the body. To successfully unpick each part of a garment (no doubt before reassembling it) required skills that no machine could supply. Moreover, new sewing movements of the last quarter of the century began to promote handiwork techniques beyond the capabilities of the machine (Sylvia, 1880).³⁵ This indicates that the potential of the sewing machine was limited and hand sewing continued to be necessary. Furthermore, while the same book did admit to the sewing machine’s ability to produce strong and even stitches for such work as attaching flounces, women were informed that it was never sufficient to know how to use a machine alone (Sylvia, 1880). Therefore, Branca is misguided to claim that the female adoption of the sewing machine signalled women’s readiness to give up hand-sewing and the personal touch that this allowed them to stamp upon their work (Branca, 1979).

Even more tellingly, the author of *Sylvia’s Book* went on to argue, ‘The sewing machine was originally intended and invented in order to assist hand-work, permitting at the same time an increase of work, whilst shortening the time which the same work would have taken’ (Sylvia, 1880: 65). The *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* ran a series of articles in 1867, giving advice on sewing machines, owing to their burgeoning popularity among readers. Women were warned:

But a few preliminary remarks on sewing machines in general will not be out of place before writing a description of any particular one. First of all, the sewing machine is a mechanical contrivance, and as such must not be expected to perform miracles. To their pretty and untiring seamstress, ladies must bring,

³⁴ Holland was a special type of paper used for making dress patterns.

³⁵ This comment by *Sylvia* is most likely a reference to the burgeoning Arts and Craft movement, with its emphasis on hand-made, labour-intensive textiles.

along with their work and materials, a small amount of intelligence and common-sense...Perfection in every kind of sewing machine work is attained by precisely the same course as is pursued in arriving at eminence in any other kind of work, study or pursuit – patience, perseverance, attention to rules, and daily practice. (EDM, 1867: 264)

This final point is important. Not only did a woman continue to undertake the tasks that a machine, still in its infancy, could not perform, but the sewing machine required a woman to operate it and thus have a continued tactile involvement with her work. Indeed, as with the sewing practices of infants, women who were learning to use the sewing machine had to invest ‘study, patience, perseverance’ (EDM, 1867: 264). The image shown in figure 4.6 is an advert which depicts a woman sitting at a spooling machine to wind cotton. Although this was a slightly different machine, it still shows the principle behind the work, whereby the woman continues to have a strong tactile involvement with her materials. If the result of this was to quicken the rate of completion for sewn items, Sylvia alluded to the fact that the sewing machine would only increase the expectations on women, and the amount of time that they devoted to sewing (Sylvia, 1880: 62). Each item would be quicker to finish but this simply meant that more pieces could be sewn; after all, the sewing machine was an ‘untiring seamstress’, who never needed to rest (EDM, 1867: 264).

In this vein, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* wrote in October 1867 that operators of the machine were increasing their skills so much that ever-finer types of work were being undertaken. Some ladies were even said to have developed a ‘genius’ for the sewing machine (EDM, 1867: 540). Taking the example of French industry at the end of the nineteenth century, Karen Offen (1988) argues that the sewing machine was feared by men, because of its potential to mobilise a workforce composed of more women. It would do this by allowing women to sew even more (and for money). In England, middle-class women were still largely sewing at home, and not in the workforce. Yet Offen’s point remains important because the sewing machine offered the potential for more work to fill their hours. In England, ready-made clothes did not become popular among middle-class women until the end of the

nineteenth century and, even then, it would take several decades for their full penetration of the market.³⁶

Women did visit dressmakers but the frequently precarious financial nature of middle-class living, in addition to the ideological expectations on women meant that sewing retained, and even grew in its importance. Sewing machines enabled women to make their own clothes within the home and so keep up appearances. The ability to make (or at least to alter) more clothes was never more appreciated because of the rapid turnover of fashions. In her novel *Wives and Daughters*, Elizabeth Gaskell describes one of her protagonists, Cynthia Kirkpatrick, as being able to provide the latest fashions for herself and her mother because of her skills with the needle:

She was a capital workwoman...she could repeat the fashions she had only seen in passing along the streets of Boulogne, with one or two pretty rapid movements of her hands as she turned and twisted the ribbons and gauze her mother furnished her with. (Gaskell, 1999 [1866]: 195)

That which was visually pleasing relied upon the skills of the hands. In *More Work for Mother*, Ruth Schwartz-Cowan rightly claims that, historically, technology designed to help women and save labour has ironically given them more work to do. Technology that has saved time has simply allowed expectations to rise, further tied women to household jobs and underlined their identity in relation to this (Schwartz-Cowan, 1983). For middle-class Victorian women, the sewing machine only encouraged the increased use of sewing skills. This was the century in which the needle and thread was rarely far from its mistress and, as will become evident, this had a powerful effect on how she came to perceive other areas of life.

Summary

This chapter has argued that the sensory experiences of the Victorian woman when shopping cannot be understood without first taking a step back into the home. This is

³⁶ Ready-made clothing for men and boys started to become readily available from the 1850s, but the equivalent garments for women and girls did not make an appearance until the final years of the nineteenth century and even then this was a slow process. See Connolly (1999) and Burman (1999).

because women did not enter shops without prior perceptual experiences. Understood from a phenomenological perspective, new sensations are always comprehended on the basis of past habit memories. Owing to this, it is important to examine the wider experiences of a subject's life.

Middle-class women were predominantly located within the home and their chief activity there was sewing, as it was both necessary and was considered to be eminently suitable for women. Learning this skill started in early childhood. Teaching was very practical and repetitious and through this, girls developed strong tactile skills. This was intentional because childhood was a training ground for adulthood. Sewing was valued in itself but it also helped women to develop a finely tuned sense of touch, which was recognised as particularly feminine. The effect of this training was to develop habit memories whereby future tasks and perceptions would be influenced by their needlework skills. In addition, their perceptual world was narrowly focused on the tactile by the activities that they were encouraged to pursue. This was shown in the sewing activities that were undertaken by grown women and the embodied knowledge that was anticipated in the presentation of sewing instructions. In addition, this chapter has shown that technological advances such as the sewing machine only heightened the stress placed on sewing for women. Through all of this, the Victorian middle-class woman's body was powerfully formed, not in what it symbolised, but in the way that its sensorium was formed and the means of apprehending the world that were developed.



Figure 4.1 - Philip Mercier (1750). *A Girl Sewing*.

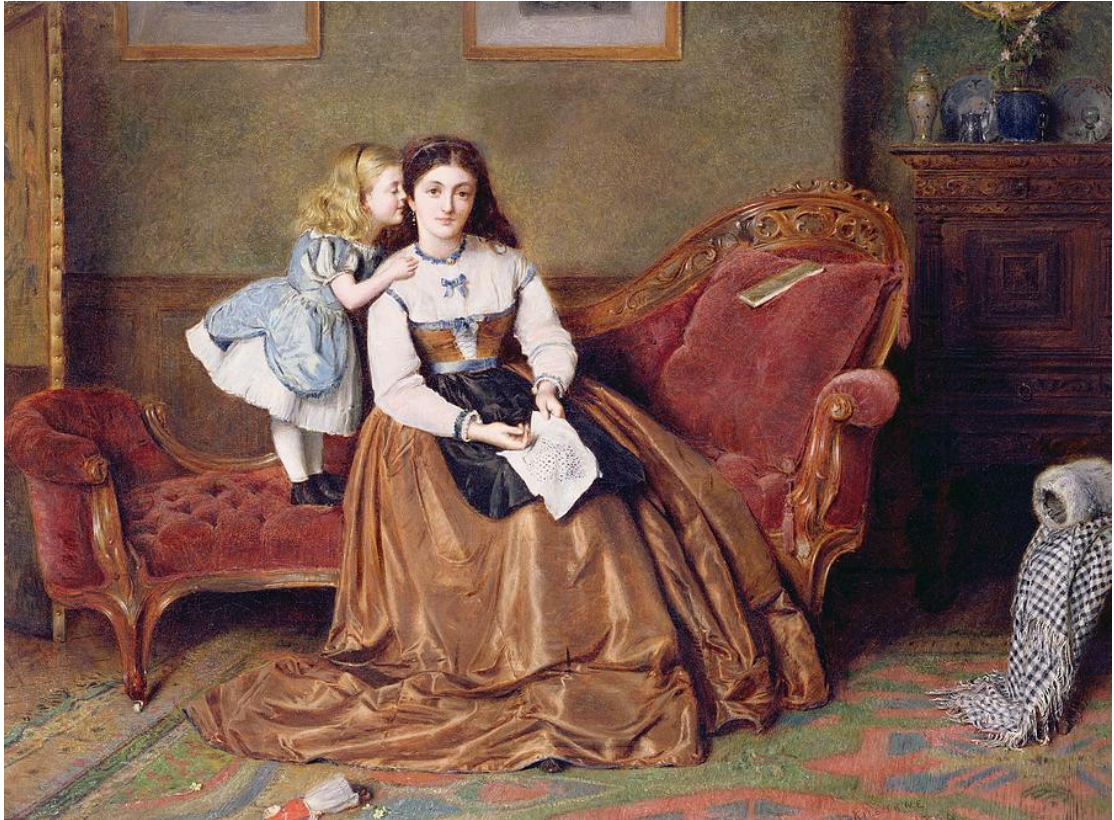


Figure 4.2 - George Goodwin Kilburn (1869). *A Mother's Darling*.

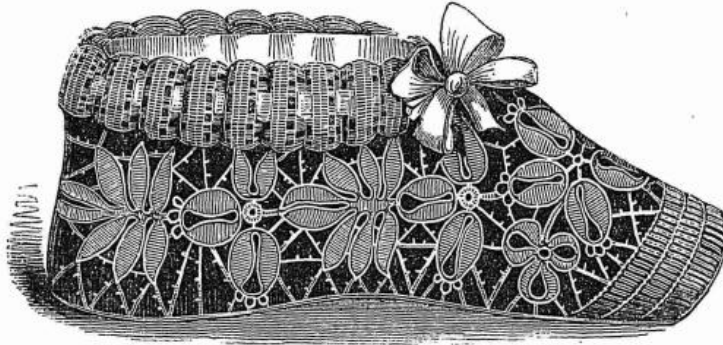


Figure 4.3 - William Kay Blacklock (date unknown). *The Lesson*.



Figure 4.4 - John Thomas Peele (1858). *The Knitting Lesson*.

Crochet.



INFANT CROCHET SHOE. BY S. T.

MATERIALS.—Rather fine white cotton, Walker's Penelope hook No. 1, and sufficient blue or cerise velvet to cut to the size required; 1 yard of narrow ribbon. After making the shoe commence working.

The Sole.—1st Row—34 chain, turn, and on the chain 34 long fasten off; make both ends alike. 2nd Row—Miss 2, 1 long in 3rd loop. 3rd and 4th Rows—Miss none. 5th Row—Miss 2. 6th Row—Miss 1. 7th Row—Miss none. 8th Row—Miss 1. 9th and 10th Rows—Increase 1. 11th Row—Miss none. 12th Row—Increase 2. 13th Row—Increase 1. 14th Row—Miss none. 15th Row—Increase 1. 16th Row—Miss 1. 17th Row—Miss none. 18th and 19th Rows—Miss 1. 20th Row—Miss none. 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Rows—Miss 1. 24th Row—Miss none. 25th and 26th Rows—Miss 1. 27th Row—Increase 1. 28th Row—Miss 1. 29th Row—Miss none. 30th Row—Increase 1. 31st Row—Miss 1. 32nd, 33rd, and 34th Rows—Miss none. 35th Row—Miss 2. 36th and 37th Rows—Miss 3. 38th Row—Miss 2. D.c. all round. Fasten the 1st row round the toe of the shoe, so that the 3rd row comes to the end of the toe.

1st Flower.—5 chain, make it round by working 1 s.c. on 1st chain; then in round loop “5 chain, 1 s.c., repeat 4 times more,”* 1 s.c. in the 1st stitch of 5 chain; 7 chain turn; and on the 7 chain miss 1, 1 d.c., 1 long, 2 d. long, 1 long, 1 d.c., 1 s.c. in 2nd chain stitch of 5 chain, 1 s.c. in 3rd chain stitch; 3 chain join to 2nd d. long of last section; 8 chain join to the top of same section; turn, and on the 8 chain “1 s.c., 3 chain, repeat twice more,” miss 1, 1 d.c., 1 long, 2 d. long, 1 long, 1 d.c., 1 s.c. in 4th chain repeat four times more.* **then on the middle 3 chain of the 5th section of 1st flower, 1 s.c., 11 chain.

2nd Flower.—Miss 5, 1 s.c. in 6th chain; then in round loop “1 s.c., 5 chain, repeat twice more;” then on each 5 chain from *to* in 1st flower three times. Then down the stem 1 d.c., 3 long, 1 d.c., fasten off. 1 s.c. in 1st chain stitch of 11 chain of 2nd flower.

1st Bud.—10 chain, turn, miss 5; 1 s.c. in 6th chain; 1 chain to cross, and in round loop, 1 s.c., “5 chain, turn, and on the 5 chain; miss 1, 1 d.c., 3 long; 1 s.c. in round loop repeat 4 times more,” and on the stem 5 s.c.; fasten off. The other bud to be worked to join 4th flower on the other side of the vamp. Then, on the middle, 3 chain of 3rd section of 2nd flower 1 s.c., 20 chain.

1st Leaf.—Turn, miss 1, 1 d.c., 4 long, 3 d.c., 1 s.c., * “6 chain, join to 4th long in last section of leaf; 6 chain, turn, miss 1, 1 d.c., 4 long, 3 d.c., 1 s.c., repeat twice more;” 4 d.c. down the stem, repeat twice more.* 4 long, 1 s.c. in same as last long, fasten off; 1 s.c. in top section of 1st leaf, 11 chain.

3rd Flower.—Same as second. Fasten off; then, on the middle, 3 chain of 3rd section of 3rd flower work 1 s.c., 20 chain.

2nd Flower.—Same as first leaf, fasten off.** Repeat from ** in 1st flower to ** in 2nd leaf. Put the flowers on in the following manner:—Fasten 1st flower on the vamp of the shoe, so that the 2nd and 3rd section may meet the long stitches across the toe; then bring the 2nd flower and 1st bud round the side: 1st leaf, 3rd flower, 2nd leaf; this brings to the heel. On the other side of the vamp, 4th flower and 2nd bud, 3rd leaf, 5th flower, and 4th leaf; this brings to the other side of the heel.

Then work the bars to connect the flowers and leaves together, as shown in the engraving.

Bars.—5 chain turn, miss 2, 1 s.c. in next chain, repeat in same manner throughout.

For the Frill.—1st Row—12 chain; “1 long, miss 1, 1 chain, 1 long, repeat four times more,” turn. 2nd Row—* 2 long in 1st loop, 1 chain between each long; repeat *, miss 1 loop; 5 chain repeat twice from * to *, turn. 3rd Row—** 2 d. long, 1 chain between each long, repeat twice more **, in large loop 6 d. long, repeat three times more, from ** to ** turn. 4th Row—*** 2 long in 1st loop, 1 chain between each loop, miss 2, repeat five times more ***, turn, repeat from 1st row till the required length.

Fasten the ribbon at the back of the shoe, run it through the frill, and tie with bow and ends.

Figure 4.5 - *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*. 1853: 335.



Figure 4.6 – Advert for a spooling machine from a supplement to the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal*. 2 November 1872.

Chapter 5 – Shopping for fabrics

It's what endures through one's life that matters; my own life matters to me, in its long continuance and development. But what do the occasional connections matter?... habit, to my thinking, is more vital than any occasional excitement. The long, slow enduring thing...that's what we live by...not the occasional spasm of any sort.

D. H. Lawrence – *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (2010 [1928]: 46)

Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD.

Proverbs Chapter 11 verse 1

Introduction

It was argued in the preceding chapter that in order to comprehend the sensory experiences of shopping within the nineteenth century, an understanding of the broader formation of the female sensorium is needed. Shopping cannot be taken as a starting point because that is to ignore the wider influences of life on female perception. Women developed a strong tactile sense through their situation within the domestic sphere and specifically through their continual, time-consuming involvement with needlework. This created a certain bodily schema, whereby the sense of tactility became highly developed through methodically and repeatedly engaging in sewing activities. While not necessarily intended to be used for shopping, the forging of a tactile sense was socially desirable for women, and the making of a habit body did create the possibility for future experiences to be perceived and measured according to this.

As discussed in the literature review, women have historically been the main consumers for the household.³⁷ Therefore, the phenomenon of women shopping outside the home in the nineteenth century was nothing new. However, the extent of this was greatly enlarged, and the attention it received in the public imagination similarly grew (Hosgood, 1999a; Lysack, 2005). The increase in a middle-class woman's very public visibility, it is claimed, aroused fears when contrasted with her more traditional role in the home. This was only exacerbated when combined with fears that arose towards the end of the nineteenth century concerning national degeneration and its link to female emancipation.³⁸ Female consumerism was just one more item to add to the list of national fears, but arguably one with huge symbolic potency. Rather than being at home, looking after her family and indulging in the domestic pursuits detailed in the preceding chapter, she was represented as irresponsibly wasting her husband's hard earned money in the dangerous urban centres (Abelson, 1992).

The department store has been assigned a prominent role in contributing to changes in female shopping practices and this will be discussed at length in a later chapter. Yet the consumer behaviour of women in a range of shops has been examined in many studies in terms of a sudden break with the home and, overwhelmingly, as a visual sensation. As detailed more fully in the literature review, shops are said to have given women new ocular delights to savour in the city. The activity of shopping in the nineteenth century has been almost wholly transformed from being an occasion to acquire to an activity devoid of use, indulged in solely for leisure and entertainment (Rappaport, 2000; Lysack, 2008)

However, having understood many of their primary occupations and the domestic sensory formation of women as being concerned with tactility, it is reasonable to question these arguments. Instead, attempts should be made to understand the impact of the domestic on shopping experiences, rather than merely assuming that the majority of experiences were orientated around the spectacle, and that there was a

³⁷ Although women have played the most prominent role in consumption, male consumer activity should not be overlooked. For examples of this see Finn (2000), Shannon (2004), Ugolini (2003) and Breward (1999).

³⁸ While slanted towards the working classes, Anna Davin (1978) provides an excellent study on the blame attributed to women, especially mothers, for the feared decline of Britain and her Empire.

sudden break with the private sphere. In addition, wider socio-economic factors that affected the atmosphere of trade must be accounted for. This requires a reassessment of the priority placed on vision and an analysis of how women actually shopped and bought goods, and why. In line with this, this chapter will have the following structure. First, a brief explanation will be offered as to why the consumption of the middle classes in particular deserves academic attention. Following on from this, the second part will attend to visual displays. So often, when the visual aspects of shopping are discussed, little attention is paid to the effect that they had on consumers, or to whether they allowed a reliable use of the sense of vision. Using records from the trade press, novels and memoirs of drapers, it will be argued that displays, right into the early twentieth century, were frequently poor. This not only meant that visual modes of marketing had less of a role in enticing women than has been claimed but, when they were used, they were frequently ineffective and distrusted by consumers.

The third section will move on from the problems of visual display to a discussion of the wider climate of trade and how this affected the use of the senses among female consumers. In analyses of nineteenth-century commerce, material goods are often ignored, and yet they formed the principal reason for most shopping expeditions. Fabrics and sewing materials represented a key area of expense for women belonging to this class, yet the economic climate of *laissez faire* encouraged fraud and adulteration in fabric production and retailing. This became a widespread problem, helped by new technologies and changes in living and working patterns, and the result was a decline in consumer confidence. Owing to this, many advice guides were produced and columns in periodicals also offered women help to buy fabrics. Much of this centred on using the sense of touch to discern quality, as sight could lead to women falling foul of dishonest tricks and making poor purchases.

As with the evidence for the poor quality of visual displays, these guides provide further compelling proof that the sense of sight was risky when wise purchases needed to be made. The fourth section will go on to consider whether women followed such counsel. It will be claimed that women used the sense of touch to judge quality and assess what they needed because of the risks in commerce and the advice that they were given. More than this though, the ability to use the sensorium in this way was made possible by the enduring tactile skills of the habit body, fostered within the

home. Rather than shopping representing a complete break with domesticity, tactile skills formed an interconnecting bridge between the public and private spheres. In this way, a familiar and reliable sense of the domestic was brought into urban spaces. The possession of a tactile skill set assisted women in moving from the familiarity of the home to an environment where she risked being tricked. That which was so useful for understanding needlework allowed women to judge the quality of goods that they were interested in buying, and to enjoy browsing. There is a certain irony here as the development of tactility, forming part of an attempt to create a particularly feminine figure based in the home, functioned here so as to allow women to have a more public role. Furthermore, in constructing women as naturally suited to sewing, this encouraged their increased participation in the consumer world because sewing, as a productive activity, required materials and products with which to make items.

This is not to assume though that there was necessarily a direct correlation between shopping and female empowerment, and this consideration forms the final part of this chapter. While the evidence that will be presented shows that women could use their skills to make sure that they were getting value for money, the draper was never far behind in using ever-more sophisticated tricks to get the better of his customers. There was a general reluctance to interfere with the market and to provide protection for the female consumer. Moreover, while shopping did clearly offer opportunities to enter towns and cities (Rappaport, 2000), the impact on this has been overstated, and the material aspects neglected. For the majority of middle-class Victorian women, shopping was a question of buying goods that would endure long after shopping had finished. The goods that these women were buying were intended to be used back in the home. Shopping could be enjoyable and there is no attempt to argue that it was a constant chore. However, the items that a woman took home served as a means to further domesticity and traditional femininity.

This means that there needs to be a reassessment of the public-private split. In this chapter it is shown that the two spheres were mutually supportive of a traditional female activity. The tactile skills developed in the private sphere did allow participation in the public sphere, but the goods taken from the public sphere allowed a continuation of the routines and duties of the home. The flow between public and

private through shopping worked in a constant back and forth motion but ultimately, the public served the private and provided for the activities therein.

A wide range of sources is used to support the arguments presented in this chapter. When speaking of retail establishments, evidence from individual drapers in small towns to drapery departments in some of the larger London department stores is deployed. The reason for focusing on a range of shopping environments is to show, first, that problems with visual displays and techniques permeated a large range of retailers in multiple parts of the country. Furthermore, in covering a variety of shopping environments the strength of the tactile sense and its widespread transfer from the home to the shops is reinforced. The use of this sense did not cease because of bright lights, mirrors and window displays. This will contribute to questioning the myth that new technologies wrought such fundamental changes on the senses and exerted such a revolutionary effect. The buying of material goods remained central.

The expansion of commerce

It is important to explain briefly the rationale behind the continued focus on the middle classes and their role in nineteenth-century consumerism. Although not imprisoned there prior to the expansion of commerce, opportunities for leaving the home to go shopping proliferated in the nineteenth century. Just as the cult of domesticity was developed and prized most among the middle classes, this group also profited most from shopping. The capacity for consumption within the nation as a whole grew, thanks to the growth of the British population which rose from 10.7 million in 1801, to 20.9 million in 1851. This figure almost doubled again by 1901 to 37.1 million (Benson, 1994), aided by such factors as a decline in mortality rates, improved food production and superior technological capacities (Minchinton, 1973). This trend was not evenly spread however, and was most heavily concentrated in urban areas. In 1851, England became the first nation to witness half of her population living in towns and cities (Saville, 1951). London's population alone doubled between 1801 and 1841, then again between 1841 and 1881 until, in 1914, its population stood at 7.25 million (Fraser, 1981; Saville, 1951).³⁹

³⁹ This was aided, not just by natural increase but also by in-migration, particularly from the countryside, and was helped by developments in transport infrastructure. Meanwhile, although the rural

Many of the new urban-dwellers were the chief beneficiaries of rising wages. Population growth alone does not necessarily bring about spending increases, but the capacity for spending grew with average incomes per person in real terms (taking 1801 as a base rate of £100) rising over the course of the century and reaching £240 by 1901 (Benson, 1994). While these increases were felt across the board, it was undoubtedly among the middle classes where they had the biggest impact. This was also the sector in which the trend in falling family sizes exerted the greatest influence, adding to the disposable income at hand (Fraser, 1981).⁴⁰ While acknowledged in the previous chapter that middle-class incomes could span a large range, a general guide to increases in income within the group as a whole is the change in the number of those paying income tax. In 1860, those receiving over £160 per annum amounted to 280,000, while those falling just outside that tax bracket, receiving £100-150 per annum, stood at 160,000. In 1880, however, 620,000 were paying income tax and in 1913, this figure was 1,190,000 (Fraser, 1981). The lower middle classes also flourished as administrative jobs, such as those of the famous white-collar clerk, proliferated in industry and commerce, leading to an increase in the salaried workforce (Crossick, 1977).⁴¹

When incomes rise, the money generated can be spent or saved. Even though money could be tight, cultural ideologies guided the middle classes to choose to spend. For this group, among whom ‘keeping up appearances’ is often identified as their guiding light, consumerism offered the possibilities to correctly furnish the ideal home and family. As Judith Flanders (2006) has explained, the nineteenth century was the first age in which standards of living came to be measured, not only by intangible, spiritual qualities, but also by the amount of ‘stuff’ that an individual or a household owned. Loeb (1994) concurs, noting that in the nineteenth century there was a feeling of

population of England increased in the first half of the nineteenth century, it fell after 1851 when it had reached its peak of 9.9 million (Armengaud, 1973).

⁴⁰ Between 1841 and 1881 childbirth rates, on the whole, were increasing and it was only after this period that they started to level off, but the trend towards this had already been in motion among the middle classes for some time, before spreading throughout the rest of society (Hair, 1982).

⁴¹ While understanding the growth of the middle classes is vital, it is important to keep this in perspective, bearing in mind that, even between 1911 and 1913, 87.4 per cent of the population still possessed under £100 in capital and only 9.4 per cent was in possession of between £100 and £1000. The rise in living standards was certainly an uneven process (Minchinton, 1973). In some sectors, near abject poverty continued to dominate, most notably among agricultural workers in the South, many of whom were still paid in kind at the turn of the century (Fraser, 1981; Saville, 1951).

national progress and the chance for personal improvement, and this was measured through increases in material possessions. Women, as the guardians of the home, were largely responsible for buying and consuming. This role necessitated trips outside the home.

Bright lights and window displays?

Having explained the reasons for the continued focus on the middle classes, attention is now turned to re-evaluating the role of technologies of vision in commerce. Certainly, visual technologies did develop and their use expanded greatly throughout the nineteenth century, in particular during its final quarter. There were fundamental changes in display techniques, namely the growth of window displays and lighting. The development of this has been charted in greater detail in the literature review. To clarify, it has been claimed by several authors that it was in the nineteenth century when representation was elevated above exchange value, something which was promoted through the mass advertising spectacle that exploded, and the displays created in shops (Richards, 1990). Analysing this on a practical level, Crossick and Jaumain (1999) argue that, as monumental department stores were largely aimed at the aspirant middle classes, shop windows became a crucial tool in training those aspirations. This argument is very similar to that made by Rappaport (2000), who claims that exhibitions in shop windows and displays taught women how to see and so addressed them as spectators. She adds that shops were the same as magazines in this sense, with both teaching visual browsing, the former through fashion plates, the latter through physical visits to stores (Rappaport, 2000).

The picture that emerges from these studies is one of a city transformed into a wonderland for the eyes. However, these conclusions are drawn from a focus on a handful of very large department stores, which formed the exception rather than the rule. Analyses have overwhelmingly ignored both the extent to which such techniques were used and their effectiveness. For example, the majority of department stores did not benefit from being housed in grandiose, impressive structures built for that purpose, but instead grew through leases being acquired at different points. This meant that many shops did not have large and impressive window displays. The more advanced developments that occurred in France and America have been transposed

onto the British scene, resulting in rather inaccurate characterisations. The ‘logic of expansion’ that Proctor describes in relation to the buying of land and the creation of huge monuments of commerce, such as Printemps, Galeries Lafayette and the Bon Marché in Paris, is limited in its applicability to England (Proctor, 2006: 396-403). The procurement of large swathes of land was harder to achieve here, owing to leaseholds being more difficult to acquire (hence the more ‘uniform’ look of Paris as compared to London) (Proctor, 2006).⁴² The *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal*, the key publication representing the trade, made it clear that this spoiled the effect of displays, noting that Harvey Nichols had some good window displays, but that their shop was disrupted in the middle by several smaller establishments so that there could be no uninterrupted effect (WDTJ, 1873: 23).

Even when forming one continuous block, shop displays, in both large and small establishments, fell foul of a host of problems. A regular feature of the *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal* was a column entitled, ‘Our Town Traveller’ in which a columnist visited different areas of London, commenting on the various shops and displays. In January 1873, the reporter surveyed some of the windows of Oxford Street and Regent Street, with the hope of prompting a general improvement in this area of the trade. Swan and Edgar’s was noted as having nothing but a sign denoting a sale, while Peter Robinson’s had just a few dresses draped over stands, the tops of which were merely covered by tissue paper, rather than jackets, something which the ‘Town Traveller’ said spoiled the effect (WDTJ, 1873: 3).

Over time, some window displays did start to improve gradually. In 1882 the *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal* wrote, with some relief, that even in smaller shops, window displays were being well used and that the art of window display was gaining ground as a new area of study for those in the trade. Yet, despite this vote of confidence, it was still noted that few were fully aware of the value that good window dressing could offer to the business (WDTJ, 1882: 656). This same feeling was voiced just a few years earlier in the journal:

⁴² See Rappaport (2002) for a study on the developmental trajectory of Regent Street’s architecture that details the oppositions between civic and commercial interests, and the British landholding patterns which prevented uniform development.

Our age has been called the ‘age of progress’, and it is essentially so. Drapers, as a rule, however, do not keep so near level with the times as they might, and while other trades are making great and rapid advances, we cling to old habits, customs and prejudices, with a spirit truly conservative. (WDTJ, 1873: no page number)

Such a sentiment was also echoed in H. G. Wells’ novel, *The History of Mr Polly*, written as late as 1910. At the lower middle-class draper’s shop in which the young Mr Polly works, he is informed by a senior member of staff:

The art of window dressing is in its infancy...All balance and stiffness like a blessed Egyptian picture. No joy in it, no blooming joy! Conventional. A shop window ought to get hold of people, grip ‘em as they go along. It stands to reason. Grip! (Wells, 2005: 26)

Wells, who himself trained as a draper and based many of his literary observations on his own experiences, was in good company when making his comments. In 1884 complaints were being voiced among the trade that windows in England lagged far behind their Parisian counterparts (WDTJ, 1884: 19).

Clearly, there were deficiencies in buildings and in the skill of window dressing that prevented them from providing visual enticements and from being attractive to potential customers. However, to assume that window displays functioned well and drew women even when they were cleverly arranged is premature. Even the best displays were beset by a host of problems. In November 1874 another article in the *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal* noted that there was still no remedy for steam on the windows and that this meant that window displays had little effect on potential customers because of the ‘watery veil’ which covered them (WDTJ, 1874: 552). The window of Marshall and Snelgrove’s was noted by ‘Town Traveller’ as having a good display but it was suffering from so much steam that nothing was visible (WDTJ, 1873: 3). In 1882 complaints continued to flood into the journal regarding the problem and the lack of a solution. Some readers did write to the publication to recommend remedies, but one suspects that varnishing with methylated

spirit or painting the window with glycerine would have done little to improve visibility (WDTJ, 1882).

One of the major contributing factors to the problem of steam was, ironically, that other hailed development: lighting. Gas lighting was blamed for the steaming up of windows but, apart from this, it possessed other disadvantages. While intended to illuminate all before the eyes, those in the trade frequently complained of its less welcome effects. ‘Town Traveller’s’ trip to Kensington and Hammersmith in 1873 involved a stop at a shop called Lamb’s, where poorly fitted displays were said to be made even worse by bad lighting (WDTJ, 1873). A correspondent to the same journal, himself a draper, asked whether there was any effective way of illuminating windows. He considered naked flames to be too dangerous, while lights placed at the top left much in gloom near the bottom (WDTJ, 1878). Worse than this, poor lighting could lead to a misrepresentation of goods inside the shops themselves. A comic passage in *The Diary of a Nobody* of 1892 recalls how Charles Pooter was left feeling particularly put out after buying some trousers by gaslight. Although this represents a male experience, the problem would have been widely understood:

By the by, I will never choose another cloth pattern at night. I ordered a new suit of dittos for the garden at Edwards’, and chose the pattern by gaslight, and they seemed to be a quiet pepper-and-salt mixture with white stripes down. They came home this morning and, to my horror, I found it was quite a flash-looking suit. There was a lot of green with bright yellow coloured stripes.
(Grossmith and Grossmith, 1999: 162)

Gas lighting in general was often criticised for its smell and oppressive heat (Milan, 1999). That is not to say that electric lighting offered a much better solution. The *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal* noted in 1880 that its adoption in domestic settings, although greatly anticipated, would bring about many problems because of its effect on the appearances of fabrics and faces. The writer warned that the powder and rouge that could be used with gas light would not be possible with an electric alternative and that, ‘fabrics that would pass muster without difficulty in what is now looked upon as a well-lighted room will not do for an apartment properly illuminated by electricity’ (WDTJ, 1880: 140).

It is clear that visual displays could suffer from a range of problems, from merely being of poor quality, to being ruined by bad lighting and steam. These points are important to remember as they provide a background for analysing alternative sensory experiences. They show that consumers could not necessarily rely on what they saw. One final point concerning the attention paid to the female spectator should be added. Contrary to what is often argued, many drapers recognised that most women were just not interested in even the most fancy, illuminated displays. While shopping had the potential to be a pleasurable activity, it was also a means by which to acquire goods and it was a task which had to be built into a busy day. As Daniel Miller (2012) notes of consumption today, the vast majority of shopping is an activity that is fitted in around other daily rituals and which involves the purchasing of items to be used in the home. It is not just a leisure pursuit. Voicing a similar sentiment over 150 years earlier, the anonymous author of *A Handy Guide for the Draper and Haberdasher* wrote, ‘Many, from the midst of domestic engagements “run out” to make purchases, and will much rather go in to some quiet, unexposed place, than be exhibited and reflected in every possible way by a variety of mirrors’ (Anon., 1864: 4). This author recognised that women led busy domestic lives. Shopping was an important part of that because goods were needed in order to further domesticity. However, this meant that many women simply had no time to just go out and browse and did not want to go out to look in shops simply for pleasure.

This point was emphasised in another guide produced for women to take with them when shopping, published by ‘Olivia’ in 1906. Protesting against the tricks used in window displays, she noted:

we are not so easily deceived in small matters as you might think. When we see a costume marked ‘Exclusive’ we are inclined to remember that just the day before it had been labelled ‘To be had in all colours.’ How sweetly I have seen ‘*Le dernier cri*’ reposing on a worn-out season’s first pride. The power of a window-dresser to alter fashions may be enormous, but somehow it does not always convince us. (Olivia, 1906: 80-81)

The above quote reinforces the point that women went shopping with a purpose. They were not content to just go and look and they were well aware of visual tricks that might be used against them. This theme can be seen again in figure 5.1, a cartoon from *Punch* magazine that accompanied an article entitled ‘Traps and rattle-traps’. The article detailed the ruses that drapers would use to sell goods. As shown in the image, false signs and ‘puffs’ were a well-known feature of a draper’s shop, designed to entice women to spend but recognised for what they really were.

When the poor quality of window displays and visual techniques, the busy schedule of women and the desire for quality goods are accounted for, it makes sense to surmise that the ocular aspects of shops would have been insufficient to secure the custom of most female customers. Their effect on consumers has therefore been overestimated. As they wanted quality materials to sew with and with which to make serviceable clothes, visual perusal alone would not have provided enough information for the female body to make the right decisions to achieve these ends. Moreover, many women simply did not have time for the diversion of ‘just looking’.

Judging quality

The problems presented by visual technologies and the pressures of time on women’s lives meant that shopping was not always an enjoyable visual spectacle. More than this, the wider economic climate which impacted upon the production and retail of goods for sewing meant that sight actually became unreliable when choosing products. Buying goods was not a simple matter of picking what pleased the eye, not only because of incomes being tight and a frequent need for thrift, but because of a severe lack of trust among consumers that arose from the growth of fabric adulteration and fraud. The reasons behind this have been well covered in relation to the multiple risks that assailed the food industry, which was a problem that spanned all levels of society. This phenomenon stretched back to Roman times in the form of wine adulteration, and bread adulteration in the Middle Ages (Camporesi, 1989; Wilson, 2008).

Yet in order to profit from the advantages offered from feeding a growing urban population in the nineteenth century, much of which continued to have scant resources

at its disposal, unscrupulous traders often disguised poor quality food so as to look fresh and nutritious. Henry Mayhew, in his observations of London in 1861, wrote of the costermongers who boiled oranges to swell their appearance, and of bad fruits being hidden under the good, before the inferior items were sold to the unknowing worker (Mayhew, 2010). Indeed, food adulteration was such a big problem that it formed one of the main reasons for the creation of the co-operative movement, in order to give workers access to pure food in the face of a *laissez faire* state that, for a long time, would do nothing about the problem (Kassim, 2001).

However, adulteration and cheating were also pervasive features of the drapery and clothing trade, and women were well aware of this. Very little academic research exists in relation to this problem however. The reasons why deception was possible when manufacturing and selling fabrics are similar to those which allowed adulteration to occur in the food industry. Huge leaps forward in chemistry during the 1800s, capable of rendering life cleaner and healthier, also provided a boon to manufacturers and retailers who wished to trick and cheat consumers (Wilson, 2008). In the fabric industry, improvements in technology and transport allowed more types of fabrics and related goods to be manufactured, improved and imported. This could have resulted in superior items being offered for sale but so often novel products, unfamiliar to women and with dubious qualities, were easy to palm off on the ignorant. Even fabrics that were seemingly familiar could be sold to women as top quality, thanks to these new manufacturing techniques, when the reality was that they were made of cheap materials, benefitting from clever technologies of disguise.

One of the main reasons why it was possible to put these technologies into effect in the market with little resistance was due to the fortuitous coincidence of their growth alongside new patterns of living and working. Mass consumer fraud triumphed as urban society sprawled, increasing alienation and lengthening the chain between producer and consumer (Atkins, 1991). Hosking claims that modernity is characterised by ‘strong thin trust’ (Hosking, 2014: 47). Globalisation has resulted in the need for a great deal of trust (strong) to be placed in networks and people about which we have little personal knowledge (thin) (Hosking, 2014).⁴³ Although occurring

⁴³ See also Vernon (2014) on British modernity as characterised by a community of strangers.

on a bigger scale today, a similar problem characterised nineteenth-century commerce. In a society in which the chain of production had become so long, if a problem was discovered it was always difficult to know at which point the blame was to be attributed (Wilson, 2008). While usually less dangerous to the health, fabrics and clothes were subject to the same fate as food. Due to deception on the part of the producer or retailer and ignorance on the part of the customer, drapers were able to market inferior or cheaper goods dressed up as something else.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, techniques for doing this were developed, all to the detriment of the buyer. Mayhew noted how old clothes were ‘restored’, re-collared and finished with ‘a substitute for silk’ (Mayhew, 2010 [1861]: 149). This particular example largely affected the poor, but he went on to note that old clothes could be re-cut to form new items. In the past, much of this material, in its original state, was no good for anything but with improvements and re-dying it could be made into clothes that appeared to be new and were even sold to the wealthy (Mayhew, 2010 [1861]). Having passed through multiple pairs of hands, it was impossible to know at whom to point the finger when faults were found.

While it was the customer who tended to suffer the most in this, it should be noted that drapers and haberdashers often fell foul of cheating when they procured stock for their businesses. This shows just how difficult it was to locate blame in such a lengthy chain and how pervasive the problem was. Manuals produced for those entering the trade throughout the century warned of unscrupulous manufacturers who would try to sell inferior goods for drapers to stock. For this reason, they stressed that assistants should take time and invest practice to learn the material qualities of their supplies. A guide produced for this purpose in 1885 noted:

Many goods are called by a particular number or make, which, if tested, will be found inferior in width or quality to what they should be. Ribbons called No. 9 often measure no more than No. 7. In comparing value, these successful items should not be overlooked. (Beyman, 1885: 15)

Similarly, a guide for drapers and haberdashers of 1864 contained warnings to check materials in various lights in case of defects in appearance, and also so as to divine their more tactile qualities:

This is particularly necessary in regard to woollen cloths and some other textures in which 'honest' manufacturers, like sophisticated logicians, endeavour to make the worse appear better material... All goods, or certain portions of them, should be weighed, measured, or otherwise tested, to prove whether they are as represented. (Anon., 1864: 20)

Another such guide produced in the 1840s provided buyers with the lengths and qualities of certain goods. This was in the form of a six-by-two-inch pocket book, suitable for carrying around for an on-the-job reference. It even gave a scale of ribbon widths, against which the desired items could be held for comparison, and it detailed the prices that should be paid for each, to ensure that the buyer was getting a fair deal (Carter, c. 1840). Still in 1894 George Kirkhope produced a measurement book for drapers that was comprised of tables listing the number of folds and lengths that blocked goods should contain in relation to the amount of the product ordered (Kirkhope, 1894). The existence of such works, spanning the course of the century, highlights the enduring problems that existed at all levels of production and supply in the fabric industry. However, the ultimate destination of goods was with the consumer, and it was she who would most likely suffer. Despite wishing to protect their own pockets, many drapers were neither scrupulous in ensuring that female customers were sold a quality item, nor were they worried about tricking the consumer if it meant a sale.

This information on the state of the fabric trade provides the background for the consumer atmosphere in which women shopped. When entering any drapery or haberdashery a woman constantly met with the possibility of being cheated. In the face of such problems, what action could she take? Even in the case of food, state intervention to protect the consumer was limited. The legislation that was implemented offered only basic consumer protection and it came about after very protracted campaigns. For example, despite prominent work being undertaken in the 1820s by Frederick Accum showing the extent of the problem, it was not until the

1850s when Arthur Hill Hassall mobilised the microscope to detect adulteration in food, that more notice was taken by officials (Wilson, 2008). This, combined with a growing fear of public health disorders led to the Food Acts in 1860 and 1872, followed by stronger legislation in the form of the 1875 Food and Drugs Act (Kassim, 2001). Yet it was only from the 1880s when the situation vastly improved.⁴⁴ Had it not been for such prominent scientific work and public injury, it is questionable as to whether any action would have been taken. Adulteration in any form, while not ideal, was seen as a necessary price to pay for allowing the market to reign supreme. The state certainly did not consider interference in business to fall within its remit (Wilson, 2008).⁴⁵

If legislation was slow in coming in the food industry, *laissez faire* really was allowed to triumph when it came to fabrics. After all, cottons, linens and ribbons were the preserve of disenfranchised women and were unlikely to cause significant public injury.⁴⁶ If women were cheated then this was considered to be regrettable, but it was also a worthwhile sacrifice for maintaining market autonomy. The strength of belief in this is shown in an article appearing in *The Times* on 12 September 1884 (and which was subsequently reprinted and endorsed in the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* in October 1884). The newspaper discussed the use of aniline dyes for fabrics. It recognised the injuries caused to the skin by these poisonous dyes,⁴⁷ but argued strongly that no legislation should be introduced to counter this. Instead, women should rely on the trustworthiness of traders. Legislation was, after all, 'contrary to the general method of English procedure' (*The Times*, 1884: 7).

⁴⁴ Despite this, milk adulteration remained a problem well into the twentieth century (Atkins, 1991). Furthermore, the acts that did exist, like so much nineteenth century legislation, were highly permissive.

⁴⁵ This is not say that the British state was entirely anti-intervention in all matters. The relationship between *laissez faire* and legislation is complex. MacDonagh's (1961) work on the North Atlantic Passenger Acts of 1800-60 shows how these, although often a last resort, represented some of the first extensive interventions from central government in the lives of individuals, here the aim being to protect large numbers of emigrants. Likewise, Henriques (1979) provides a useful survey of the vast amounts of domestic legislation and attempts at reform that emerged throughout the century, covering subjects as diverse as marriage, poverty, child labour, housing and prisons.

⁴⁶ Although fabrics may not have killed at the rate of, for example, milk tainted with borax, or lozenges painted with red lead paint, fabrics dyed with arsenic to produce the bright colour 'Scheele's green' did cause their fair share of health problems, and even fatalities (Whorton, 2011). See also Matthews David (2015) on the vast range of chemicals in clothing that harmed wearers and manufacturers.

⁴⁷ This too was a result of the arsenic used in the preparation process.

Even though it has been shown that they themselves often suffered when procuring stock, the anti-legislation attitude is confirmed in the response of drapers to the Merchandise Marks Act. This was one of the few pieces of legislation brought in to regulate the fabric industry in the nineteenth century and it came into force on 1 January 1888. This Act aimed to prohibit forged goods, or goods bearing fake trademarks from being imported into Britain, and it gave authorities the power to seize such goods if required (Loxham, 2016). The *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* was very vocal when it came to voicing the drapers' concerns surrounding this. It wrote that, while the Act was intended to combat problems including false and inferior quality goods entering the country, it would damage the drapery trade because the potential existed for the misrecognition of many marks (WDTJ, 1888: 72).

A meeting was held at the London Chamber of Commerce in February 1888 to discuss this and traders claimed that the legislation would delay the reception of goods. The inevitable result would be that which was feared above all: protection (Loxham, 2016). By December 1888, when the Act had been in force for twelve months, the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* reviewed it, stating that it had, on the whole, been harmful to trade because of its poor administration. Following this, the government proposed to appoint public officials to ensure proper enforcement but this use of public funds was strongly opposed (Loxham, 2016).⁴⁸

While these examples show resistance to legislation, there is evidence that wider society remained concerned about these problems. Indeed, the failings of the fabric industry seem to have been a well-recognised and widespread source of unease. Samuel Smiles wrote in his book *Duty*, first published in 1880, that lying had become a very grave problem in commerce. 'A young woman buys a reel of cotton marked 250 yards. When she works it out with her skin and bones, she finds it to contain only 175 yards. What can she think of the truthfulness of her countrymen?' (Smiles, 1889: 51). In a damning tone reminiscent of the writer of the book of Proverbs he went on to note,

⁴⁸ It is not a great surprise that drapers and their assistants were so strongly against legislation. Hailing from the lower middle classes, this group was overwhelmingly characterised by its conformity and very conservative behaviour, owing to a desire to show its distance from the working classes and to legitimise its belonging to the middle classes. See Crossick (1984) and Carey (2002).

We sell shoddy for wool. We sell veneering for solid wood. We build wretched sheds of bad brick and bad mortar and green wood, and call them houses. We rob and cheat each other all round, and in every trade and business, and we are all so bent on making money. (Smiles, 1889: 59)

Clearly there was a massive problem facing women when shopping; the pervasive spirit of free trade meant that the state was reluctant to act and drapers also shied away from legislation that would protect the consumer. Confronted with this situation, female shoppers had to rely on their own abilities of inspection. Berry (2002) has argued that women employed a lengthy scrutiny of goods in the eighteenth century because this was a period before standardisation, thereby necessitating the use of the senses in divining quality. Kate Smith (2012) adds that records from the eighteenth century indicate that women constantly asked mercers questions about their goods and were keen to examine them. These women were astute and thoughtful, not caught up in reflections and dazzling displays but touching and handling objects, showing that they were knowledgeable about the quality of the product and of the workmanship (Smith, 2012). However, Berry (2002) argues that these trends faded with the emergence of modern capitalism in the nineteenth century and improved manufacturing techniques. Yet, it is clear that it was in the nineteenth century when inspection became more important. This was the true period of *caveat emptor*, when women had only their own abilities on which to rely for making judgements.

The need for skill among consumers was a well-recognised fact, and it was in this vein that literature was produced to guide women on how to shop. Such works advocated that judgements should be carried out using the skill that they knew best - the sense of touch. Ironically it was during this period, which is so often claimed to have seen the triumph of vision, when sight could least be trusted. E. E. Perkins published a small, brown pocket-book, as early as 1834, entitled *The Lady's Shopping Manual*, which was to assist women as they entered the shops of London. The introduction stated:

In London, one can procure anything and everything. This is an acknowledgement, not deficient in truth; but, fully to enjoy the advantages which the Metropolitan market offers, it is necessary that the purchasers

should be acquainted with the nature and qualities of the articles which they seek. To afford this necessary information, the present work has been prepared: its objects are to promote both the satisfaction and advantages of those who prize it, by rendering them independent of the recommendations of interested persons, and qualifying them to judge for themselves. (Perkins, 1843: iii)

As this excerpt makes clear, the new opportunities for shopping were recognised (in this case, those of London in particular). However, so too were their associated dangers, namely that women would not be well-acquainted with the range of new goods on offer and so would be tricked into buying something that was not suitable. This would occur because they lacked the requisite knowledge with which to make an accurate judgement.

It was for this reason, therefore, that Perkins produced the manual, so as to help women to avoid being fooled by sales assistants whose, ‘object too frequently is to sell *by any means*’ (Perkins, 1843: iii). Figure 5.2 shows a cartoon that appeared in *Fun* magazine, depicting a haberdasher and his customer.⁴⁹ The text jokes that, so common is deception within the fabric trade that this haberdasher goes bankrupt because he is incapable of lying about the quality of his stock (*Fun*, 6 November 1889: 200). Perkins was clear that women needed to be able to make decisions independently of such ‘interested parties’ (Perkins, 1843: iii). As the cartoon in *Fun* shows, these men were clearly well-recognised. Perkins therefore arranged the book by shop department, listing all the goods that it would be possible to find within each one. Full descriptions of the goods were provided so that a woman would be able to turn to the appropriate part of the book when she was in a certain department and wished to know the necessary qualities of a particular article. For example, the following was the description given for Dutch diaper tape:

This tape is made of linen and is by some called heron-bone tape; it is softer, stronger, and has a neater appearance, than any other tape: it has some

⁴⁹ A haberdasher sold trimmings for dressmaking and often his role was interchangeable with that of the draper.

resemblance to stay-binding, from which however it may always be known by its being thinner, and in pieces of 9 yards each. (Perkins, 1843: 5)

Similarly in the 'Threads' section was this entry:

Scotch Ounce – is in ounce hanks. It is a soft and pretty thread, but the real cottons have nearly superseded it...No. 6 is the coarsest quality, and each number, in advance, is proportionally finer; each ounce is made up into as many skeins as the number is for quality. (Perkins, 1843: 8)

As these entries show, the risks that a woman faced when shopping were recognised. However, the book also pointed out that a woman could avoid being fooled. For, as Perkins notes, product quality could be assessed through touch, a skill in which women were by no means deficient. For Dutch diaper tape, the requirement was that it was to be 'softer' and 'stronger' and 'thinner' than other tapes. Different types of Scotch Ounce were similarly to be judged on their texture.

Sight was not completely redundant (in the case of Irish linens, for example, women were advised to search for round threads and straight selvages) and, of course, women wanted their dresses to look good. However, when it came to quality and truth, it was the tactile sense that was lauded. In the case of the Dutch diaper tape, for example, the problem was that it bore a close resemblance to stay-tape. In the nineteenth century, not only was sight often not enough but relying on it alone could be a real drawback. The problems with poor lighting and displays were only compounded by the potential for inferior quality goods to be disguised as something superior.

Wilson argues that adulteration flourishes when the senses are no longer reliable, either because they lack the requisite knowledge and experience or because fakes are so persuasive (Wilson, 2008). However, for the Victorian woman in a haberdashery or in a draper's shop, the problem did not affect all the senses equally. It is true that fakes became all too accurate, but this was a problem that affected vision the most. When it came to quality, the eyes were increasingly deemed untrustworthy. Technology was recognised as being to blame, as Perkins wrote:

Of many years a great many goods have been made, half cotton and half linen, done up in the same form, and labelled in the same manner as Irish cloths. Such goods have the appearance of being great bargains, but on examination they will be found too sleazy to be all linen, and too light for Irish cloth; and if chaffed a few minutes with the hand, the coldness peculiar to real cloth is not felt, while the action produces a woolly appearance. The buyers of lawns are subject to similar frauds. (Perkins, 1834: 67)

Perkins makes it clear that only the hand could discover such falsities.

The anonymous author of *The Life of a Dundee Draper*, published in 1878, compiled his memoirs after spending his life working in various drapery establishments. In the face of so many drapers lacking any knowledge of the goods they were selling, and because of the many swindlers at work, this author was keen to prove his honesty, integrity and Christian morality. Whether he really was altogether truthful will likely never be known. As his publication is an autobiography, there is the chance that he wished to paint a good picture of himself, and to bolster this by stressing the negative character of others. Yet, he too acknowledged that the hands should inspect fabric goods, because what the eyes saw could mislead. Of blankets he noted,

It is a mistake to judge a blanket by its appearance only. One comes to learn that many a fine woolly aspect lack warmth and durability, which can only be obtained where the blanket is well-knit in texture, and of sufficient weight. (Anon, 1878: 46)

Clearly, there were some women whose tactile abilities were lacking, and he made it clear that he was able to assist them in judging the qualities of materials that they were hoping to purchase.

It was not long before I could finger my goods satisfactorily. I could arrive quickly at the value of the article by examining the nap, with its mellow touch, and the nature of the dye by which it was prepared. Many of the customers

who were not themselves judges of cloth, relied intuitively on my judgement in the matter! (Anon, 1878: 47)⁵⁰

However, in light of his pronouncement on the unscrupulous nature of the trade, and the common knowledge of this commercial atmosphere, whether many women would have wished to put their trust in any draper is subject to doubt.

The problems with fabric quality were frequently compounded by the ways in which drapers chose to display their items. More drapers (who, understandably, published their works anonymously) left records of the techniques used by other drapers to trick the eyes. The ‘old draper’ writing in 1876 noted,

Silks were never kept in folds, but rolled on blocks; and it was part of the practise of a draper’s assistant to learn how to show silks to the best advantage, which necessitated handling the rolls properly, which was done by seizing the end of the piece of silk briskly in one hand, and by twisting it dexterously round two or three times, throw the end beneath, and pop beneath the customer’s eye the fabric loosely puffed up in a heap so as to show off the article in the best manner, and display the brightness, or shade of the silk. (Anon., 1876: 200)

This technique seems fairly innocuous when compared to other ruses. Even if this was not a case of pure deception, the same aim of deceiving the eyes lay at the heart of it. A similar case is reported in Dorothy Whipple’s novel, *High Wages* of 1930. Based on her own experiences and set in 1912, she notes how a draper’s assistant was trained:

‘One-and-three-halfpence the yard. Excellent value, Mrs. Barton Madam. Thirty-nine inches wide.’ He ran the material between his finger and thumb, and shot a glance to the side to see if Jane was watching his methods with intelligent interest. She was. (Whipple, 2009: 18)

⁵⁰ ‘Nap’ refers to a particular weave in a fabric that gives it a raised texture, for example, velvet.

Even if he himself was the victim of cheating, the Victorian draper was certainly not averse to doing whatever it took to make a sale.

Heeding advice?

It has been shown that women received much advice to handle fabrics in order to assess them and to avoid relying on sight, because of the climate of mistrust. However, these sources do not reveal whether women followed this counsel. The work of many academics would seem to suggest that they did not. Thomas Richards (1990) claims that, by the nineteenth century, and because of the influence of the Great Exhibition, shopping lost its multi-sensory aspect and instead became a visual overload that drove customers to a state of distraction. Similarly, Abelson (1992) argues that the home and the body were increasingly located in the market because possessions came to denote class. This meant that traditional skills of domesticity fell out of favour. They were replaced by the skill of shopping, which was a visual activity. Taking this argument yet further, Loeb (1994) asserts that the thrift, self-restraint and puritanical attitudes that had long characterised the middle classes suddenly evaporated by the 1880s, being superseded by rampant hedonism.

However, the wider circumstances of the middle classes suggest that such hedonism was rarely possible, even at the end of the century. As discussed earlier, despite increasing incomes, middle-class existence could be precarious. While in 1913 over one million fell into the income tax bracket, less than half of these people possessed an annual income of over £400 (Fraser, 1981). The lower-middle classes especially were often pushed to the very limits of their finances, but they still tended to pursue conformity above all else (Crossick, 1977). The middle-class dictum of keeping up appearances and maintaining what Fraser terms the 'paraphernalia of gentility', added to the priority placed on women sewing, gave clothes and fabric a vital role (Fraser, 1981: 130). The combination of the necessity for thrift and the need for spending, added to credit being so frowned upon, meant that shopping was no triviality. It made sense to follow the kind of advice examined above. In this way, shopping needs to be seen as a skill, and one that was both aided by and put into the service of domestic skills. The division that has been imposed upon shopping and domesticity is therefore false because buying was an occasion on which to use the skills so keenly developed

in the domestic sphere. The social mores of the time, which stressed self-regulation and adherence to class codes meant that purchases were necessary and yet money could be so tight that close attention to the value of potential purchases could not be overstressed.

This was particularly true when entering a drapery. As noted in the previous chapter, the ready-made clothing industry did not take off in a big way for middle-class women until the twentieth century and, while many women did frequent dressmakers, most undertook many of the tasks themselves. These skills, learnt in the home, were not abandoned at the shop door for the sake of entering into a state of distraction. Women did judge quality, as was recommended in the manuals produced for them. Indeed, it appears that women had a propensity for doing this, often to the annoyance of shop assistants for whom this activity could be something of a nuisance. In an article of 1888, originally printed in the *Cardiff Times*, it was noted that English shoppers were ‘blunt and practical’ (Anon., 1888: 9). The author of the article went further to observe of the female shopper:

She is not particularly enamoured of any individual tradesman or assistant; her visits are regulated by the value and prices of your articles. On a Saturday night, after she is caught by an attractive display, she walks in without much ado, gives her order in a business-like manner, pays for the goods, and orders them to be sent to her address. On the other hand, if she is not pleased with the quality of your goods, she saunters out with very little ceremony and tries elsewhere. (Anon., 1888: 9)

This quote reveals that women used the same managerial and practical ethos that they employed in the home and was advocated in the manuals when doing their shopping. They made visits to shops, not just to look but on the basis of the value of the items held there. The appearance of goods was important and displays could spark an initial interest. However, these did not tend to result in ill-thought spending. For the well-trained woman, quality mattered and this could make the difference between securing a sale and leaving the shop empty handed. She would quite happily ‘saunter out’ if not satisfied (Anon, 1888: 9).

Although standing against regulation, the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* did not advocate cheating. As such it provided advice to drapers on how to display their stock so that its tactile qualities would be appreciated, recognising that this mattered to women. An article from 2 March 1874 instructed drapers and their assistants on how to hold, display and store fabrics. They were told to turn back folds and to insert their hands between them so that the quality could be evaluated. It was clear that this inspection would be done largely with the hands, because the following warning was given about the transportation of fabrics: 'In carrying folded goods about, also, from one part of the shop to another, care should be taken to grasp the folds at top and bottom as to prevent their slipping, so that the fresh, firm feel which belongs to properly-kept goods may be preserved intact' (WDTJ, 1874: 200). However, while this advice was provided to help secure sales, it was simultaneously recognised that women could be, in the eyes of the journal, over-zealous in their inspections. Therefore guidance was given on how to look after stock because women were so prone to scrutinising articles with their hands. In an article of October 1873, drapers were advised on how to store coloured sewing-silk skeins, so fine that, if the band holding them together broke, there would be much disorder and, 'like Humpty Dumpty in the rhyme of our childhood, all the king's horses and all the king's men would be quite unequal to the task of setting it straight again' (WDTJ, 1873: 537). In this particular case, the advice was to use wrappers with half pockets so that the majority of these goods would be out of reach. The reason for why the precautions were needed was laid firmly at the feet of the female customers: '[keep] the reserve away from mortal ken, so that your stock may not be hauled over by unlicensed hands, always being certain first that there is no occasion for any but the forward stock being disturbed' (WDTJ, 1873: 537). Drapers knew that shoppers would touch and disturb their goods and, as in this instance, it was a case of damage limitation.

It seems that touching fabrics in order to ascertain their quality was taken for granted among women. A children's book, *The Shopping Day*, published in 1902 and written by Clare Bridgman and illustrated by Charles Robinson, introduced younger readers to shops and what was on sale there as the characters went out with their mother. Each shop discussed featured a beautiful illustration and, as shown in the examples for the haberdasher and the wool shop, the young girls depicted keenly handle the stock (figures 5.3 and 5.4). Indeed, returning to figure 5.2 from *Fun* magazine, the dishonest

haberdasher's female customer is drawn as quite rigorously handling the goods to check the quality of the fabric against his words. Yet, what was a necessary act for the women in search of excellent goods could represent a real disturbance and a nuisance to shop assistants.

Women used the skills of touch for the reasons already stated and it is also clear that they brought their tactile skills with them when they went shopping. Therefore, it has been shown that sensory interaction depends upon a wide range of social factors. Yet these abilities were so clearly honed within the home and they formed part of a woman's deeply ingrained body schema. In light of this, can their use be classed as an aptitude and a free thinking assessment of wares or did the habit body, of which touch was a part, cause women to function as blind automata? Certainly, habits are very powerful. In a similar understanding to that of Merleau-Ponty, John Dewey notes that habits allows 'grooves' to be formed in life, which lead to certain behaviours being routinely followed (Dewey, 1959: 280). The quote by D. H. Lawrence included at the start of this chapter explains this well, as he notes that it is habit that allows life to be lived smoothly, rather than the 'spasms' caused by occasional excitements (Lawrence, 2010 [1928]: 46). Skills are embedded through practice, which in turn helps these skills to be converted into intuition. In the previous chapter it was explained that, in the context of needlework, this allowed women to undertake new activities with some ease, on the basis of what had gone before. In this way, habits allow life to be lived without every small action having to be thought about in detail, which would be paralysing (Sennett, 2009).

However, this does not mean that habits cannot be altered nor, and importantly, that there is no place for cognitive thought. Merleau-Ponty (2002) maintains that, so as to be able to function on a daily basis, pasts, and the habits to which they give rise, must not be so close to the surface of the consciousness as to cause immobility and perpetual repetition. Rather, memories incorporated within the body remain peripheral, connected to the present so as to allow comparisons, but not being so central as to blind the body to novelty (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). When discussed in terms of material existence, the habit body is formed largely through the embodiment of movement. It is a 'spatiality of situation' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 115). This means that it is formed through understanding the movement of the body in relation to the

world and its objects, which then allows for new sensory experiences to either resonate with, or to diverge from this (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Dewey (1959) goes on to add that, while habits allow for the smooth functioning of life, they are also subject to a certain instability because there is a constant communication between the subject (the habit body) and new environments which are being encountered on a daily basis. This means that the body is able to repeatedly re-orientate its relationship to the world. Habits allow smooth daily living but they can be reconsidered or altered as needed.

This means that, while experience of the world first comes through non-cognitive encounters, and embodied experiences allow new perceptions to be measured, the intellect can also be used to reflect upon perceptual activity (Dewey, 1959). Consciousness is only possible if it is consciousness of something, because the world is there prior to any encounter of it by the body. Thus encounters from the past continue to exist in the form of unconscious recall in the present (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). These memories are only brought up if necessary and because present action allows a referral to them, so that there is not a conscious overload of the bodily schema (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). In this way, the body can be said to experience a constant union between the stability of the habit body, and the instability of a new present. Past, embodied experiences are brought up in the consciousness to assess the instability of the present, thus combining habit and intellect (Dewey, 1959). The intellect can therefore be said to play the role of sorting out disorder, on the basis of the order that has been created from earlier experiences (Dewey, 1959). It acts as a barometer, checking the effect of the new against the habits of old.

How this worked when shopping is best illustrated with an example. An excerpt from the work of George Sandford, a draper who also wrote his memoirs on the trade, illuminates how women deployed the skill of tactility that they had developed in the home, but combined it with critical thought in new shopping environments.

When a lady comes to the shop to purchase, say a silk dress, every piece of the description must be shown her, and if she chooses at all, it is only after having examined and turned over every one. Thus a great amount of time is lost to the salesman then, and probably a half hour's work prepared for him in the evening, after the shop is shut, as the goods must be carefully folded and put in

their proper place, which can only be done after the shop is clear of visitors.
(Sandford, 1853: 23)⁵¹

This extract explains that a woman would visit the shop with the intention of buying a certain item. As she knew what she wished to buy, this indicates that she had prior experience of the fabric. But while she used this habit knowledge to approach the situation, the cognitive facilities were at work as she ‘examined and turned over every one’ (Sandford, 1853: 23). Hence, she did not search on the basis of mere habit, but the new was compared with the habit knowledge of the old, examining the original items for how they measured up in terms of what she desired.

As the above example makes plain, this meeting of past and the present was always orientated around the future. Women were able to make decisions because they could understand new objects through past memories that had been formed in the home environment (Dewey, 1959). Memories are brought to mind when a present experience allows the bodily recall of a past experience (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Yet these memories were always mobilised for a future purpose. What occurred when women shopped can be explained in terms of what Richard Sennett calls a ‘domain shift’ (Sennett, 2009: 126). This is when tools or principles, originally intended for one purpose, are transferred to a new situation, because the suitability of the transfer becomes apparent. This means that the skills and crafts that an individual possesses and uses for one particular purpose can be appropriately used elsewhere (Sennett, 2009). This then allows new areas of life to be successfully explored. In this way, women were able to transfer the skills of sewing and domesticity to the world of shopping, even though they had not necessarily been developed for that purpose.

An article of 1880, similar to the quote by Sandford, discussed the female propensity to handle stock, again to the annoyance of the assistants, whose carefully arranged goods were put out of place. While the word ‘look’ is often used to describe such an activity, careful attention to what women were actually doing reveals a much more tactile engagement:

⁵¹ Note, ‘dress’ was frequently used to denote fabric, rather than a ready-made garment.

It often appears as though our fair customers thought very lightly of time and trouble when they take a seat at a draper's counter; the young men are so obliging, and so anxious to show the goods under their care, that it becomes an absolute pleasure to sit and look at them...material for a dress may be looked at, but if the young man is not very careful indeed, the centre fold will be pulled completely out in a series of sharp jerks. The lady is very anxious to try the effect of the stuff upon her own figure, hence the difficulty regarding the centre fold. (WDTJ, 1880:767)

Drapers understood that women were not content to look with their eyes, because this was insufficient when it came to assessing the quality of materials for a dress. Instead, they pulled fabrics out and even draped them across their bodies. Pallasmaa notes that touch is the sense by which the world can be integrated with the body, as opposed to sight which functions more as a sense of distance (Pallasmaa, 2007). When explained this way, it makes sense that women, who were buying fabrics that would ultimately be turned into clothes, and which they would first have to sew, would wish to touch them extensively so as to judge their suitability for that purpose.

It was always this future suitability of the materials that was so important. The domain shift happened so as to allow past experiences to assess the present yet present experiences do not only allow for a comparison with embodied habits, but they are ultimately orientated around securing future aims (Dewey, 1959). The aforementioned need for thrift and keeping up appearances, and an ability to pursue their sewing, formed future aims when women went shopping. Although probably fun and pleasurable at times, buying these wares was a serious business. Life is lived with a 'bodily intentionality', that is, experiences are always immersed in references to the past and the future, and it is from this that the present draws its meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 2004: 10). The determination shown by the female shopper when searching for her goods, and her keenness to employ her sense of tactility is understandable in the light of this meeting of past experience and future aims. Sharon Zukin writes that touching goods, 'gives grounds for predicting whether a product will satisfy...it makes women more expert shoppers' (Zukin, 2005: 55). This expertise is shown in a song written in support of the early closing movement that began in 1842. It did not

berate women for shopping; they were merely encouraged to shop earlier in the day. However, the lyrics make clear why and how women shopped:

Three ladies went shopping out in the West
Up Regent Street, as the sun went down
Each thought of the bonnet that suited her best
And for that she would ransack the whole of town. (Harding, 1859)

The word ‘ransack’ can carry destructive connotations, and this is just what women were seen to be doing by drapers and their assistants, because of how thorough they were in their shopping activities. The ‘Old Draper’ noted that women were keen to exercise their tactile judgement so as to procure the exact article that they desired (Anon., 1876: 9). In the song, an exhaustive search was performed so as to attain a future goal, in this case, finding the perfect hat. This ideal of perfection embodied quality but also value for money.

A final example is useful to bolster the argument that women used tactility for judgement, both because of the multitude of problems in commerce and because of habit memories. This particular illustration though shows what could happen when a woman purchased goods with which she was not happy. As noted, the look of fabrics and fashion mattered. However, if forced to choose between fashion and quality, the latter seems to have won out. The *Warehouseman and Draper’s Trade Journal* published an article on 15 April 1872 concerning the respective qualities of English and foreign silks. For taste and fashion, the foreign products were judged to be superior, but in terms of quality, those made in England triumphed. Foreign goods were ‘artificially weighted’ and dressed to look good, while their quality was noted as severely lacking (WDTJ, 1872: 7). It seems that customers were quick to notice such aspects and, when drapers employed practices that discouraged the handling of fabrics, or sold goods whose quality became apparent only after the sale, they could be the ones to suffer. One woman wrote to the journal complaining that ‘she should never go to a certain draper’s shop again...because the last black silk dress she bought there cut out in the wearing, and she was confident their articles were not nearly so good as formerly...’ (WDTJ, 1872: 7). Whether this woman had felt the fabrics in the shop before making her purchase is not clear. However, the embodied habit

knowledge of the past played a crucial role in evaluating the decision after the silk had been bought, because she was clear to note that this particular silk did not wear so well as those of the past. Thus, present experience and cognition, hand and head, were combined with past experience in order to provide for a future need. In this case, that need was not met.

Female empowerment?

What shopping has meant for women historically has been the source of some contention. For Elaine Abelson (1992), the sights of the metropolis dazzled women, leading them to purchase what they did not want, or even to shoplift. Erika Rappaport (2000) shares a similar view, claiming that shopping became a pleasure, although she does not stress shoplifting. Rachel Bowlby (2010) and Krista Lysack (2008) suggest that women were able to assume the role of the *flâneuse*, whereby they enjoyed looking but did not succumb to buying. The place of the department store and the public presence of women in these debates will be attended to more fully in a later chapter. But can turning the focus onto material goods and tactile inspection add anything to the debate about the empowerment of women through shopping?

First there is the question of whether women's skills did help them to secure good deals and to avoid being tricked. This is difficult to ascertain as letters to the press only seem to have been penned when a woman was not happy with a purchase. However, the mere fact that women could use these skills seems to point to them having some power over the draper. Indeed, this power was one of the reasons behind the derogatory characterisation of the draper in the public imagination. His association with women led to him being turned into an effeminate figure of fun because he seemed to be at their beck and call (Wynne, 2015; Loxham, 2016).

Yet for every advance that a woman was able to make in this respect, and for each good judgement that she was able to execute, the draper (and the whole fabric industry) was never far behind. This can be shown by using the example of judgement through the haptic sense. Women could judge quality with their hands but when this was not possible, the haptic sense could be used. Hapticity can be described as the sensation of touch, but it is sensed through the eyes. In this way it is like language; its

use is possible because of prior tactile sensations. The eyes can ‘touch’ something because there is a unity between the sight of a texture and that which has previously been felt through the skin. Sennett (2009) comments on this ability, noting that information stored in the brain about the touch of an object allows pictures of the same object to be made sense of. Instead of the flat representation being seen, the brain is able to conceive of how it may feel. Pallasmaa (2007) adds to this analysis, noting that, although hapticity may appear to be a reversion to the sense of sight, its use serves to stimulate the sense of touch, rather than acting in and for itself. In haptic viewing, the body is projected onto materiality (Pallasmaa, 2007). Hapticity is therefore the potential to look at an image and for it to make sense because of its resonance with prior bodily experiences. In this way, sight matters but only in so far as it remains in service of the tactile sense (Pallasmaa, 2007).

Merleau-Ponty (2004) similarly draws on this idea of hapticity, arguing that the visual experience of objects always depends on their context. Crucially, this experience relates to the self as an embodied subject. The appearance of something to the eye rests on how it has also been experienced by the other senses. He actually provides the example of a folded cloth to illustrate his point, noting that to see this is to recognise the dryness of the fibres or the temperature of the material. These qualities can be grasped because the body projects such understandings onto sight, due to the already experienced sensations of tactility that have gone before and whose memories remain present in the body (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

To use hapticity in a nineteenth-century drapery establishment was risky, because of the advances in technology that allowed visual trickery to take place. Yet it was sometimes used by women when physical touch was not possible. However, it was also mobilised by drapers to trick women as shown in this example provided by Sandford:

It is a common practice to ticket in large characters a class of goods far below their value, and at a price at which they are not intended to be sold. The articles thus labelled are placed in the window immediately above a duplicate of the colour or pattern, but inferior in point of quality. Should a shrewd and knowing customer insist on having the article in the window in preference to a

selection from the reserve stock, the shopman with alacrity and pleasure jumps into the window and draws out the lower article, while the superior one or 'drawboy' is adroitly tumbled into a prepared cavity under the window. Thus, either way, the bargain hunter is cheated, and the draper receives full value for his money. (Sandford, 1853: 37)

This quote shows that hapticity was used to judge the quality of goods, because reference is made to the 'shrewd' customer who would recognise the value of the article displayed in the window, and that it would be on this basis that they would request that particular item. Yet the draper fought back against the skills of the female customer, to get the upper hand once again.

So common was it for women to use their skills of judgement that Sandford attributed part of the blame for such occurrences, which were not infrequent, to females who, he claimed, were never tiring in their quest for a bargain. This meant that drapers had little choice but to use some tricks so as to make a living! However, he admitted that the draper's trade suffered from such a bad reputation because, 'Every pure and honourable feeling is sacrificed on the altar of Mammon...' (Sandford, 1853: 43). Owing to this, Sandford continued, drapers would happily dress up inferior articles so as to look like genuine goods, and then sell them to an unwitting buyer for a price far above their real value, 'and the result of such dealing is the introduction of spurious and counterfeit wares into the market by manufacturers' (Sandford, 1853: 42). This discussion of the haptic is not central to the wider exploration of touch, but its inclusion here has been used to show an interesting facet of the tactile sense and the importance of remembering sensory unity. More than this, it reveals that, despite possessing such finely-tuned skills of judgement, an unregulated market and dishonest trading was never far from getting the better of the female consumer. Protecting her and offering consumer rights was simply not a priority.

Yet there is another way in which the place of women can be discussed. It should never be forgotten that the process of shopping was rarely an end in itself. An earlier quote from *A Handy Guide for the Draper and Haberdasher* mentioned how women often rushed out to make purchases 'from the midst of domestic engagements' (Anon., 1864: 4). Shopping was often a necessity, a process by which items were procured for

the home. It is true that shopping helped women to make strides into the public sphere. However, this could be a rushed activity and the ultimate aim was to buy items for more sewing. Women learned sewing skills in the home and they were able to use them in shops to make wise purchases. This shows that tactility allowed the public and private spheres to be deeply intertwined, because skills from the home were used to make wise choices in shops. However, buying fabrics and trimmings served as a means to sewing in the home once again. What this meant for women remains a source of debate, and it will be returned to in a later chapter on the department store. However, it is clear that there was a constant dialogue between the public and private spheres when it came to buying goods, and it was the tactile sense that allowed this.

Summary

This chapter began with the argument that nineteenth-century commerce has too frequently been analysed as a visual form of entertainment. This focus has led to the material goods that were purchased and female sensory interactions being ignored. To demonstrate that the significance of the visual has been overstated, attention was paid to the limitations of display culture, including problems with buildings, window dressing and lighting, but it was also shown that many middle-class women were busy and did not have the luxury of just going out to look around town. In addition, the *laissez faire* economic structure of society helped adulteration and fraud to flourish in the fabric industry. This meant that sight could not be trusted when assessing quality.

It was in this context that advice guides were produced to help women to judge goods using the sense of touch. Women certainly did touch goods to assess their suitability but the capacity to do so resulted from the embodied habit skills that they brought from home. While not intended to be used for this purpose, the skills were easily transferred and, when coupled with conscious reflection, they allowed good choices and purchases to be made. This did allow women to exercise some power as they moved further into the public sphere. However, the tricks of the draper were never far away because of the deceptions that an unregulated market encouraged. In addition, this chapter has shown that the relationship between public and private spheres is more complicated than a strict separation. The transfer of tactile skills from the home to the shops was balanced with the ultimate destination of the goods being the home.

The abilities of the habit body that served women so well in the shops were fated to be put to good use with the items she had bought, back in the domestic realm.

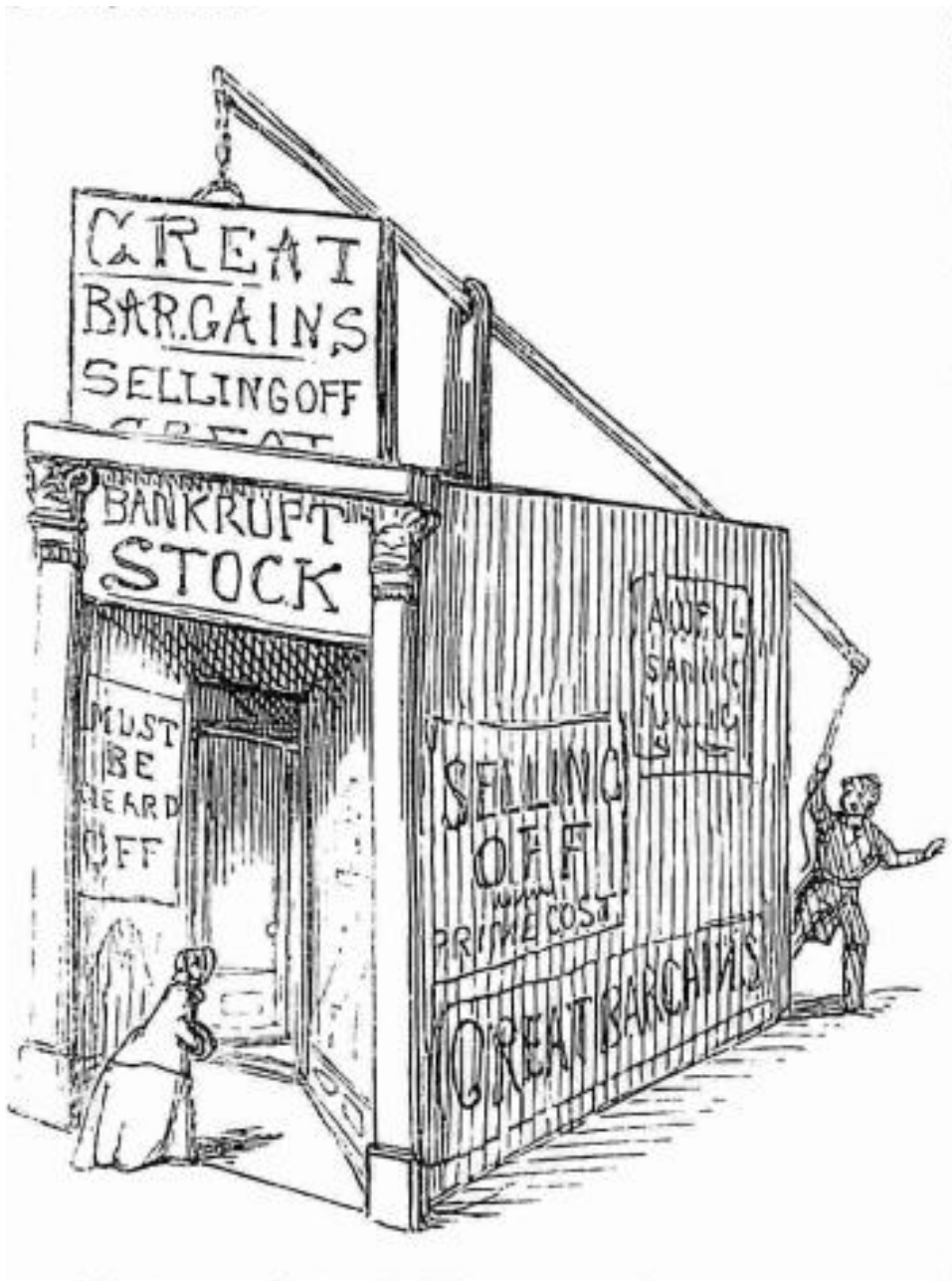


Figure 5.2 – 'Traps and rattle traps'. *Punch*. 5 January 1850: 2.

ON DOING IT THOROUGHLY.

THERE are too many tradesmen in this country of ours who do not carry out the art of making believe in a really successful manner by reason of a want of CONVINCING THOROUGHNESS.



For instance, there's a haberdasher of our acquaintance who never *can* put a proper face on it. When a customer, inspecting a fabric of unalloyed cotton, asks, "I suppose this is all wool?" he sniggers feebly, and forces a pale and undecided smile of reassurance. Suspicion of his good faith is at once awakened in the customer, and that unfortunate tradesman is now bankrupt for the third time, and pretty well done for.

Figure 5.2 – 'On doing it thoroughly'. *Fun.* 6 November 1889: 200.



The Draper's Shop.

Figure 5.3 –Bridgman, C. and Robinson, C. (1902). *The Shopping Day*.



The Wool Shop.

Figure 5.4 – Bridgman, C. and Robinson, C. (1902). *The Shopping Day*.

Chapter 6 – Selling a new skin

The first wealth is health – Emerson.

Introduction

Motivated by a concern that sensory understandings of modernity have placed too much emphasis on vision and have ignored the specific situation of women, the development of a tactile sense among Victorian, middle-class women in the home has been discussed. Following this, its transfer to shops and use in buying fabric was analysed. The focus on the tactile sense is allowing a rebalancing of the place of the senses in consumption and an appreciation of how perceptual skills joined the public and private spheres. However, so far tactility has been discussed primarily as a capacity of the hands, honed in the home and mobilised for discernment among consumers. The touch of the hands is a vital component of tactility, but touch is not limited to this part of the body and it is important to consider the place of the wider body within consumerism. Of the five senses, touch is unique in that it is not limited to one small area or organ. Instead it is a capacity located everywhere on the skin, thus providing a huge area for the reception of information (Montagu, 1986).

This being the case, bodily touch will be the focus of the next two chapters. As a central concern throughout this thesis is to illustrate that consumerism can only be understood in terms of much broader socio-economic considerations, this chapter aims to analyse the selling of clothes on the basis of their relationship to the skin, its health and feeling. Dress in the nineteenth century has been attended to largely in terms of appearance and visually symbolic qualities. Elizabeth Wilson (1985) explains this by stating that modernity requires fashion because of the context of mass spectacle. Fashion has served both to connect and differentiate individuals in an ocular world. Yet a concern with bodily health and the impact of clothes became particularly acute in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. This was linked to the dress reform movement, famous for its concerns over corsets and the adoption of bloomers, but the movement's concern with aesthetic aspects will not be considered here (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010; Newton, 1974).

The first section of the chapter will begin by discussing contemporary understandings of the skin and its role by examining some of the many scientific works that were written on the subject. Doing this will reinforce the claim that the academic priority afforded to the eye has been misplaced, given the concerns of Victorian society. Not only was tactility considered to be important for women, but nineteenth-century medics also devoted a lot of attention to proving the skin to be important for health. The skin was positioned as an organ for knowledge of the world, but it was also assigned a key role in purifying the body and removing waste products from the blood.

In the second section, the discussion will move onto examining how these understandings of the skin fitted into wider medical works, on which there is now a vast literature. Health, like the market, was to be self-regulating. In order to avoid uncomfortable discussions on the economy and the impact of poverty on vitality, the health crises of this nineteenth century were attributed to the environment. Fitting into this rhetoric, discussions on the health of the skin also placed the environment centre stage. The third section will discuss the solutions to health problems that were introduced in light of these beliefs, namely environmental alteration, linking this to Foucauldian ideas on governance.

Any attempts to alter the environment in which the skin dwelt were fraught with difficulty because liberal views on freedom were largely incompatible with impinging upon the individual, private body. The division between the public and private spheres made itself felt very strongly here. However, commercial companies could fill the void left by the state and take advantage of the widespread concerns about the health of the skin. Clothing formed a large part of this. Taking the Jaeger Company as the focus (yet with some reference to other firms), the fourth section will detail the aims of this company to provide clothing that both promoted the health of the skin and fitted into wider understandings of wellbeing. Here the attention will move from analysing how women shopped, to how attempts were made to sell to them.

The penultimate section will examine the specific place of middle-class women. While most health problems throughout society were understood as mainly affecting

the working classes, environmental changes ostensibly excused the market of its failings again, because alterations appeared to work on everyone. Jaeger could also sell clothes on this basis, because the skin was common to all people. Yet the reality was that the company targeted the middle classes, as will be shown through an examination of the health concerns of this particular group. In addition, although the company sold clothes for men, women and children, women were specifically targeted in marketing. This was because of their role in ensuring the health of the family, their association with shopping and, importantly, their understandings of clothes and fabrics, as described in the previous chapters. This meant that women were positioned as intermediaries for adopting public health advice and taking it back into their private homes through commerce.

Finally, the success of the company will be considered. Although detailed sales figures for Jaeger do not exist, company literature indicates that success was only partial. The company did grow but women were selective about the items that they bought, even in light of strident health concerns. Providing an explanation for this allows a phenomenological perspective and a consideration of habit to be brought back into the picture. Despite all the warnings and panics surrounding health, and the contemporary, liberal discourse of the rational individual, a key consideration was the feeling of clothing against the skin and the comfort that it offered. The company recognised that there was often a reluctance to buy products if this could not be assured. Bodily habits, once again, proved to be enduring.

As noted, the bulk of this chapter will centre on just one company, Jaeger. This focus is partly a pragmatic choice, because the company archives still exist and are very comprehensive. In addition, Jaeger was the most prominent company offering health clothing. This means though that care must be taken when considering how representative the company was. To ensure this, references to other companies and public discussions of the topic will be included, in order to show that this was not just a fringe concern.

Understandings of the skin

Before examining how the relationship between materials and the skin was used to sell clothes, it is important to understand contemporary beliefs about the skin and its role in the body and health. Chris Otter (2008) claims that during the nineteenth century, the visual was increasingly lauded in all areas of life and, as part of this, the health of the eye became the prime focus of a great deal of scientific attention. He illustrates this by discussing medical works that were devoted to the subject. However, this was a period of flourishing in numerous fields of science and Otter's arguments, while important, neglect the many works which placed the skin at their centre.

The skin as a whole, and not just the hands, was understood as acting as an important sensory receptor. In 1878 the doctor John Haddon described the skin as consisting of the *corium* and the *epidermis*, with the latter acting as a protective layer that lacked nerves and blood vessels. Therefore it was incapable of sensibility. Meanwhile, the upper layer (*papillary*) was packed with blood vessels and nerves, allowing even the smallest of stimulations to be sensed (Haddon, 1878: 66). This sensory capacity mattered because the skin was located as forming an interface between the body and the external world; tactility was understood as a prime means by which information was taken in (Haddon, 1878). Yet, because the skin was the barrier between the body and the world, it also had a role in protecting and regulating its health. These roles were intrinsically linked. If the health of the skin were not secured then the wider condition of the body would be endangered. This in turn would affect the sensory capacity of the skin, which would put the body at further risk because the skin would not be able to differentiate between good and bad sensations (Haddon, 1878).

The way in which the skin was to regulate bodily health was by controlling the emission of waste products. This was accomplished through insensible perspiration. The skin was believed to be constantly breathing out waste gases (Haddon, 1878). Ideas on insensible perspiration had existed among the ancient Greeks; Galen discussed the pores as breathing, and blockages were treated with hot baths, vomiting and purging (Renbourn, 1960). Similar ideas endured throughout subsequent centuries but they intensified in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when a range of

illnesses was blamed on inefficient insensible perspiration. These ailments included gout, rheumatism, kidney, lung and bowel problems (Renbourn, 1960).

Renbourn (1960) claims that ideas on insensible perspiration faded as the nineteenth century wore on but this was not the case. It was in 1835 that Gilbert Breschet and Augustin Roussel de Vauzeme described the anatomy of sweat ducts, and their work was translated into English in 1837 (Hennepe, 2014). These works clearly had an influence in nineteenth-century England, where the ideas became common currency among scientists and doctors. One doctor, Richard Beamish, claimed that blood possessed a fixed capacity and that arterial blood could only take up oxygen if waste products had first been removed from venous blood (Beamish, 1859). In the typically statistical mind-set of the time (Porter, 1986), Erasmus Wilson, Professor of Dermatology at the Royal College of Surgeons and one of the most famous authorities on the skin, calculated: ‘the number of square inches of surface in a man of ordinary height and bulk, is 2,500; the number of pores, therefore, is 7,000,000, and the number of inches of perspiratory tube 1,750,000, that is, 145,833 feet, or 48,600 yards, or nearly 28 miles’ (Wilson, 1876: 43). In this way, the skin was deemed to be well equipped to ‘breathe’ out waste.

In ideal circumstances these processes would occur naturally and without assistance. James Startin, a surgeon and lecturer on skin diseases at St John’s Hospital London spoke in 1884 of the skin as ‘the greatest medium for purifying our bodies’, a means by which ‘corrupted’ substances were to be removed from the body, via little vessels (Startin, 1885: 4). But, he added that this should be accomplished in a self-regulating capacity (Startin, 1885). Other doctors shared this view. Richard Beamish described the skin as providing a mode of constant ‘renovation’ for the body, inhaling and expiring, and shedding dead cells (Beamish, 1859: 7). Haddon too went on to affirm the skin as being self-regulatory, by making it clear that the body accomplished its role without mental volition (Haddon, 1878).

Regulating the body

Clearly, medical attention during this period did not shift solely to the eye and, in its sensory capacity and its ability to secure the health of the body, the skin was

considered to play a vital role. However, the question of self-regulation requires further attention as its potential failure gave rise to strong anxieties. The responses to this can only be appreciated in relation to wider health concerns of the time. As discussed, ideas about the skin and its role did not arise among the Victorians but had been in existence for centuries.⁵² However, the form that they took in the 1800s was coloured by specific circumstances. While simmering under the surface for quite some time, it was from the 1830s that the general health of the nation, in particular of its urban inhabitants, became a subject of major alarm across the country. A vast literature documents these developments; rising populations, rapid industrialisation, swelling cities, *ad hoc* housing provision, poor food and dangerous living and working conditions among the poor all combined to escalate fears over health (Daunton, 2001; Hamlin, 1998; Lees, 1983).

This was the period in which health inspectors and concerned observers such as Edwin Chadwick, James Kay-Shuttleworth and Friedrich Engels, ventured into smog-filled cities and recorded their experiences. These became widely read publications, outlining the grave situation that society was facing. Even with the end of the ‘Hungry Forties’ and the more optimistic outlook that enveloped society from the 1850s, poverty, ill health and their accompanying fears continued. In the 1870s and 80s slum investigators, such as Octavia Hill and Reverend Andrew Mearns explored London’s East End and supposedly clean, rural districts where they were alarmed and appalled by what they encountered (Hill, 1970 [1875]; Mearns, 1970 [1883]). Disquiet about the general health of the nation grew, and fears for the future of the Empire ravaged society (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010).⁵³

These developments were greeted with shock and fear and it was in this context that the public health movement developed, with the aim of explaining and combatting the problems. When speaking of the history of cleanliness, Virginia Smith (2007) notes that cleansing appears to be a timeless activity, yet no aspect of it is natural or inevitable. This was certainly true in the nineteenth century, when the designated role

⁵² See Virginia Smith (2007) for an excellent overview of this and Weisser (2009) for examples of these concerns in early-modern England.

⁵³ The late nineteenth-century, sweeping through into the inter-war period, saw a growth of health movements which advocated bodily disciplines connected to exercise, physical culture and cleanliness. See Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2007). Waddington (2012) provides an overview of the less well-understood issue of rural sanitary investigation, focusing on Wales.

of health officials, explanations for problems and the legislation implemented were heavily influenced by wider beliefs about society. Chris Hamlin (1998) has argued that it was during the nineteenth century that the notion of ‘public health’ was coined in England. The concept of public health was not neutral but was contingent upon perceived needs and interests and it was linked to wider political and class struggles. Action was prompted, but never dictated by circumstances, and political and economic interests lay at the heart of most decisions.

Political and economic interests meant that an understanding of diseases as rooted in the sheer poverty in which so many dwelt frequently went unacknowledged. The rise of free market liberalism, exemplified in the institution of the New Poor Law of 1834 and the Abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, posited life as a fight for survival, according to natural laws and premised on non-intervention (Hamlin, 1998). Recognising that working conditions and low wages were causing illness and death would have amounted to an acknowledgement that the economy was at fault and that state intervention was necessary. As argued in the previous chapter in connection to adulteration, state intervention in the economy tended to be a last resort. Rather than acknowledging these failings, it was to the state of the environment that blame was attributed.

While there were exceptions, the most influential health reports that were compiled during the great period of social investigation of the 1830s and 1840s discussed, not poverty and malnourishment, but sewage, cesspits, poor ventilation and dirt (Chadwick, 1997 [1842]; Kay-Shuttleworth, 1970 [1832]). By using the filth theory of disease, it was claimed that diseases would subside if the grime in which the body dwelt was dealt with. The remedy was less tied up with medicine than with questions of political economy; the chosen solution would avoid the need to question the role of the state, or to acknowledge market-related issues of working conditions and wages.⁵⁴ As Pickstone (1992) has added, by this rationale the subject was identified, not as a patient, but as an object, acted upon by the environment. This allowed the removal of socio-economic factors from consideration so that political necessities could take precedence.

⁵⁴ Hamlin (1998) provides an excellent account of the public health movement from the 1830s. A more traditional account is Wohl (1983). For a wider European perspective see Williams (1994).

The basis for this approach was closely linked to the prevailing liberalism of the time. Patrick Joyce (2003) explains that liberalism was, first and foremost, concerned with analysing the composition of the social, and devising ways of ruling that were compatible with this. Freedom, not control, was the key tenet and questions of governance always hinged upon their compatibility with this. Just as consumers in shops needed economic freedom, the ideal condition for the individual was freedom, for both the body and the soul. Yet, when it came to health, freedom could only be fully and correctly exercised if the surrounding conditions encouraged this (Joyce, 2003). This is because government was a question of mentalities; liberalism concerned itself with applying techniques that would preserve the agency of subjects, yet induce certain forms of conduct by structuring the field of action (Osbourne, 1994; Poovey, 1995). The precondition for healthy bodies and the exercise of freedom was the creation of an environment that promoted this. By arguing that bodies could not function properly because they were trapped in detritus and filth, it was made clear that, if the environment were changed, the body would be ‘freed’ into experiencing a ‘correct’ relationship with its surroundings, becoming healthy, rational and self-governing (Crook, 2006: 22).

At this point, understandings of the skin and its potential problems can be returned to. Medical works fitted into this public health rhetoric and understandings on the operation of the healthy body and liberalism (it comes as no surprise that the skin specialist, Erasmus Wilson dedicated his book to Edwin Chadwick). Like the economy or the city, the skin was considered to function at its optimal level when left to operate freely and without interference. In using such ideas, understandings were not at risk of contradicting the wider ideological climate that underpinned liberalism and beliefs about health. This was highlighted in a comment made by the doctor, W. J. Sinclair, who wrote that the self-regulating capacity of the skin, which allows sweat to be removed from the body and for heat to escape is ‘of the greatest consequence in the animal economy’ (Sinclair, 1878: 92). In describing the body as an economy, Sinclair evoked principles of the circulation of finance within the free market. Borrowing medical ideas that found their origin in Harvey’s *De Motu Cordis*, the Victorian economy was regularly analysed through the lens of a freely self-regulating body,

with money circulating like the flow of blood.⁵⁵ Likewise, the ideal Victorian city was viewed as one of free flows, with roads and sewers acting as arteries, promoting the free movement of citizens and waste (Joyce, 2003). In using such language when discussing the skin, the familiar analogy was reversed, yet this only served to embed already understood ideas.

However, while considered to work best when functioning on its own, the skin, like the rest of the body, or the city, could suffer from a host of problems, especially impediments and blockages. Erasmus Wilson wrote that, without the regular exhalation of ‘insensible perspiration’ (as opposed to sweating following vigorous exercise), ‘the animal temperature would run riot, and substances of an injurious quality would be allowed to permeate the finest and most delicate of the tissues of the body’ (Wilson, 1876: 49). Wilson added that, if free perspiration were prevented and the concomitant removal of waste products from the blood inhibited, the liver or kidneys would have to take up the slack. However, this could not be maintained in the long term, because it would disturb the ‘equilibrium’ of the body and lead to disease (Wilson, 1876: 49). Haddon explained this matter in the following terms:

Taking the lowest estimate, we may consider the skin endowed with the important charge of removing from the system about 20 ounces of waste matter every 24 hours. We may thus understand how checked perspiration proves so detrimental to health, because for every 24 hours during which such a state continues we must either have a large amount of useless and now poisonous matter in the system, or have some of the other organs greatly over-tasked to get rid of it. (Haddon, 1878: 68)

Haddon’s comment indicates the belief that the skin, when not labouring under optimal conditions, could cause deeper illnesses. Added to this, the skin was such a crucial sensory receptor that, if unable to carry out its role then it could put the body in further peril because its tactile ability was important for detecting both good and bad influences on the body. As the skin formed a permeable barrier for the body, it

⁵⁵ See Wright (2013) for his work on the origin and formulation of William Harvey’s ideas on circulation.

was necessary to maintain its condition as this exerted such an influence over general corporeal health.

Far from taking a backseat to the eye then, the skin was considered to be most worthy of scientific attention. The surgeon and physician, William Wood, again employing liberal and economic terminology, wrote in 1832: ‘No part of the living body has a juster claim on our attention than the skin; its functions hold a principal share in the animal economy, and, on account of their frequent connexion, both with the origin and with the cure of diseases, an extant knowledge of them becomes of paramount importance’ (Wood, 1832: 1). The skin was understood as possessing the ability to alter the whole of the body’s inner constitution, something which could be dangerous indeed. Wood went on to argue:

Through the medium of the skin, almost exclusively, external agents influence the actions of the living body. Of these actions, the circulation of the blood is at once most susceptible of derangement, and, in the greatest degree, subjected to the effects of changes in the functioning of the skin. (Wood, 1832: 113)

Scientists believed it was vital to know the skin, and the possible pernicious influences affecting it, because changes in its functioning could have dire consequences on the health of the individual, and society at large (Wood, 1832).

Altering the body’s environment

Beliefs about the role of the skin and the problems affecting it, combined with the wider political context of liberalism, had implications for the interventions that were recommended to secure its health. Although not always made explicit in works on Victorian infrastructural changes, efforts to intervene in the environment in which the body lived hinged primarily upon concerns about the sensory interaction between the body and its physical situation. Virginia Smith (2007) highlights the timeless importance of the sensory organs and their place in bodily health, noting that the senses have always had a crucial role by detecting foreign matter and guiding the responses of the body. Social investigations of the 1830s and 40s made frequent and anxious references to the dulling of the senses that occurred in unhealthy

environments.⁵⁶ This was considered to be harmful to health because, if the senses were not functioning well, the body would not be equipped to recognise an unsanitary environment.

As poor health was blamed on the environment, the structures and surroundings in which people dwelt were to be altered to improve physical and moral health (which were considered to be contiguous). The urban implementation of this has received wide attention: Chris Otter (2004) examines the use of technologies for freeing the body into experiencing both positive and negative sensory reactions to the environment. Negative changes were to foster increased levels of decency by lowering the threshold for disgust, while positive changes were to encourage the subject to enter into good relations with the cityscape. Examples of this included dealing with air pollution, lighting, slaughterhouses, sewerage systems and water supplies (Bowler and Brimblecombe, 2000; Otter, 2004, 2008; Hamlin, 2003). These changes were considered to be absolutely necessary and yet they were also premised on minimum intervention. The aim was that, as the body interacted with its new environment, a consciousness of self and surroundings would be inculcated that would produce improved physical health and self-regulation.

These studies, however, have been largely vision-focused. Otter's (2008) work on the political history of lighting within the Victorian city traces the growth of scientific studies on vision, which led to the illumination of public environments, so as to promote mutual visibility and foster good behaviour. Simon Gunn (2007) similarly focuses on the visual culture that was promoted through street widening and cleansing, and the opening up of urban cores which, he argues, fostered a community of spectators. As important as these works are, they neglect the efforts that were put into improving the functioning of the skin. Doctors considered the main risks to the skin to be poor food and washing, and dressing habits. For instance, Sinclair (1878) suggested that cold baths were needed for healthy skin, while Wilson stressed the need for regular 'ablution' (Wilson, 1876: 169). Tom Crook (2006) has made a strong case for how attempts were made to deal with this in his work on nineteenth-century baths and washhouses. Public baths were, in the words of Erasmus Wilson, 'schools

⁵⁶ For example, see *First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts* (1844).

for the moral training of people', and they were to act on the person so as to ensure both physical health, and a symbolically regenerated soul (Crook, 2006: 21). The process of washing the self, maintains Crook, relied heavily on tactile self-exploration of the body, which lent liberalism a sensual dimension (Crook, 2006). Similarly, his work on the cubicle and the privatisation of sleeping space to promote sensory knowledge of the body reinforces the emphasis on corporeality (Crook, 2007, 2008).

However there is a problem when discussing the interventions that were considered suitable for improving the environment of the skin, so as to ensure its healthy functioning. This may account for the lack of work on the topic as a whole. Interventions in the health of the skin immediately appear to be incompatible with the liberal tenets that guided sanitary reform. As Joyce (2003) argues, liberal governance was a question of guaranteeing the correct freedom for the body to operate, but without interfering with the actual person. Osbourne (1994) adds that this form of governing was less concerned with a political creed but was a reflection on government itself, how it should function and where its limits should lie. One such limit was the body. Alterations to external materialities replaced bodily interference, which was strictly off limits. Here again the division between the public and the private can be seen. Even sanitary investigations and urban improvements tended to stop short of crossing the threshold of the private home and when attempts in this direction were made, such as in the case of compulsory vaccination, resistance frequently occurred.⁵⁷ Indeed, when analysing spaces for resistance within the apparatus of governance, the home is often cited as having provided a refuge from the increasingly omnioptic public gaze (Crook, 2007).

This did not present such a problem when the senses of distance were being considered, such as sight and smell; it was possible to make adjustments to the environment which removed odours and what were viewed as visual 'nuisances' without interfering with the body. Yet it was a step too far for the state to interfere

⁵⁷ Durbach's (2000, 2005) work details resistance to the vaccination movement from the mid-nineteenth century. Apart from opposition based on health risks, much of the discourse centred on beliefs about the economy of the body and the limits of state interference. This movement spanned all classes (although the middle classes were rarely pursued by officials over their opposition) and it drew on language concerning the free-born Englishman, individual rights and liberty. The debate was concerned with articulating the right of the private individual to guard his or her body from public, state interference.

with the actual skin of a person. Waddington (2012) reminds us that ‘nuisance’ was a relative term and what some could not or would not tolerate, others did not consider to be dirty or unhealthy. When connected to the body, these disagreements could be hard to deal with.⁵⁸ Even with the limited action that was taken in creating the public baths that Crook examines, participation could not be forced (Crook, 2006). Furthermore, as governance is always found alongside resistance, it is no surprise that, once in the baths, there was often bad behaviour and subversion of the original aims (Crook, 2006).

Although there were attempts by the state to take action, bodily health remained very much a private matter. This is where consumerism enters the picture and it allows us to see a further bridge between the public and private spheres. The nineteenth-century market for medicine and healthcare was enormous (Hill Curth, 2006). This is not to argue that commerce took over the role of the state or acted on its behalf but, with a frequent lack of state intervention in such matters, it was left to the individual to self-treat. However, in the Foucauldian framework in which liberal governance is so often understood, power operates in networks that emanate from diverse points and within a multitude of social institutions, rather than from a central point of control. A proliferation of discourses can produce knowledge and multiple, non state-based sources locate arenas on which power can act (Foucault, 1998). Power can then emanate from the top, or from the bottom of society, and at all points in between.

It is important to understand that this is the context from which this strand of commerce derived its roots, being so strongly linked to state desires to change the environment of the body. Understanding this reinforces how important analyses of wider society are for comprehending the developments within consumerism. The medical market thrived in the nineteenth century because of the huge rise in health fears, and the growth of print culture which communicated these fears to a growing urban population (Loeb, 1994). Companies that sold products on the basis of the health discourses that were already in circulation formed one of Foucault’s networks of power that served to further a strong narrative within society. Indeed, the consumer sphere formed the perfect site for this. Liberal governance shared strong similarities

⁵⁸ See also Canguilhem (1991) on the way in which ‘norms’ surrounding health are decided and negotiated.

with, and was in many ways modelled on, economic liberalism. Both were overwhelmingly concerned with promoting freedom. Yet, in this way it was possible for commerce to span the gap between the public and private, something that the state failed to do.

‘Hygienic’ clothing companies

As has been demonstrated, discourses concerning the health of the skin circulated throughout society, as did recommendations for cleanliness. The two chief roles of the skin were as a tactile organ, and a regulator of the health of the body, achieved by releasing waste products from blood through the pores. Although supposed to be a self-regulatory process, doctors advised that this could be helped through regular bathing, ventilation, clean houses and correct clothing. Such recommendations, and a lack of action from the state, gave rise to a wealth of products being marketed to this end. In the nineteenth century, medical firms were the biggest spenders on advertising (Nevett, 1982).⁵⁹ The focus here though is on clothing. Rather than all clothing being a question of fashion, many firms started to market garments that addressed the question of the skin’s relationship to fabric in the final quarter of the nineteenth century.

In view of the problems that could be suffered by the skin, different companies suggested what they claimed were the best fabrics for improved health. Although all such firms claimed to base their policies on experimentation and statistics, not all offered the same recommendations. For example, one reviewer, writing of the vast array of fabrics available for underclothing, highlighted the similar claims of companies in promoting hygienic principles. However, he noted their divergence in fabric preference, including flax-based products from Ireland, the ‘Patent Invigorating Net-Cloth Vest’ by Dr Pettenkofer of Cologne, perforated buckskin from the USA, and sealskin and fur garments. The reviewer also listed two items with the somewhat questionable names of ‘Underclothing for the Future’ and the ‘Net of Health’ (WA, 1327/9).

⁵⁹ Beecham’s, for example, spent £22,000 on advertising in 1884, £95,000 in 1889 and £120,000 in 1891 (Nevett, 1982).

There was no real consensus on what materials would be best for the skin, and the recommendations of various companies were often in complete contradiction of each other. For the purposes of this work, this is not really a problem because the ‘correct’ scientific advice is not being analysed (much of the reasoning behind the recommendations would be considered to be ‘quack’ science today). What is important is that many companies did begin to market clothing based on its relationship to the skin. This was a prominent feature of the Health Exhibition of 1884 in South Kensington, popularly referred to as the ‘Healtheries’. Similar to the Great Exhibition, this huge event was reported to have attracted between one and two million visitors by July of that year (*The Standard*, 24 July 1884: 5). The range of exhibits was innumerable but involved such diversity as ‘healthful cooking’, wine demonstrations and model housing (*The Standard*, 24 July 1884: 5). Of all sections though, clothing was the most popular. There were displays of national dress through history and, importantly, many companies exhibited their take on hygienic clothing (*Morning Post*, 8 September 1884: 6). This reinforces how widespread discourses on the skin and its health were, and how quickly they were taken up in commerce.

The most prominent and arguably the most successful company to be involved in producing and marketing hygienic clothing was the Jaeger Clothing Company. This started life in London in 1884, its full name being ‘Dr Jaeger’s Sanitary Woollen System of Clothing’. Despite its name, the company was named after, rather than created by Dr Gustav Jaeger, a German zoologist, pictured in figure 6.1. The company was founded by Lewis Tomalin, a former grocer, who invested £2000 of his personal capital into the business. Tomalin was granted permission to name his company after Dr Jaeger because of his work on the body, the skin and health, which provided the underlying rationale for the firm (WA 1327/23).

Like his English medical counterparts, Dr Jaeger’s scientific work focused on the place of the skin in securing bodily health. However, what made his writings of particular interest to Tomalin was that, while other scientists offered some recommendations as to how to regulate bodily health through washing and clothing, Dr Jaeger devoted much of his work to analysing, in considerable detail, the best attire to be worn on the skin (WA 1327/8). Agreeing with ideals of self-regulation and based on his own extensive experimentation, Dr Jaeger concluded that cotton, silk and

linen garments and bedding prevented free perspiration and caused chills and diseases, 'tending to early and painful death' (WA 1327/8). Through his experiments, he claimed to have found that wool prevented such problems. Concerning temperature regulation, from linen being given a base rate of 100, wool was assessed as having a conductivity rate of between 50 and 70, thus making it better suited for keeping the temperature of the body constant. Owing to it being a poor conductor, Dr Jaeger concluded that it would protect against the loss of internal heat, and the absorption of excess external heat (WA, 1327/11/1).

The clothing worn on the body mattered because of the processes with which it had to assist. Dr Jaeger claimed that poor clothing habits limited circulatory free functioning and led to blockages. From further experimentation, he added that the human body was most susceptible to disease when made up of large amounts of fat and water, affecting nervous action (WA, 2334/8/2). Their initial presence was safe but, when out of proportion, overall health would be compromised. He wrote of the body: 'any over-accumulation of water or of fat will lessen its energies and its power of repelling the action of sickness-breeding influences' (Jaeger 1327/2). Fat and water were considered to be problematic because, when in excess, they hindered the action of the pores, and therefore they required dispersal. Dr Jaeger went on to add, 'But to insure the hardening of the body, it is necessary that every pore of the skin should perform its function without let or hindrance' (WA, 2334/8/2).

Such 'hindrances' came in the form of clothing. Just as they were considered to hamper temperature regulation, vegetable fibres prevented the pores from functioning efficiently, because they impeded air from circulating freely and gases from escaping. The logic behind this was that vegetable fibres cleansed the air by absorbing poisonous odours from human bodies when living. However, they continued to do this when dead and made into clothing. This meant that, when worn, bodily emissions would be absorbed by the clothing yet, as the fibres were now dead, the emissions would not be given off but would remain on the skin. The body needed to be clothed in fabrics that would allow the free circulation of air, and the easy escape of noxious sweat, without leaving the clothes damp and liable to cause chills (WA, 1327/11/1). Cotton and linen became wet easily and prevented the escape of 'volatile substances'. Undyed wool though, as a natural animal product with an open-weave texture,

allowed gases to be taken off without condensation (WA, 1327/11/1). Dr Jaeger considered a woven stockinet material to be the most suitable attire, being worn next to the skin and allowing the free circulation of air (WA, 1327/11/1). However, his recommendations were extreme and he claimed that, for the completely healthy and self-regulating circulatory system, all clothes should be made of wool. In making these arguments, Dr Jaeger was identifying material and structural alterations that could be made so as to maintain the freedom and autonomy of the person (clothes did have to be freely chosen), yet to encourage its workings in a certain direction.

The original concern of the Jaeger Company was limited to underclothing, as the surface closest to the skin and the item most often manufactured from cotton or linen, and this is what most other companies also focused on. However, the remit of the company soon grew (WA, 1327/11/1). This was because Dr Jaeger's theories attained such prominence through their concrete realisation in Britain when the Jaeger Company was set up. The company catalogues informed customers that the position of Jaeger was identical to that of its namesake and the company was authorised to carry out his ideas, in the form of manufacturing and distributing clothing and bedding that adhered to his system. To bolster its credentials, company literature stated that the firm was founded by those who had tried, and were fully convinced of the worth of Dr Jaeger's System, having themselves experienced its benefits (WA, 1327/45). Catalogues also listed recommendations received from medical journals, such as the *Medical Record*, and the *Medical Times* (WA, 1327/44). By 1913, the company even had its own fabric-testing laboratory (WA, 2334/5/3/1/8).

On this basis, the Jaeger Company was proud to market only woollen goods, which were manufactured expressly for the purposes of bodily health. All clothes were made from pure wool, undyed and untreated, that would cover all of the body, up to the neck, so that no part would be 'injuriously exposed' (WA, 2334/8/2). As one handbill noted, 'all must be wool, wool only, pure unadulterated wool, wool, wool' (WA, 1327/8). Tight leg fastenings of wool were sold to prevent 'updraughts' which could, it was believed, cause rheumatism and lumbago because of sudden alterations in temperature. Being especially concerned with the self-regulation of circulation, the chest was considered to be most important as it was here that blood vessels converged and that the skin was assisted in performing its wider secretory functions (WA,

1327/45). Chest coverings therefore contained a double layer of fabric for greater protection and stimulation (WA, 2334/8/2). The attire of the daytime was complemented by the use of the clothing system at night, as shown in figures 6.2 and 6.3. The company advocated that the bed be free from vegetable fibres, linen sheets replaced by woollen blankets or camelhair rugs, the mattress and pillows also stuffed with wool, and even the curtains made of wool. It is of little surprise that the sleeper was advised to leave the window open at night, in order to ensure sufficient ventilation for the skin (WA, 3324/8/2).

Clothes make the man (and woman)

Breathable fabrics, sold on the basis of their relationship to the skin remain popular today for many items of clothing, such as sportswear. However, the Jaeger Company, drawing on contemporary ideas concerning the relationship between the body and its environment, attempted to market clothing by playing into wider attempts to refashion the physical and moral health of the body through material systems. Much of this was done by appealing to the relationship between the body and its clothing, and the sensation of clothes against the skin. In terms of physical health, Jaeger positioned its clothes as performing a sanitary role, encouraging the free working of the corporeal system, much like the sewers or ventilation systems in towns. Indeed, their catalogues often prefaced the words 'clothing' or 'bedding' with 'sanitary'. However, the clothing's sphere of operation was not the city but the human body. Dr Jaeger did not criticise the sanitary reformers' work in urban centres. However, he argued that such work began one stage too late. Sewerage and ventilation systems were examined only once epidemics had become rife, while urban sewage and gases grew in the body, before they reached privies and drains. The gases that these contained would not be noxious if the bodies which emitted them were in a better condition. However, poor skin ventilation and temperature control, exacerbated by inefficient clothing, caused the body to produce 'volatile essences' which then resulted in urban problems (WA, 1327/2).

Due to this, it was to the sewerage and ventilation of the body that the Jaeger Company directed its attention. This was with the aim of improving the body's self-regulating capacities, helping it to work to its full potential. *The Daily Telegraph*

reported that, while the skin had millions of pores to remove poisonous substances, they would inhale the poisonous elements back into the system through steam if they were covered (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). In view of such sentiments, Jaeger posited its clothing as being capable of acting upon the body, so as to free up blockages. Rather than focusing on fashion, style or cut, the 1888 Jaeger catalogue pointed out that the chief consideration in choosing clothing should be that ‘the skin’s function of exhalation should suffer as little impediment as possible’ (WA 1327/45).

As explained earlier, the governance of the body through environmental changes in England’s expanding urban cores was aimed at altering individuals and society, but by promoting the freedom of the body. This was to be achieved by providing the conditions for the body to realise its peak physical and mental health. Jaeger capitalised on these ideas of freedom but translated them into the marketing of clothing in two ways. As noted, the clothing was promoted as providing freedom and comfort for the skin so that it would be able to work to its full potential. Second, it was stressed that wearing the clothing was the result of the consumer’s choice. This was a key tenet of contemporary economic ideas. Yet the choice was stressed by the company as a good one. Garrett and Tomalin wrote that underclothing, before the era of their hygienic wear, was in a ‘barbarous condition’ (WA, 1327/ 11/1). To reinforce the emancipatory potential of its attire, the company described traditional clothing as ‘heavy’ and ‘burdensome’, something from which the body required liberation (WA, 1327/11/1). For this reason, hats, collars, ties, braces and lacing were criticised for being heavy, tight and constraining of the internal organs (WA, 1327/11/1). Shoes too were considered to be problematic because they did not provide enough freedom for the balls of the toe, which then hampered free circulation (WA, 1327/11/1).

All was to be made of wool because of its potential to improve the working capacities of the body. In opposition to normal shoes which limited circulation, Jaeger marketed light, all-wool shoes, complemented by separated toe socks to prevent excess perspiration in the feet (figure 6.4) (Jaeger, 1327/44). By ringing these material changes, it was believed that the body would be freed into acting in the correct way. Liberal governance enacted within urban cores was concerned with the implementation of material structures to positively affect the body. This has been described as the ‘conduct of conduct’, whereby material infrastructure is implemented

to bring about a change in behaviour, without other forms of direct intervention being necessary (Dean, 1999). The woollen clothes that Jaeger marketed altered the idea that clothes were for fashion or covering alone, but that they could affect a deeper change within the person. In September 1903, an article in *The Daily Telegraph* argued that the aims of hygienic clothes should be to improve growth, prevent decay and to make 'life more vigorous, death more remote' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). Jaeger clothes, once placed on the body, would work on the subject to bring about improved health, without requiring conscious effort. Clothes were therefore to alter the inner 'conduct' of the body and foster its normal self-regulation.

Furthermore, the catalogues stressed how this clothing would feel. A draft concerning the company's aims, written in the late 1880s, argued that the body would be 'forced into a healthy action' when wearing the hygienic clothing, because fat and water would be removed from the pores, thereby hardening the skin and allowing it to breathe 'freely' (WA, 1327/5). The 1884 catalogue noted that the system would prevent and remove congestions in the blood and provide 'increased freedom for the passage of the exhalations of the body' (WA, 1327/44). The clothes marketed by the company, in opposition to the burdensome outfits favoured by society at large were thus posited as freeing the body through the skin. The staff bulletin of 1911, produced for employees of the Jaeger Company, and vendors of its goods, wrote of the Jaeger pure wool corset: 'The resulting freedom and stimulus to the skin's beneficent action improves the digestion and complexion, while diminishing bulk by the consequent elimination of water from the tissues' (WA, 2334/5/3/1/2).

Similarly, an 1884 catalogue described the clothing as allowing circulation, without 'impediment' (WA, 1327/44). Strong appeals to the senses were made as part of this; a *Times* article of 1884 on Jaeger made it clear that no inconvenience or discomfort would be felt against the skin but, by converting to the Jaeger Clothing System, the skin would be stimulated and 'noxious principles' would be given off immediately before evaporating. Corpulence would be reduced, the flesh made firmer and physical and mental powers would be improved (*The Times*, 4 October 1884: 4). The emphasis on the relationship between the healthy citizen and its environment therefore remained, but the stress was shifted to the most intimate environment of all – clothing.

Potential consumers were targeted on the basis of their health and how their bodies would feel when wearing the garments.

The great unwashed?

For reasons already stated, the focus of this thesis is consumption among middle-class women, and it remains so here. Yet until now, this chapter has drawn strong links between sanitary clothing and discourses of public health. Public health works may immediately appear to be connected more to the urban poor, and not to be gender specific. As noted though, alterations to material systems and a reliance on seemingly objective science, as opposed to direct interference in the lives of a certain class or group of people were deliberate. By attributing illness to atmospheres, issues of poverty and working conditions were prevented from being invoked as a root cause because, in theory, all wealth groups could be affected (Hamlin, 1998). Similarly, urban restructuring, such as street widening and improved lighting, served to increase visibility and the potential for watching and being watched among all, creating a community of spectators (Sennett, 2003; Loxham, 2013). The urban bourgeoisie was made as visible (and hence, given an equal incentive to self-regulate) as were slum dwellers. However, the initial motivation for effecting many changes did indeed come largely from the condition of the poor.

Although urban restructuring was seemingly class-neutral, the middle classes often felt far removed from it and there were feelings of resentment towards public money being used in this way. In a strong climate of individualism and self-help, many of the middle classes viewed the health problems of the slums as being so connected to the lower orders that they showed opposition when it came to rate paying for improvements that would benefit anyone but themselves (Clark, 2007; Hamlin, 1988). The middle classes could also avoid venturing into London's overcrowded East End and, as Sheard (2000) argues, many people viewed public baths as solely for the poor, who were stereotyped as smelly and ignorant. Conversely, street widening and the civic pride projects of the second half of the century attracted more support from the bourgeoisie because such changes, as well as improving the city aesthetically, often removed the problematic slum dwellers to the urban periphery (Gunn, 2007). When

they were still too close for comfort, suburbanisation gathered pace among the middle classes in many towns (Cannadine, 1977).⁶⁰

The skin, however, presented a different problem. Visual and olfactory disturbances could be avoided but the skin, its potential ills and the necessity of bathing and wearing clothes were common to all classes and the medical literature of the period made this clear: sweat did not discriminate, being produced by rich and poor alike (Beamish, 1859; Wilson, 1876). In addition, the fears that accompanied this were actually more characteristic of wealthier groups; Nancy Tomes (1990) highlights the anxieties that raged among the middle classes in the final quarter of the nineteenth century over miasmas filling homes. Although there was a rise in knowledge of germ theory towards the end of the century, these new (and more accurate) ideas sat happily alongside older beliefs on smells with seemingly little contradiction.⁶¹ When commenting on the effects of the ‘Healtheries’ exhibition (which were overwhelmingly popular with the middle classes), one correspondent wrote, ‘For weeks society has been chattering of germs, downdraughts and nitrous chemicals’ (*The Standard*, 24 July 1884: 5).

Domestic literature aimed at this group was full of advice on how to keep the house and the body clean and to protect the family from these dangers (Tomes, 1990). The ‘Domestic Sanitation Movement’ arose in this atmosphere, and it pushed for medical and sanitary ideas to be applied within homes (Hennepe, 2014: 411). Crook (2006) similarly argues that, although bath houses were mainly for the poor, more expensive and luxurious facilities for wealthier groups did exist. However, more often than not, the wealthy had washing and bathing facilities at home. Soap was also a vastly advertised product, which reinforces how important the skin and cleanliness were considered to be. Hennepe writes that soap advertising was successful because it was able to strike a chord with the middle classes who were so aware of public health

⁶⁰ Although this was the trend, famously shown in the westward expansion of London, there were exceptions, especially in medium-sized towns. See Loxham (2013) and Croll (1999).

⁶¹ See Worboys (2006) for an overview of the development of germ theory and bacteriology in British medicine.

problems and concerns over the health of the skin (Hennepe, 2014). It represented a way of ridding the body and wider society of unwanted substances (Hennepe, 2014).⁶²

When it came to dress, Jaeger was keen to point out that all groups required healthful clothing. It was the uniting commonality of skin that the Jaeger Company was able to use to its advantage because, in theory, no one was excluded. In reality though, the company targeted the middle classes who were inured with fears on the skin and cleanliness, and heavily exposed to adverts that exploited this. This was reflected in the higher prices of many of its items, which it justified by referring to the quality of the products, which would make them last longer (WA, 1327/8).

A further confirmation that Jaeger was consciously targeting the middle classes is the stress placed on the importance of keeping a correct balance of fat and water in the body, and the warnings about the serious dangers to which excess fat could lead. Jaeger catalogues specified that their clothes were suited wonderfully to those who led sedentary lives and were susceptible to the accumulation of excess water and fat (WA, 1327/44). The sedentary life was another health concern of the late nineteenth century, especially in relation to the middle classes, and the clothes that Jaeger was marketing fitted into the health trends that arose as a result of this, including exercise and vegetarianism (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2010). The support belts, in particular the woollen ‘Domen belt’, depicted in figure 6.5, were intended for the overweight. Again stressing the importance of the body, Dr Jaeger wrote that the ‘hampered circulation’ of fat people makes them ‘inferior’ and puts them ‘at a drawback’ (WA, 1327/2). The overweight, he considered, should view their corpulence as a *memento mori* (WA, 1327/2). Conversely the company often included Emerson’s words ‘The first wealth is health’ on the front of its catalogues. Along with the emphasis placed on corpulence, the company again recognised that it would find custom among the middle classes when advising agents to promote the clothing system by distributing copies of Dr Jaeger’s book *Health Culture*. It was added that the book should be read,

by everyone whom education and circumstances enable to appreciate what Dr Jaeger has written. Jaeger agents are virtually purveyors of health; and those

⁶² Anne McClintock (1995) details the importance of racial imagery in soap advertising as a means of conveying the rejuvenating and civilizing properties of washing.

members of the community who have the intelligence to understand this are necessarily attracted to become customers. (WA, 1327/556)

Clearly the middle classes were those considered to possess the correct ‘education and circumstances’ to appreciate Dr Jaeger’s writings. Moreover, to bolster its credentials among the upwardly mobile and aspirational, Jaeger was keen to point out in the May catalogue of 1886 that they had one princess, three duchesses, two marchionesses and five countesses on their open accounts (WA, 1327/44).

The reasons behind the focus on the middle classes are evident. Within the middle classes though, women were specifically targeted. While the company made clothing for men, women and children (and even dogs),⁶³ it was towards women that the company particularly directed its marketing. The middle-class concern with health and family was largely centred on the women of the home. The Victorian ‘angel in the house’ really was to be that – she was to be responsible for guarding the family from the new health fears that gripped the nation (Loeb, 1994). Jaeger therefore had a ready-made target audience. *The Daily Telegraph* discussed, with some fear, the consequences of women following fashion, at the expense of choosing healthful clothing: ‘she has become a slave, and...in due time, she will bind her offspring as a bond-maiden’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). Meanwhile, the illustration in figure 6.6 shows that the company stressed the protective capacities of their children’s clothing, with words such as ‘safety’ being used. Each illustration shows a child sitting on a woman’s (most likely the mother’s) lap. She is therefore the figure charged with the task of protecting the family through the skin.

When these considerations were combined with the social characterisation of women as more tactile and concerned with textures and feelings, such as were detailed in relation to their needlework activities, it is no surprise that they were the target of so much of the literature. Female consumers were advised to feel samples of fabrics that were available in the catalogues, in order to ascertain their softness (figure 6.7), and

⁶³ In 1900 the Jaeger Company won a gold medal at Cruft’s dog show for its canine clothing! (WA, 2188/25)

the company also sold its own wools for making garments at home.⁶⁴ Indeed, much of the company literature drew heavily on multi-sensory understandings. Discourses of urban investigation that had so appalled the middle classes were exploited, so as to highlight the importance of the Jaeger mission. Men such as Chadwick and Kay-Shuttleworth had described the smell of the poor districts into which they ventured in offensive terms and so too, in the Jaeger catalogues, the exhalations given off by humans were described as ‘offensive’ and ‘poisonous’ (WA, 1327/44). Even the healthy were advised not to rest on their laurels; Jaeger’s system was to act as a preventative, an, ‘excellent defence against bodily disorders’ (WA, 1327/44). To remind them of the change that would occur when Jaeger clothing was worn, customers were assured that ventilated Jaeger clothing remains ‘sweet and wholesome’ (WA, 1327/47).

The specific targeting of women is reinforced again by the religious language used in much of the company’s literature. The ideas of liberation and freedom that frequently appeared in Jaeger’s marketing material carried with them connotations of religious transformation, which would have particularly resonated with women. In the previous chapter it was noted that nineteenth-century commerce, and draper’s establishments in particular, attracted a terrible reputation for their poor trade practices, and publications were filled with reports of greed and religious immorality. This was considered to affect women most because they, as the chief purchasers for the household and the supposed weaker sex, were being taken advantage of (Loxham, 2016). In opposition to this, Jaeger marketing stressed the spiritual rebirth that their clothing could bring about. Despite the growing encroachment of science, such concepts drew on wider evangelical currents of the time of God enacting a change in the penitent sinner.⁶⁵ Women were most associated with spirituality and they also made up the majority of practising Christians (Gill, 1994).⁶⁶ Ideologically women were also associated with godliness and purity through their situation as the regenerating figure in the home (Prochaska, 1980).

⁶⁴ Jaeger and other hygienic clothing companies are examples of firms that did sell ready-made garments. However, this does not contradict the argument that middle-class women were keenly occupied with sewing. Jaeger also supplied fabrics to be made up at home or by a dressmaker.

⁶⁵ See Houghton (1963) for an outline of the religious saturation of society and culture.

⁶⁶ Gill (1994) uses records that indicate a ratio of three women to two men within many church organisations, and in some cases this could be as high as three to one.

For this reason, these ideas featured frequently in Victorian marketing. Loeb (1994) discusses how nineteenth-century advertising frequently used religious terms such as 'salvation' in order to sell goods. The idea was that, by buying a product, an improvement would be wrought, with no effort being necessary on the part of the individual. Non-Conformist groups also drove many of the efforts of urban reformers and their work contained frequent references to the regeneration and improvement of society. It was into this climate that the Jaeger Company assimilated itself. The article from *The Times* published on 4 October 1884 described the Jaeger Clothing System as a 'gospel' which 'promises the physical regeneration of mankind, if we will but adopt a, comparatively speaking, simple reform in our system of clothing' (*The Times*, 4 October 1884: 4). The same article went on to claim that the system formed a 'doctrine' (*The Times*, 4 October 1884: 4).

This highlights the perceived health problems of this target group and the reasons why healthful clothing was specifically aimed at them. While state efforts and sanitary improvements were generally focused on the lower orders, companies such as Jaeger could play on rampant middle-class fears over the skin's health, and position their products as effecting a change. As they were freely chosen, these products could also be viewed as forming part of a culture of middle-class self-help and individualism. However, this also indicates, once again, that commerce spanned the divide between public and private, with a back-and-forth exchange between the two. Public fears over the private body could be mobilised by companies and feed back into very public discussions on health. Taking these ideas up by buying clothes then allowed that power to infiltrate the private home. The outworking of this can be understood with reference to Foucault's discussion of the production of sex in the nineteenth century. Foucault (1998) notes that, while many techniques of power operated so as to affect the lower orders to a greater degree, the working classes were able to escape the deployment of sexuality until the later nineteenth century when fears over racial health grew. Rather, the middle classes deployed techniques of power on themselves first. This was a self-preservation technique concerned with the survival of their own social body, because of the feared political implications of its degeneration.

A similar argument can be applied to the care of the body and buying of Jaeger clothing. The aim was that the middle and upper classes would undertake this first, so

as to preserve themselves. Hennepe (2014) argues that the skin and the problems that it could face meant that it formed a bridge between classes. Although there is some truth in this, it is more accurate to see Jaeger as forming a tool for class preservation. Clothing, in its visual aspects, could denote much about a class but the healthful properties of clothes and their relationship to the skin were increasingly considered to be capable of playing a role in the real conservation of that class. Again, women were located centrally in this, being the mothers of the nation (Davin, 1978).

In addition to this (not to mention the expense of Jaeger clothing), the working classes were viewed as being incapable of making these changes and choosing hygienic clothing on their own. As noted earlier in the chapter, the senses of the working classes were considered to be dulled from their environment, which meant that they would not be capable of choosing or appreciating these clothes. Despite the provision of public baths, there were frequent complaints that many of the poor did not, and could not, afford to use them (Sheard, 2000).⁶⁷ The sensory functioning of the working classes was considered to be deficient, as horror was voiced at how the poor were content to walk around in their own filth and to ‘carry the germ-laden scales of greasy exultation upon them when in five minutes each morning it could be swept away’ (WA, 1327/10). Once again, the superior sensory capabilities of the middle classes were implied.

Yet despite all of these problems, the middle-class purchase of healthful clothing was considered to be something that could, potentially, have a wider social effect. It was hoped that the lower classes might develop a bodily sensitivity that their surroundings had so far prevented and eventually come to appreciate the properties of Jaeger clothing. In September 1903, a report from a conference on health, published in *The Daily Telegraph*, posed the question of how ‘all these comforts of hygiene improvements are to be carried into the East End?’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). Where hygienic clothing was concerned, the solution was that the upper and middle classes were to ensure that they were bathed and dressed hygienically first. The wealthier were to set the example, demonstrating that extravagant and visually-pleasing clothes should not be bought at the expense of

⁶⁷ Crook (2006) does differ in his opinion here, arguing that the baths were very popular among the lower classes and he is more optimistic of their overall impact than is Sheard.

hygienic wear (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). Interestingly, it was the working classes, rather than the middle classes, who were considered most likely to put the visual properties of clothing before tactile aspects and quality. One writer named simply 'X', noted that, 'fashion has become a perfect despotism' (X, 1857: 4). Yet a key tenet of liberal governance was what has been termed, 'the calculated administration of shame' (Rose, 1999: 73). Rather than directly interfering and providing rules and regulations, erroneous habits could be eroded by making people ashamed of their own ways, through contact with the reformed. Just as dirt was considered to be contagious, so was cleanliness. The more that people were exposed to a sanitary example, the more they would detest filth on their own bodies (Crook, 2006).

Generally, the potential of these changes has been analysed in visual terms in many studies which discuss how the poor would change when they witnessed an alternative example. It makes sense to focus on vision as tactility is a very private sense which is hard to 'catch on'. However, in the marketing of clothing, tactile and olfactory elements were strongly implicated. While the poor were recognised to be the most deficient in these areas, the skin and its exhalations did affect all classes. *The Telegraph* claimed that, if all practised good bathing, inhabited well-ventilated rooms and wore hygienic clothing, the morals and physique of the whole nation would exceed all expectations, but this was something that had to work from the top down (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1903). Richard Beamish wrote, 'Shall we still continue to neglect our duty, not only to ourselves, but to the struggling poor around us, and rest content with a delusive and inefficient legislation against effects, while we pertinaciously and ignorantly ignore the cause?' (Beamish, 1859: 26).

This idea of setting a good example fitted in with middle-class ideals of charitable work and helping the poor to reform themselves, in which women also played a key role (Burman, 1979; Prochaska, 1980). This was to be sensory teaching. Haddon wrote, 'Cleanliness is one of the levers by which the masses are to be elevated, and if the means of cleaning themselves is not within reach they must remain dirty and degraded' (Haddon, 1878: 88). Richard Beamish went on to write that the 'means' for cleansing the working classes lay with the middle classes and, if they did their duty then class differences might be eroded:

Difference of habits form, I am satisfied, the great barrier to intercommunication in these countries; they are far more powerful than wealth or intellectual attainment. The clean and the unclean cannot associate, however philosophers may reason, and philanthropists declaim in favour of the unity of Christian fellowship. (Beamish, 2859: 28)

In this way, a further dialogue between public and private was intended as middle-class women would take the public health ideals into their home through commerce, and then take them out again to spread through wider society. However, with the emphasis on a top-down transfer of sensory comprehension, it is likely that this would have served to embed and reinforce class division through the use of the senses, rather than uniting the nation. As Bennett writes, when habits and actions are taught by one group to another, ‘It distinguishes those who are able to govern others because they are able to govern themselves’ (Bennett, 2013: 108).

Levels of commercial success

The marketing of Jaeger clothing (in addition to the other companies that sold hygienic clothing) and the social fears that drove this show how important the skin, its health and sensory capacities were among the middle classes. Choosing clothing was not merely a matter of how good it looked. Yet the question remains as to whether anyone bought the items and their real impact. Jaeger, and similar companies, may have aimed to change the functioning of the body through clothing but the success of a company depends on people buying the goods. Jaeger still exists today, although in a very different guise, which suggests that it did have at least some commercial success.⁶⁸ However, detailed sales figures are not available for the company, or for any of the other, similar firms, which makes this issue difficult to answer. Some observations about the success of marketing practices can reliably be made though, by returning to the subject of tactility and habit. This may seem odd, as the theoretical concern of the chapter has been on liberalism and governance. Yet understanding the

⁶⁸ Jaeger embraced fashion more from the 1920s but continued to push woolen clothing until the 1950s. Even today, the reputation for quality woolen items remains, although cotton and linen are no longer shunned!

influence of habit is crucial for filling in some of the gaps in work on governance, namely in showing where resistance to the clothing and marketing techniques came from.

Is there a contradiction in returning to habit after having discussed clothing as fitting into a system of liberal governance? Certainly Foucault distanced himself from Merleau-Ponty's work and the phenomenological subject (Crossley, 1994). Yet, a dialogue between the two is possible, and the opposition of their work is a misplaced one. Foucault, like Merleau-Ponty, stresses the need for understandings of perception and action that do not separate the subject and object (Cohen, 1984). Both understand the futility of a mind-body dualism and emphasise perception as pre-personal, with the body playing a central role (Crossley, 1994). Foucault however stresses intersubjectivity as being formed within a field of power (Crossley, 1994). Merleau-Ponty's work is much weaker when it comes to discussions of power. However, although he does not go into the matter strongly, he in no way implies that perception is formed through totally free subject-object interaction. The 'world' that is given to a subject is always a particular world and freedom is therefore situated.⁶⁹ For example, it was noted before that the formation of tactile habits among women in the home occurred because the 'world' with which they were presented was a limited one, designed to constrain their perceptual freedom. In this way, both Merleau-Ponty and Foucault share a similar concern with how life is constituted and how practices are made and re-made (Crossley, 1994). Foucault provides a detailed understanding of the limits of freedom, while Merleau-Ponty delivers a more comprehensive account of the formation of intersubjectivity, but they are far from incompatible.

The Jaeger Company argued that its clothing system had to be adopted in its entirety if it were to function fully. Pains were taken to stress the necessity of adopting the complete system and wearing all woollen clothing, not just certain garments thereof. Clearly though, this advice was not always followed. A staff bulletin, produced in 1911, stressed that workers needed to be careful that customers did not elect to wear

⁶⁹ This has been a common mis-reading of Merleau-Ponty. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, David Howes strongly criticises approaches to the senses that draw on his work (such as that of Tim Ingold) because, he claims, they do not account for the cultural formation of the senses. Sadly this represents a poor reading of Merleau-Ponty, rather than any real deficiency in his work (Pink and Howes, 2010; Ingold 2011a).

only certain items in wool, and to emphasise the importance of being clad from head to toe in it:

No one of the articles is catalogued 'for the fun of the thing', or as a hobby; each one is required by the public, and can be sold by all Jaeger agents who recognise the value of intelligent introduction to public notice of this Jaeger System, so wonderful in its completeness. We desire to impress upon our customers that we should never have made our great success if we had simply been vendors of underwear - like the firms who imitate our 'Natural Wool' stockinet materials. It is the complete system of clothing - head to foot - and of bedding, which has made 'Jaeger' as a household word...(WA, 2334/5/3/1/2)

Clearly the question of choice created a problem here. Being free to choose hygienic goods also meant being free to reject them. As well as consumers having a wider selection of fabrics from which to choose than ever before, the many companies selling hygienic clothing, as discussed earlier, often presented very contradictory discourses surrounding the best fabrics to wear. Beck's survey of fabrics acknowledged that the great selection of healthful outfits could be confusing, as so many different materials were suggested (WA, 1327/9). For example, a certain Dr Lahman completely rejected Dr Jaeger's findings and argued that wool increased the risk of chills and so should be avoided (WA, 1327/9). During the 'Healtheries', the fashion column of the *Graphic* reported on the pure wool hygienic clothing that was available but in the next paragraph the writer went on to discuss lace and muslin attire (*Graphic*, 9 August 1884: 147). In the face of this, it was the consumer who had to arbitrate.

With so much conflicting advice, all produced by so-called 'experts', how was a decision made on which health clothing to purchase, or even whether to purchase health clothing at all? Beck recommended that, in light of the many choices available, the buyer should pick what best suits one's 'predilections and pocket together' (WA, 1327/9). 'Predilections' of a tactile nature seem to have played a particularly important role. Choices were often related to the fabric of a product and the feeling of it against the skin. While the strongest and most anxiety-inducing health advice could be given, women approached this counsel with a good understanding of the sensation

of various materials and opinions on what felt pleasurable or otherwise. This knowledge was formed through habits of daily dressing, sewing and shopping. Just as women formed habit memories on the sensation of fabrics on the hands, dressing and sewing clothes provided a knowledge of the feeling of fabrics against the whole of the body, and this was clearly a consideration when choosing garments, for health or otherwise.

In the previous chapter, the hands were shown to have been important when assessing quality. Yet the skin, covering the body, constantly experiences tactile feelings. These sensations are not registered continually otherwise the body would experience a sensory overload (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Instead conscious stimulation occurs when there is a change in sensation. This was recognised by doctors of the time:

The influence of habit on sensation in general, may be well-illustrated in the case of the nerves of common sensation and of touch. Impressions sufficiently strong in the first instance to arouse the attention, soon become feeble, and in time wholly disregarded, if continued uniformly or frequently repeated...
(Todd and Bowman, 1845: 433)

Tactile understanding of clothing would have been prompted when new fabrics, such as those on offer by the Jaeger Company, came to attention. The eye, as an organ of distance would not have allowed such information to be taken in (Pallasmaa, 2007). Tactility though, as a sense of proximity, allowed consumers to judge whether the fabrics on offer were suited to them, according to these habit memories. This time, the comfort of the whole body rather than quality was the main concern.

For Jaeger, or for any other company, this could work to the brand's benefit or to its detriment, because it meant that the skin would be used as a negotiating tool.

Although Jaeger highlighted the importance of its staff providing information on the health benefits of their products, and of books and catalogues being read, the feel of fabric was crucial and this often overrode any other arguments that were advanced.

The *Jaeger Bulletin* of Spring 1912 noted:

Many who were persuaded to wear Jaeger in winter threw it off as a matter of course when the warmer weather set in, thus flying in the face of the Jaeger System. In vain did we appeal to the example of the cricketer, who wears flannels, however the sun may bear down upon him in the field... (WA, 1327/556)

Strong appeals to comfort were made by the company, highlighting the tactile properties of the clothing and bedding, and acknowledging the attention to bodily ease that was demanded by customers. The 1911 staff bulletin advised workers to stress to customers that, not only was sleeping in Jaeger Pure Wool good for the health but that it also provided ‘delightful comfort’, being cool in summer because it was pervious to heat and perspiration and warm in winter because wool conducts heat in a poor manner (WA, 2334/5/3/1/2). As noted, Jaeger catalogues also contained fabric samples, so that customers could feel them and realise for themselves that these would make comfortable garments. However, as the above quotation reveals, the most persuasive of appeals could be in vain if the wearer of the clothes simply felt better in something else. The wearer of Jaeger in winter ‘threw it off as a matter of course when the warmer weather set in...’ because the comfortable and embodied habit was not to wear woollen garments when warm, even if health advice stated otherwise (WA, 1327/556).

Customers did buy Jaeger products, and the company grew. Yet, as has been argued, the sensory subject is never a blank slate when it comes to understanding new experiences and making decisions. Bennett et al. (2013) write that habit has been overlooked too much in the humanities and social sciences. The reliance on habits has sometimes been seen as characteristic of pre-modern societies, yet this chapter again reinforces the case for their role in modernity. Moreover, habits have historically represented a fundamental difficulty for any entity wishing to direct behaviour. In this way, they create a ‘problem space’ (Bennett et al., 2013: 4). Discussing habits in this way is helpful when understanding resistance to governance. Foucault notes that governance is a question of changing the relationship between subjects and materiality. In other words, it is a matter of altering habit relations. Nineteenth-century discourses surrounding environmental change and health also stressed the need for bad habits to be broken and for subjects gradually to learn to make the right choices

(Bennett et al., 2013). Self-reflection and rationality were *leitmotifs* of liberalism and they were to be used here.

Put this way, choices concerning the ‘correct’ clothing, in the face of scientific evidence should have been easy to make. Foucault does not pay sufficient attention to the deep habits that affect a subject prior to attempts to change these. These habits form one of the principle reasons for resistance and constitute the ‘problem space’. Habit making and breaking can take a long time and the liberal emphasis on rational thought in this period was misfounded, because it failed to account for the powerful subject-object relations that operated on the level of habit memory and affected this ability, often more than did rational arguments (Bennett, 2013). Habits prove to be enduring because objective conditions have been incorporated into the self. As Dewey writes, ‘[Habit] has a hold on us because we are the habit’ (Dewey, 1922: 24).

These contradictions in nineteenth-century thought do seem to have been a recipe for failure. As was shown in the preceding chapters, there was also a strong concern with the inculcation of good habits. Good habits, demonstrating personal morality were prized among the middle classes (Collini, 1991). This emphasis on habit formation seems to contradict the ideals of rational decision making. Indeed, as Crook (2013) notes of this period, the emphasis on both liberalism and habits was often tricky to negotiate and contradictory. Liberalism stressed the rational choice of the clear-minded individual but good habits were supposed to come naturally, not requiring thought. This contradiction had a clear impact on urban improvement projects. Hamlin (1988) demonstrates that the history of public health is not one of continued progress, with decisions being made in light of scientific knowledge, but it has been full of fits and starts. In the nineteenth century, work depended on local governments, whose decisions were often hampered by both a lack of funds and a fear of the unknown. There was a preference for sticking to the old, known ways of doing things.

This paradox affected the Jaeger Company which was very aware of the impact of habit. Despite detailed sales records being unavailable to analyse, it is clear that early sales suffered because of this. The *Jaeger Bulletin* of 1912, published 28 years after the company was started, noted that sales of all of their products had now improved, with the idea of the clothing system having caught on among the nation. It noted of

the early days of the company that the ‘dead weight of tradition of wearing cotton and linen had hampered its full adoption...but now, as younger people whose parents often give it to them grow up, it is more a part of daily life’ (WA, 1327/556). This is a reminder that both liberal governance and consumerism always had choice built into them, and this was considered to be the ideal state for a society guided by free market principles. However, ‘choice’ never rested on immediate experience alone but always came up against deeper habits. New habit formation always entails de-habituation (Bennett et al., 2013). Any attempts to govern and change behaviour through material structures must reckon on the continuing impact of prior formations of intersubjectivity. For Jaeger, company growth took time, with it only being fully accepted by those who had grown up with the clothes as ‘a part of daily life’ (WA, 1327/556). As Jaeger found, the habit comfort of the body was a powerful force to confront.

Summary

This chapter has shown that, rather than taking a backseat to the eye, the health of the skin remained a strong concern among scientists in the nineteenth century. How it was understood was linked to beliefs on the free individual and the economy. However, this meant that the state found it hard to interfere when there were problems with its health because of the sanctity of the private individual. This was a gap that clothing companies could fill as they sold on the basis of personal choice. In this way, they bridged the gap between public health discourses and the private individual. Hygienic clothing companies, such as Jaeger, sold their clothes as material systems that could alter the behaviour of the skin and the body, much like urban restructuring.

While projects in cities were largely undertaken owing to the condition of the poor, the health of the skin was a strong concern among middle classes and it was on this basis that Jaeger targeted them. In addition, women were specifically targeted, because of their role in caring for the health of the family and their habit knowledge of fabrics. They were also to be responsible for spreading these ideas to the working classes. However, although rational thought was a key tenet of liberal governance, acceptance took time as governance met with the problem of habit memories, which often formed a powerful barrier to the acceptance of the clothing. Buying hygienic

clothing can be seen as a further connection between the public and private spheres. Public health stopped short of interfering in the private body but consumer companies could fill that gap. However, their ability to do this came up against the powerful force of embodied habit.



Figure 6.1- Dr Gustav Jaeger. Date unknown. WA 1327/1.

JAEGER'S
Sanitary Woollen Knitted Sleeping Garments.
SLEEPING SUITS.

In commencing to sleep with the window open, as is strongly recommended by Dr. Jaeger, these garments will be found very comfortable, as also during the cold season, or when the necessity is felt of extra protection to the head, in cases of thin hair or baldness.

1. SANITARY WOOLLEN HOOD.

only covering the head and throat.



2. SANITARY WOOLLEN NIGHT JACKET.

3. SANITARY WOOLLEN SLEEPING PANTS.

These terminate in stocking form, so as to envelop the feet; they are knitted sufficiently wide not to stretch at any part, without, however, making folds, and in no way impede the moving about out of bed.

Nos. 1, 2 & 3 constitute

A COMPLETE SLEEPING COSTUME, which will be found most serviceable in travelling, as it occupies little room, and in summer dispenses with the need of anything further than a light covering over the feet. This Sleeping Costume is especially suitable for the Tropics, and for Alpine and other Tourists, who may have to put up with scanty sleeping accommodation. Its division into parts makes it very convenient in packing.

For prices see page 62.

JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLLEN SLEEPING WRAPPER.

This envelops the entire figure, and is an excellent protection against damp beds. It is also most useful when extra warmth is required, or as a dressing or bath wrapper.



JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLLEN SLEEPING "SACK."

A complete substitute, on a journey, for a bed. 32 in. wide, 70 in. long.

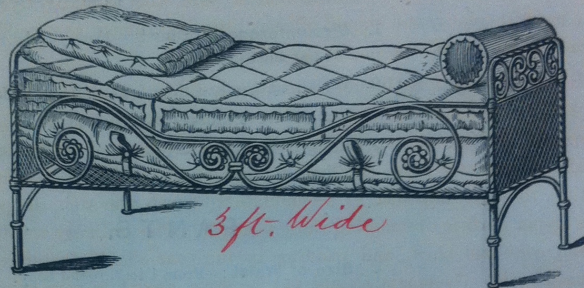
For prices see page 56.

For Great Britain and the British Possessions.

Figure 6.2 – 'Sleeping Suits'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. Autumn 1885: 19. WA 1327/44.

JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLLEN BEDDING.

The Mattresses and Pillows are stuffed with pure natural brown Wool and are covered with pure natural brown woollen Felt. The Sheets, etc., are made of very fine, durable, double Cashmere, which will not shrink in the washing.



Jaeger's Sanitary Woollen Mattress (in three sections—a most convenient arrangement).

- " " " substitute for Spring Mattress. *£3-5 Camd. H. £5.*
- " " " Pillow. *Wool 13/6 Large Camelotte 18/6 small 9/6*
- " " " Bolster.
- " " " Foot Warmer. *13/6*
- " " " Cashmere Sheets. *18/6 do with lace £1-15*
- " " " Pillow Case. *5/6*
- " " " Bolster "
- " " " Foot Warmer Case. *6/6*
- " " " Sleeping "Sack." *1st Qual. £3-4-6 2nd Qual. 2-6*
- " " " Sleeping Wrapper. Coloured. } *£1-12*
- " " " " White. }
- " " " Bedroom Slippers. *Night Socks 5/ pr.*
- " " " " Red. *Quilt £1-14-6 pr.*

* A special Soap is manufactured for washing these materials, and instructions are furnished for its use.

JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLLEN SLEEPING "SACK."

A complete substitute, on a journey, for a bed. No. 1, 39 in. wide, 6 ft. long. No. 2, 31 in. wide, 6 ft. long.

JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLLEN SLEEPING WRAPPER.

This envelops the entire figure, and is an excellent protection against damp beds. It is also most useful when extra warmth is required, or as a dressing or bath wrapper.

(See article, "THE SANITARY WOOLLEN BED," Selections from Dr. G. Jaeger's Essays.

Sole Concessionaries

Figure 6.3- 'Sanitary Woollen Bedding'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. Spring/Summer 1844: 22. WA 1327/44.

JAEGER'S SANITARY BOOTS AND SHOES.

Shoe (cloth/leather) 19/6 per. Ladies (cloth/leather) Shoes 14/3
do (cloth) 16/6 per. do (cloth) 12/



Men's Lace Shoe with and without Leather Equipment.



Ladies' Lace Shoe with Leather Equipment.

The Sanitary Woollen Boots and Shoes are made from pure Woollen materials of various colours, with and without Leather protection. Sanitarily speaking, the latter are most to be recommended, and can be used not only in dry weather, but also, where the soil is not heavy, in wet weather. These Boots and Shoes, devised by Dr. Gustav Jaeger, either completely cure, or greatly improve, complaints of excessive perspiration of the feet, constant coldness, Gout, &c. Weak Feet are hardened by the unimpeded evaporation set up; the joints are strengthened; corns and other troubles from undue pressure are prevented. Jaeger's Sanitary Boots and Shoes are free from the danger to health involved when the ordinary boot becomes wet, the foot remaining dry and warm even when its covering is wetted through (although the moveable inner soles may be changed with advantage). Tourists are particularly recommended to use Jaeger's Sanitary Boots and Shoes, as on lengthy walking excursions the feet remain longer fresh and capable of exertion.

Care should be exercised in cleaning the Sanitary Boots and Shoes. The dirt must be removed with a clean brush, and ordinary blacking can be applied to the margins of the soles, and to the heels. But the outer leather equipment should be treated *exclusively* with a specially prepared blacking or mineral grease, in order to preserve its porosity. This prepared blacking should be lightly rubbed in with a small sponge every 3 or 4 days, and after the leather has been allowed about 10 minutes to dry, a soft brush should be used to it.

(See article "THE SANITARY WOOLLEN BOOT," Selections from Dr. G. Jaeger's Essays.)

Sole Concessionaries

JAEGER'S SANITARY BOOTS & SHOES—continued.



Men's Cloth Boot with Leather Equipment.



Do. without Leather Equipment.



Ladies' Button Boot.



Men's Cloth Boot with and without Leather Equipment, or wholly of Sanitary Leather.



Ladies' Cloth Boot with Leather Equipment, or wholly of Sanitary Leather.

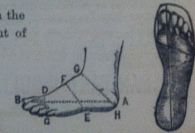


Ladies' Cloth Boot without Leather Equipment.

Ladies (cloth/leather) Boots 14/3
do (cloth) 11/3

DIRECTIONS FOR MEASUREMENTS OF BOOTS AND SHOES.

- A B—Length of Foot measured, from the centre of the heel to the point of the great toe.
- C D—Width over the ball of foot.
- E F—Height over instep.
- G H—From heel to bend of foot.



For Great Britain and the British Possessions.

Figure 6.4 – 'Jaeger's Sanitary Boots and Shoes'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. Spring/Summer 1884: 40-41. WA 1327/44.

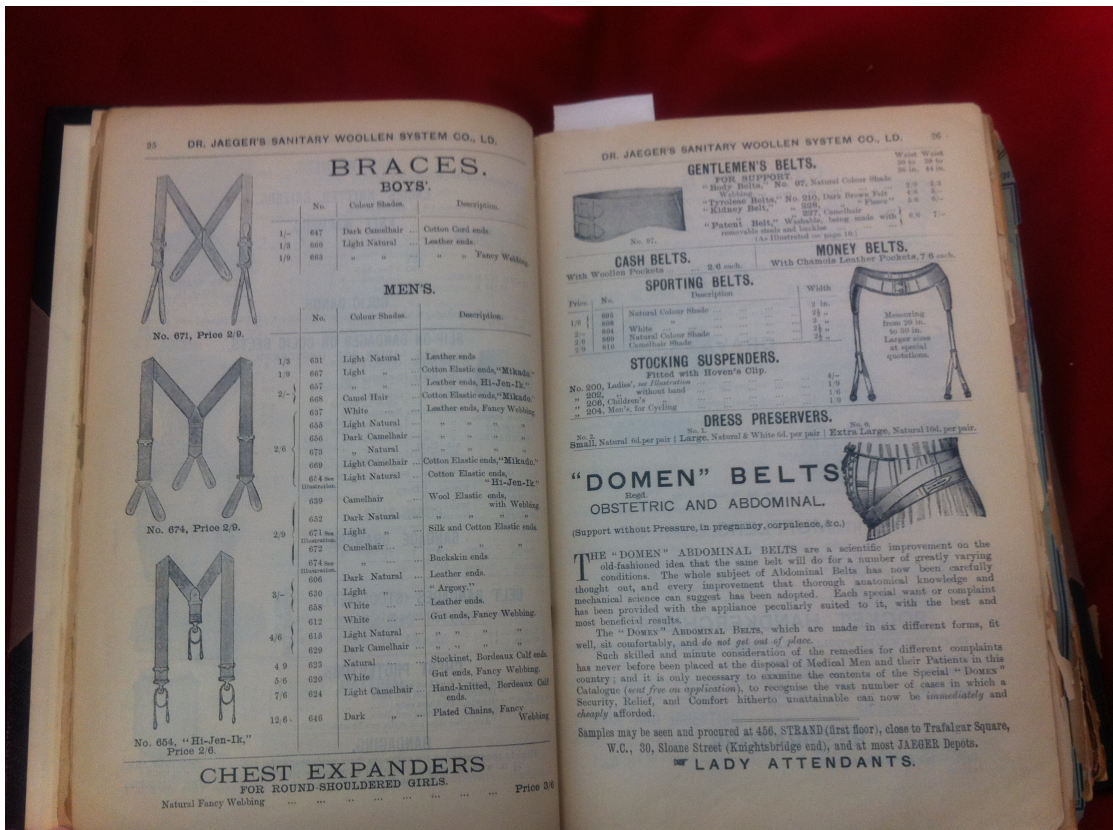



Figure 6.5 – 'Domen Belts'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. 1897: 25-26. WA 1327/46.

BABIES' CLOTHING.

 Pure Porous Wool, free from Dye.

BABIES should be in ALL WOOL from the hour of their birth. Vegetable fibre (Linen and Cotton) is unwholesome at every age, and especially so for young infants.

Vegetable fibre materials when warmed or wetted are apt to emit offensive odours, poisoning the air which the Baby breathes.

Underwear, Outerwear, Diapers, Bedding—all should be made of pure porous animal Wool, free from dye. Woollen Diapers work admirably. They do not chill the Baby when wet or insufficiently aired, and remain comparatively free from offensive odour.

In the JAEGER CLOTHING the Baby's skin is kept active, at an equable temperature, *neither too hot nor too cold*; whereas if a flannel vest is worn under linen or cotton, the skin is stimulated to exhale, but the exhalation cannot properly escape, and both the health and the comfort of the child are prejudiced.

By the simple change from Vegetable fibre Clothing and Bedding to ALL WOOL, an immense amount of illness among infants may be prevented, and, above all, they are *protected from chill*.

The Illustrations Fig. 1 to 5 show the new and registered constructions of the JAEGER BABY-CLOTHING, which have been designed on the latest and most approved hygienic principles, and in accordance with the suggestions of Mrs. Ada S. Ballin, Editress of *Baby*.



Binder, Fig. 1.



Shirt, Fig. 2.

All *unnecessary weight* has been avoided, the garments being reduced to a reasonable length, and permitting full freedom of movement. *Safety from chill*, without stifling and overheating, is a principal object aimed at, and the JAEGER Baby-garments are made with high necks and long sleeves, low necks and short sleeves being most prejudicial to infant health. Further, the blanket and night-gown are made to button at lower end, so that the Baby can kick, and throw its legs about without the possibility of exposure to chill. Buttons have been avoided as much as possible, to prevent discomfort from that cause, and everything has been done to provide the healthiest conceivable Baby outfit, both in point of materials and of construction.

(Further illustrations and details on next page.)

Figure 6.6 – 'Babies' Clothing'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. 1896: 16. WA 1327/46.

JAEGER'S SANITARY UNDYED STOCKINETTE (TRICOT) STUFFS

EXTREMELY SOFT, ELASTIC, AND DURABLE.

BENGER'S MAKE,

Guaranteed of pure Sheep's Wool.

All samples represent undyed natural Colours.

<i>For Undervests and Pants.</i>		<i>For Sanitary Shirts, Combinations, Undervests, &c.</i>	
Quality A	Quality B	Quality K	Quality KK
	Winter quality.	Summer quality.	Extra Thick Winter quality.



Jaeger's Sanitary undyed natural-coloured Knitting Wool.

Light natural colour, superfine quality.	Dark natural colour, extra fine quality.
------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------



Both qualities are supplied in light natural and dark natural (undyed) colours.

For explanation of the Sanitary advantages of this natural-coloured Knitting Wool, see page 16.

PRICES: First quality 7s. 0d. per lb.
Second " 5s. 6d. " "

JAEGER'S SANITARY
W. BENGER SONS,

UNDYED NATURAL KNITTING WOOL.
SOLE MANUFACTURERS.

Made up in parcels of $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.; each parcel has the above label attached as a guarantee of its genuineness.

For Great Britain and the British Possessions.

Figure 6.7 – 'Stockinette "Tricot" Stuffs'. Jaeger Clothing Catalogue. Spring/Summer 1844: 17. WA 1327/44.

Chapter 7 - The department store – a home away from home?

Introduction

This thesis began in the middle-class home, where women developed tactile skills through daily needlework activities. These skills became embodied and, when transferred to retail environments, they were used to judge quality in materials. In turn, companies could profit from concerns regarding the skin and its health in order to sell clothing, as was discussed in the previous chapter. In terms of tactility as a capacity of the body, attention was directed to the hands first and then to the wider body. In this chapter, the body continues to be the focus but the analysis is shifted to its place in the department store.

Shopping environments have been a strong focus in works on nineteenth-century consumerism, yet they have been notably absent from this thesis until now. This has been a deliberate omission. First, there has been a desire to contend that tactility, as a skill developed within the home, was able to span multiple environments; the use of touch to assess fabrics could be as much a feature of a trip to the small draper's shop as it could of a larger department store. Therefore, when speaking of developments within retailing and their effects, female bodily habits need to be accounted for because consumerism did not operate in a vacuum. Its impact depended upon the interaction of consumers. Second, as discussed at length in the literature review, the novelty and visual innovations of the department store have been overstated. Sidelining the department store for a time has allowed the material aspects of buying and selling to be analysed, in particular, fabric and clothing. Far from department stores creating a new culture of display that changed shopping irreversibly, both smaller shops and non-visual forms of activity remained central to middle-class, female shopping experiences. The priority for many middle-class women was buying goods, not wandering around in a dreamworld. These issues have now been discussed at some length.

In spite of this, the department store still merits our attention. Benson and Ugolini (2003) note that the focus on London department stores and the spectacle was, for a

long time, at the expense of understandings of the majority of other retailers and experiences. This very ordinariness has driven more, very welcome work on earlier, smaller and local developments.⁷⁰ Yet the existence of studies which both contend and contest its importance act as a reminder that, regardless of the actual impact, there was a perception of the department store as revolutionary among contemporaries. As Crossick and Jaumain (1999) highlight, despite the real impact of the department store being relatively low, it received a lot of attention among contemporaries as it functioned as a target of social fears through its novelty, size, and associations with women.

Owing to this attention, yet with the continued caveat that its real impact on commerce has been exaggerated, this chapter will examine the department store to reassess why it merited so much attention in the popular imagination and how women interacted with it. However, it will be analysed here in a different light so as to contribute to the arguments running through this work as a whole. First is the need to understand that vision has not been the *de facto* sense for experiencing modernity, especially for women. Second, studying consumerism through tactility and the body can show the constant interplay between the public and private spheres. This chapter will therefore reinforce the claim that consumer activity did not represent a completely alternative world for women. Whether arguing for its significance, or refuting it, studies of the department store have generally remained ocularcentric (Rappaport, 2000; Bowlby, 2010; Lysack, 2008). Asking how the department store was perceived by the tactile sense can provide richer understandings of the shopping process itself and of wider female experiences of the social world.

There is a further rationale for turning to the department store that will run throughout the chapter. The skin and bodily tactility are central in orientating the relationship with space in any period. Along with tactility as a whole, this relationship has been neglected in studies on consumer history where understandings of the body's relationship with shopping space have scarcely been probed.⁷¹ Yet a continued reading of Merleau-Ponty's work makes it clear that the body forms the primary

⁷⁰ See the collection of essays in Benson and Ugolini (eds) (2003).

⁷¹ There has been a growth in this area of study in a contemporary context. See Rose et al. (2010) and also works on affect and non-representational theory, such as Thrift (2004).

means by which space is understood. The body provides meaning for the subject in the world, not being 'in' space but 'of' it (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 169-171). Middle-class female bodies, from starting life within the home, to moving to the shops, were in constant contact with their environment and other bodies. For example, women experienced public transport and movement through crowded streets and, once inside shops, multiple experiences of space were possible. Focusing on the department store, in combination with theories of perception will therefore also pave the way for further historical studies on bodies and consumer space.

In view of these considerations, this chapter will adopt the following structure. Just as buying fabrics cannot be comprehended without understanding embodied habits formed in the home, it will be argued here that bodily experiences of the department store cannot be understood before analysing the space of the middle-class home. This is because the structuring of middle-class female tactile habits extended to perceptions of space. As Seamon and Mugerauer write, 'A central aspect of phenomenology is the identification and description of wholes – i.e. the complexes of pattern and meaning which outline the underlying, continuing order of things, processes and experiences' (Seamon and Mugerauer, 2000: 9). An appreciation of the department store must account for the influence of the 'whole' of spatial experience. The home, not the department store, was the core dwelling place for women.

Gaston Bachelard, who has written extensively on phenomenological experiences of space, notes, 'For the house is the corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word' (Bachelard, 1994: 4). Embracing a gendered approach, Judy Giles (2004) makes it clear that a discussion of home must remain central when thinking about female experiences in this period because domesticity was at the centre of their lives. Moreover, rather than diminishing in importance with modernity, the home became more central for middle-class women as suburbanisation and the separation of work and home increased. As shown in the earlier chapters, the home was where middle-class girls grew up and were intended to spend their adult years. While women were ostensibly to be leisured creatures there, they were heavily involved with the production of its interiors. Through an analysis of advice guides and the female press, it will be shown that this constant labour led to the fomentation of understandings of space. It will be argued that a high value was placed

on comfort and that women were encouraged to understand this and to create it through regular interactions with domestic interiors. This helped the body to understand and to learn to perceive space in a particular way.

The almost obsessive concern with creating a space of comfort in the home was motivated by the perception of the harsh sensory experiences of the public sphere. Examples of these sensory ‘nuisances’ were outlined in the preceding chapter but they will be discussed more fully and specifically in relation to women in the next section. Rather than women being anxious to rush out into cities, urban centres aroused fears, in particular of bodily discomfort. Efforts to create a place of respite in the home were the response to this. Yet such work was not limited to the home. There were increasing attempts to refashion parts of the public sphere so as to provide little ‘enclaves’ of home. The department store is a prime example of how this was done and this forms the next area of consideration. Using the archives of Whiteley’s and Liberty’s department stores as examples, it will be demonstrated that these shops were organised so as to create bodily experiences that would resonate with those of the middle-class home, thus easing the female body into the city. Although physically separate, the department store facilitated the sensory performance of home in the city by encouraging the replication of domestic bodily habits. In this sense, the middle-class domestic environment was able to penetrate the public sphere, not only through the creation of feminine spaces, but also through the encouragement of middle-class sensory experiences that these allowed.

The next section will draw out the implications of this for the place of women in the city. A vast literature exists on fears surrounding women in late-Victorian society, many of which centred on the city and the sight of women in public. By shifting the focus to the body in the department store, it will be argued that anxieties also addressed issues of dwelling and the sensory performance of gender through the body in the city. In the nineteenth century it was recognised that subjectivity was created through the body’s situation in space. In this sense, creating a division between public and private represented a desire to restrict how and what the senses could perceive in their environment. The growth of feminised landscapes, especially the department store, increasingly allowed middle-class females to be at home in the city because their bodies were able to sense the city in the comfortable way to which they were

habituated. It was this which caused alarm. What this meant for the place of women in society is complicated. While encouraging women to leave the home, the comfort of the department store and the bodily performance that it encouraged reinforced the female domestic identity to which a woman would return after shopping. Second, in entering the department store, the middle-class woman became a leisured consumer rather than a producer of space. This has implications for the ways in which we conceive of freedom and the actions that both the public and private spheres promoted.

The final part of the chapter ties these strands together with a more theoretical discussion of what these developments meant for the place of women more generally. Although class has not been a main category of analysis throughout the work, some implications of focusing on the middle classes do need to be attended to. If middle-class women made any steps towards public visibility and economic autonomy, what happened to the working classes? While working-class women were present in the city, department stores were not a place for them to feel at home as customers because they lacked the prior sensory experiences and embodied habit memories that would have allowed them to experience this new form of urban space in a comfortable and familiar manner. Therefore, the women who performed domestic space in the city were performing both home and a particular classed identity.

In addition, the leisured use of the department store by middle-class females hinged upon the labour of the working classes. The bodily comfort experienced by the middle-class woman depended on the tactile labour of a new army of largely female workers who were instrumental in serving customers and who entered these spaces as waged workers. Their labour was hidden beneath layers of material comfort. This offers an alternative way of understanding commodity fetishism through tactility and adds a new dimension to questions of ethics that have increasingly been raised in connection to Merleau-Ponty's work. For discussions of the place of women, in social and economic terms, we need to consider what 'advancement' is, and the classed basis on which it occurred.

Home Sweet Home

Just as needlework formed one of the main occupations for middle-class women in the nineteenth century, rather than shopping, so it was the home and not the department store on which quotidian life centred. The home has received a growing amount of attention since the 1970s. However, the main focus has been on symbolic meanings of décor, as can be seen through a brief survey of literature on the topic. This is not considered to have been a new trend in the nineteenth century; Mario Praz's classic work on the history of interior decoration details how the house has always been a 'projection of the ego' with furnishing functioning as a form of self worship (Praz, 1964: 21). He argues that decoration is chosen to mirror the soul, and that this in turn reinforces inner character (Praz, 1964). Likewise, the papers contained within Cieraad's (1999) more recent edited collection on the anthropology of domestic space analyse how expressions of the self have been visually depicted in homes over a long time period.

Although Praz traces its longer genesis, there is a widespread consensus that the visual importance of the interior grew during the 1800s. Suggesting a reason for this, Charles Rice (2004) claims that the idea of the interior *as an image* became important because of changing forms of media, such as painting and photography. These 'opened up' interiors, helping their visual qualities to be transmitted throughout society (Rice, 2004: 284). Charlotte Gere (1989) concurs, adding that Victorian interior design became a question of creating a feast for the eyes and this was aided by the world being unveiled through European travel, the growth of the Empire and increasing spectacles at home, such as the Great Exhibition.

Profiting from such developments, it has been claimed that the Victorians increasingly sought to beautify their homes. By doing this they could send out specific messages to visitors. Thad Logan (2001) analyses the qualities that the middle classes wished to transmit through the parlour. He notes that this room was a place to display female accomplishments and it was therefore important to embellish it. Drawing on the work of Thorstein Veblen, he contends that there was a strong incentive to place the right items in the home to communicate desired social identities, be these connected to wealth, religion, or fashion. The parlour functioned as a small theatre, a place where,

not only objects, but also characters were displayed (Logan, 2001). Katherine Grier's (1988) influential work on parlours and middle-class identity echoes this.⁷² She discusses how the parlour was furnished to indicate gentility and to project a desired image of the self. She states that vision was the most important sense in the nineteenth century and this was reflected in the qualities that were attached to pieces of furniture, because they had to express meanings on immediate sight (Grier, 1988). Deborah Cohen (2006) expands this argument to claim that the whole home provided a space to display identity and an opportunity to evince personal morality and religious devotion, with commitment to art and an abundance of goods confirming this.

While the visual impact of the home mattered, such discussions ignore the significance of bodily dwelling and the relationship between the tactile body and domestic space. Instead these accounts, once again, constitute inhabitants as little more than roving eyes. Yet in an age when rapid industrialisation multiplied the materials and objects available for furnishing the home,⁷³ considerations of how the body interacted with its space and the effect of this on sensory habits of comprehension matter. The *leitmotif* for the middle-class Victorian home was comfort and this was the environment in which women came to learn what comfortable space was, and how to create and interact with it.⁷⁴

The task of producing and maintaining domestic space fell largely to women, who were considered to be naturally suited to this job. This is also why they were frequently involved in efforts to improve the dwellings of the urban poor (Meller, 2007).⁷⁵ Just as middle-class women were active in sewing for the household, most had a strong practical involvement with the ordering and care of the house and its interiors. The ideal of servants doing all the work was rarely realised because aforementioned precarious finances necessitated the work of wives and daughters (Branca, 1979). Women interacted with the home and its interiors on a day-to-day basis through work and relaxation. As Rybczynski (1988) argues, homeliness and comfort arise not just from the objects within the home but through inhabitation and

⁷² Grier's work focuses on America but many of her arguments have a transnational application.

⁷³ For example, Briggs (1988) and Flanders (2009).

⁷⁴ Crowley (2010) provides an excellent overview of the cultural evolution of meanings of comfort.

⁷⁵ See Anderson and Darling (2007) on the work of the Hill sisters in providing urban housing to the poor and, in particular, their attention to interior decoration to improve comfort and morality through a sense of home.

the interactions of those inside. The nineteenth-century home was not just a retreat for women but it was a place of work: ‘The feminine idea of the home was dynamic; it had to do with ease, but also with work’ (Rybczynski, 1988: 161). Logan concurs, writing of women, ‘They were, in some sense, its inmates, but they were also its producers, its curators, and its ornaments’ (Logan, 2001: 26).

Middle-class magazines were flooded with guidance on household management, and a vast array of advice books was produced to aid women. For example, one such book by Flora Klickmann (1912), *The Mistress of the Little House*, was specifically aimed at middle-class women who lacked sufficient domestic help, or whose servants were not up to scratch. Although the labour of women had to be invisible, it was often constant and through this they both produced and consumed ideals of comfort. Books advised on how to foster a particular relationship between bodies and space, from large considerations to the minutiae of the interior. A primary concern was choosing the location of a house itself. The home was to be the place where sensory nuisances would be banished. Mrs Haweis (1889) devoted very little space to advising on the visual design of a house but insisted instead upon the importance of aspect and soil, good drainage so as to remove smells and distance from noise. Hot pipes were also praised for providing the ultimate in ‘real comfort’ (Haweis, 1889: 27). Edward Gregory (1913), writing on housekeeping, similarly remarked that care should be taken when choosing where to live, the most salient points being living on the sunny side of the road and good drainage.

Excerpts such as these may seem to be of little importance when discussing how women formed understandings of space. However, it is the attention paid to the seemingly most mundane of features, their place in routine interactions and their effect on the body that reveal how important these issues were understood as being. On the interior of the house, Constance Stallard wrote,

For a house to be restful everything in it must be accomplished with the least possible effort which efficiency will allow. Doors must open and shut well, windows must not stick and must be easy of access, blinds must pull up and down smoothly and curtains draw freely, fire-irons must not rattle, lights must be sufficient and well-situated, nothing may be awkward to handle or difficult

to clean, no furniture or ornament may be so placed that extra care is required to avoid them in passing. Carpets should be soft or so padded underneath that no clatter of footsteps be heard upon the boards; tiled halls must be at once covered so that they may be crossed without noise. (Stallard, 1913: 15)

This excerpt shows that the overriding aim was for the house to provide a space in which an immediate and total feeling of ease would be sensed. Only by paying attention to the smallest of details could this be achieved. For example, Jennings (1902) wrote of the need for good ventilation in the dining room in order to remove smells of food, and for thick, soft carpets to muffle the sound of servants' footsteps. Dorothy Peel advised that women should be careful to ensure proper ventilation: 'A hot stuffy house is unhealthy; a cold, draughty house, comfortless' (Peel, 1898: 24). A good, middle-class house primarily had to provide an embodied sense of well-being, in total opposition to the unwanted sensory intrusions of the public sphere.

Why these considerations were capable of affecting understandings of space can be explained by returning to phenomenological theory. Tim Putnam writes, 'Dwelling is at the core of how people situate themselves in the world' (Putnam, 1999: 144). The home constitutes a key dwelling space in which life is ordered and relationships are comprehended. Formative experiences of the home affect understandings of other spaces and relationships (Putnam, 1999). Yet the home possesses more than the psychological importance to which Putnam alludes. Gaston Bachelard (1994), in his classic work, *The Poetics of Space*, discusses the significance of phenomenological, physical encounters between the body and material space within the home, noting that the reverberations of these continue to make themselves felt in the future.

When analysed in this way, it becomes clear that the impact of the home on a woman's understanding of space could be powerful because no aspect of its furnishing and maintenance was ignored in advice guides. Furthermore, it was a woman's role in creating the comfortable home that was constantly emphasised. Women were exhorted to consider the effect that all objects and furnishings could exert upon the body. The Garrett sisters wrote of their annoyance at furniture which was designed with, 'a strict disregard of comfort and convenience' (Garrett and Garrett, 1877: 29). In this vein, Mrs Haweis (1881) devoted a great deal of space to

discussing the comfort of chairs, including the importance of calculating the angle of chair backs and arm rests. She praised the virtues of a comfortable chair: ‘A really comfortable sofa or chair often puts flight to a bad headache, a bad backache, or a bad humour’ (Haweis, 1881: 177). The reason that Mrs Haweis devoted such attention to the details of furniture was because of ‘their intimate propinquity to ourselves...Furniture is a kind of dress, dress is a kind of furniture...which both minister to our comfort and culture, and they ought to be considered together’ (Haweis, 1881: 16-17). This comment echoes the discussion in the previous chapters concerning dress and comfort. Just as it was recognised that women had a tactile fluency with fabrics, here they were exhorted to gain an understanding of comfortable furniture through frequent interactions with it. In doing this, they would develop habit memories of its relationship to the body. An intense concern with creating the ideal environment would produce an innate sense of how the comfortable home should feel.

Those who have argued for the visual qualities of the home have stressed that these mattered because of visitors. While Victorian homes were open to guests, visits were a highly regulated activity.⁷⁶ Only certain rooms were used for this purpose and visits were not a round-the-clock occurrence. This makes sense when it is remembered that the home was guarded as a private space, away from the public gaze (Sanders and Williams, 1988). The appearance of these public rooms mattered but daily interactions among family members throughout the whole house were constant. As the creators of the home, women had to learn which objects would provide the most comfort for the body. This is shown in another comment made by Mrs Haweis in relation to choosing something as simple as a table: ‘In England, tables of metal or alabaster, porphyry and other stones take too low a temperature to be really pleasant to the touch, and a table, to meet its real use, must not discourage touch’ (Haweis, 1881: 289). A similar attitude comes through in her discussion of cutlery. She wrote, ‘Silver-handled knives and forks...are very cold to the touch, hardly pleasant in winter, though they admit of delicate ornaments which please the eye’ (Haweis, 1881: 317). Likewise for door handles, which she argued should be, ‘meet for the grasp of a lady’s hand’ (Haweis, 1881: 329). Martin Dillon (1997) notes that, when space and objects are

⁷⁶ Davidoff (1973) writes on the rigid structure of society for the middle and upper classes and the rituals of visitation. This involved a complex round of calling and leaving cards, and etiquette regarding the days and times for different calls, length of visits and the rooms to be used.

comprehended, bodily movement is required. For movements to become habituated requires repetition in order to form the subject's 'world horizon', which is the space that the subject inhabits and by which future experiences will be evaluated (Dillon, 1997: 137). The sort of artefacts which Haweis discusses here are those with which members of the household, especially women, would move and interact on a daily basis, and which would become part of their world horizon.

How reliable are these guides for revealing the actual practices of women? If no one paid any attention to counsel concerning the effect of furniture on the body, then arguments that stress their impact on the formation of embodied knowledge fall down. Certainly, it is difficult to know whether the advice was followed. However, studies that emphasise the visual qualities of rooms using photographs suffer from a similar problem of not showing the millions of rooms that were not photographed. Jane Hamlett's (2010) attempt to understand the use of space and objects similarly draws upon household manuals, and she notes that we can never really know if the advice in these was obeyed. Yet we can see how the ideal was powerfully imagined. In addition, the sheer number of books devoted to this subject, and the space given over to the topic in magazines are further indicators that this was a strong concern among women. Not only that but, even if pragmatism dictated that not all advice could be followed, an immersion in the domestic environment, in addition to a constant bombardment of instruction, would likely have made women attuned to issues of dwelling. This would have had an effect on the body's understanding of space. How this process works is summed up clearly by Richard Lang, who explains inhabiting as:

a situation of active, essential acquisition. Incorporation is the initiative of the active body, embracing and assimilating a certain sphere of foreign reality to its own body. In this sense, assimilation is essentially the move from the strange to the familiar...The home is the intimate hollow we have carved out of the anonymous, the alien. Everything has been transmuted in the home; things have truly become annexed to our body, and incorporated. (Lang, 2000: 202)

In this instance, a woman's bodily attention was clearly directed towards issues of comfort and space through the literature aimed at her, and by virtue of being based in

the home. This inhabiting helped her body to ‘acquire’ space and an intersubjective sensory union to be formed.

*Ubi bene, ibi patria*⁷⁷

Influenced by Merleau-Ponty, Martin Dillon writes, ‘The main thrust of the thesis of the primacy of perception is that the perceptual world is the foundation of all knowledge and action, truth and value, science and culture. It is the ultimate source and the final referent of human cognition’ (Dillon, 1997: 52). The first and main perceptual space for middle-class women was the home and it has been shown that a premium was placed upon creating and enjoying spatial experiences of comfort there. Reflexivity concerning values, i.e. that comfort is good, rests upon the primacy of experience subsequently being given a cultural meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Values and emotions are not contained within objects or spaces but they follow an initial meeting of subject and object, with which they are then associated (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The experiences in the home were given positive qualities and encouraged, which meant that valued habit memories of the home would affect how new spatial encounters were assessed, because habit can function as a filter through which new sensory experiences pass for evaluation (Dewey, 1922).

The wide-ranging literature on the negative attitudes and characterisations of the public sphere as dangerous confirm this (Betts, 1971; Nead, 2000; Walkowitz, 1992, 1998). For men, venturing forth into cities each day was deemed to be unpleasant, but the home provided the haven in which they were recharged in order to do battle with the world (Tosh, 1996). However, women were viewed as completely unsuited to life outside the home. Perrot (1990a) notes that middle-class women were increasingly relegated to the private sphere because they were considered to need protection, owing to their fragility. Much of the reasoning behind the unsuitability of the public sphere was linked to the negative sensory experiences that it offered. These were discussed in the previous chapter in relation to slums, poor sanitation, drainage and miasmas. While the works covering these issues are excellent, it is rarely acknowledged that negative attitudes to public sensory experiences found their origin in a comparison

⁷⁷ ‘Where you feel good, that is your home’.

with embodied experiences of the home. Emily Cuming (2013) discusses literary descriptions of slum houses, noting that these played an othering function, so that the idea of a true, middle-class dwelling was emphasised. Houses of the poor were described as dirty and smelly, indicating their remoteness from those of the middle classes.

These characterisations of towns and cities, especially among women, resulted from pre-personal comparisons with the home. Lang comments that the incorporation of the home through embodied habits of spatial perception is mostly felt by the subject when moving to a new place, in which all feels alien and where active work is required to make this familiar and to incorporate it to the self (Lang, 2000). The contemporary philosopher Pezeu-Massabuau (2012) has written at some length on the theme of discomfort, but he mistakes the ease with which subjects can endure and even embrace discomfort, because this is to ignore the past self which every subject brings with them to present experience. Hence why Mrs Humphrey Ward, in her memoirs, noted of a trip to Italy, 'how dreary on the great stone staircase, and in the bare, comfortless rooms!' (Ward, 1918: 193). Reactions to space were immediate and embodied. This was the case for the middle-class women who increasingly ventured into the English city and for whom feelings of discomfort arose as a result of the clash of the new with the embodied habits of the old.

Instead of either acknowledging these negative understandings or the positive sentiments associated with the home, many academics have argued that women were stifled and bored at home and that they relished any opportunities to leave. Lynda Nead (2000) claims that shops and philanthropic work were welcomed because they gave women the justification to escape from the house. Elizabeth Wilson likewise asserts that, although shopping involved buying goods for the home, department stores gave women a reason to go out and look around, to socialise and to stroll: 'A woman too, could become a flaneur' (Wilson, 1992: 101). Similarly, Elaine Abelson (1992) argues that women were jaded with domestic work and welcomed any chances to leave the house. Mary Douglas sums this position up: 'The more we reflect on the tyranny of the home, the less surprising it is that the young wish to be free' (Douglas, 1991: 287).

As noted though, it takes constant, active work to render new environments familiar and to change the values associated with them, through incorporating these to the self. Some women were undoubtedly unhappy at home. However, if this had been so widespread and all women had been eager to rush out then it is unlikely that so many attempts would have been made to bring the home into the city, so that the clash with the embodied self would be lessened.⁷⁸ Yet the comfort offered by the home was increasingly mirrored in outside environments that were created in order to shield the body from unwanted sensory intrusions and to render difficult adjustments unnecessary. Such homely developments were particularly visible in transportation. Nead (2000) claims that the bodily discomfort of travel could only be rendered more comprehensible through maps and lighting which provided visual order. However, a range of changes was intended to impact the body. For example, Gloag (1961) cites improvements to road surfaces for smoother travel and enhancements to seating in omnibuses. Trains incorporated similar changes, albeit more gradually, with dining cars, smoking carriages, libraries and bathrooms becoming the norm (Gloag, 1961).⁷⁹ Third-class carriages lagged behind, with comforts benefitting the middle classes most because they were both used to and expected greater levels of comfort (Gloag, 1961).

Developments spread throughout a range of public spaces. While the suburban home was intended to provide protection from the city through geographical, physical separation (Cannadine, 1977), once in the city similar small refuges were afforded. These were not permanent dwelling places, but they offered an analogous function to the home, comforting and sheltering the body. Michelle Perrot elaborates on why and how this was the case in both France and England: ‘The dominant classes, fearful of the ignorance and filth of the masses, made sure that safe havens would exist in public places: theatre lodges were extensions of the private salon; ships and bathhouses had private cabins; first-class compartments avoided indiscriminate mingling of people from different classes and preserved distinctions’ (Perrot, 1990b: 341). A further example of the creation of the private in the midst of the public can be seen in the theatre, as shown in Hugh Maguire’s (2000) work. He argues that parallels increasingly existed between the theatre and the middle-class home. Theatres had

⁷⁸ There were nascent trends in this direction in the 1700s. Stobart and Hann (2004) reference small shops that contained fires, soft chairs and drinks for customers. Such examples reinforce Crowley’s (2010) claim that comfort was ‘invented’ in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁹ These trends began in America. See Schivelbusch (1986).

earlier been considered to be disreputable, associated with public sexuality. However, this reputation evolved over time, largely because of changes in design, which meant that they began to echo the typical Victorian home (Maguire, 2000). Such alterations particularly benefitted women, who increasingly frequented the theatre. Countless foyers were designed to be cosy and intimate, much like the homely parlour (Maguire, 2000).

The department store

Such literature on changes within urban centres is helping to form a picture of a public sphere that was altered so as to increase comfort and to shield the bodies of middle-class women who came to have ever-greater, though not necessarily conscious, expectations in this area. This was not a case of desensitising the body but rather of creating a pleasurable sensory experience. This centred on norms of comfort as found within the middle-class home. Arguably, nowhere was this felt more than in the department store. Rather than just selling goods and attracting the eye (although these were important concerns), these shops were designed to be a second home in the city for women. The spaces were formed so as to accommodate the body with the same level of comfort to which it had become accustomed, thus allowing an easy reception and encouraging women to leave the home. Women's embodied ideas on comfort would not be disturbed, nor would they feel disinclined to visit the shops if they could quite literally feel at home in the city.

Clear moves to provide domestic comfort can be seen in Whiteley's, often considered to have been the first department store. Dubbed the 'Universal Provider' for his supposed ability to proffer any item demanded, William Whiteley's department store in Bayswater, London, was viewed as a trailblazer in commerce and it attracted a great deal of media attention. An undated article entitled 'The Napoleon of Trade' detailed Whiteley's journey, from opening his first shop in Westbourne Grove in 1863, in which he employed two ladies and one errand boy. Within just twelve months he was employing 16 salesmen and women, and two porters. Following this, expansion was rapid; even throughout 1873 when Britain suffered an internal trade depression, the shop continued to be enlarged (WA 726/265).

From the early days of business, Whiteley placed a premium on ensuring the comfort of his female customers. In view of the earlier claims that women were eager to rush out of their homes due to boredom, it is of particular interest that Whiteley did not believe that women would hurry to his shop without persuasion. Instead, he acknowledged that measures were needed to attract them, and to keep them there. Particular attention was paid, even in the initial days of business, to the interior of the shop, making sure that this was adapted for bodily comfort. The following excerpt shows some of the measures that were taken in order to bring women in.

Whiteley is adept at attending to the comfort of his customers. Cosy waiting-rooms are placed at the disposal of the women, provided with papers, periodicals, writing materials, and lavatories, while the men have their smoking and lounging compartments. Even the footmen are not forgotten, a room being set aside for them. (WA 726/265)

In providing these facilities, Whiteley's was making sure that the physical comfort of women was attended to. This would have resonated immediately because the facilities provided were such as would be found in a middle-class home.

Gaston Bachelard (1994) argues that phenomenological encounters with the home become inscribed upon the subject, who then continues to inhabit it when not within its walls. This is achieved when the embodied habits developed in the home can be performed elsewhere. The provision of a space such as Whiteley's meant that habits and understandings of embodied comfort were unlikely to be disturbed and women would have been able to perform this space easily. Understanding does not refer to a cognitive experience here but to the harmony between the body and space, an ability to act with ease because of the bodily knowledge already in existence (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Sensation and perception work as a form of reconstruction, whereby past sediments of experience are drawn upon (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The space provided by Whiteley's would have allowed this process to occur.

The observation made by Bachelard becomes more apparent in the intensification of these trends as time went on, and as profits and technological developments made further growth of the store possible. While Whiteley himself met an unfortunate end

in 1907 at the hands of an assassin, the company continued to flourish. In 1910 the foundation stone was laid for a new building at Queensway, London, after a series of fires - some allegedly caused by business rivals - blighted the former premises. A souvenir brochure that was published to commemorate the event provides a detailed vision of the future design of the store. Certainly this was to be an impressive sight, as the brochure noted:

It has been designed in the Grecian Corinthian style, and the domes will rise to a height of one hundred and fifty feet. Two orders of columns, each containing two storeys, will tower above a stately effect worked out in smooth-faced white granite...The entrance will lead to an interior view of the great central dome, a reproduction of the world-famed Santa Maria della Salute in Venice... Imagine the most dignified and beautiful store you can conceive, the centre of a thousand interests, an institution running as smoothly as silk slips from a reel, and you will begin to have a glimmering of what the new Whiteley's will mean. (WA 726/248)

A store such as this would have been visually striking. However, further reading of the brochure makes it evident that there was a strong acknowledgement that visual delights would not be enough to keep customers in the shop. Although the ocular would draw customers in through curiosity, the brochure underscored that the physical needs of all visitors would be provided for, with a smoking room and lounge for men, just as would be found in the gentlemen's clubs. If men came to the store with their wives they would therefore not need to venture into the shopping areas (WA 726/248). Most importantly though, women were to be more than adequately taken care of:

The same care and thought for the comfort of ladies will be apparent. There will be hundreds of telephones for the use of visitors, all of which may be used to make appointments and arrangements for the day. There will be reading rooms superbly furnished where visitors can read the daily papers, and the latest magazines. Another feature will be the quiet, sumptuously furnished rest rooms, where ladies may rest as free from interruptions as if they were in their own homes. There will be rooms in which ladies may meet and chat with

friends, write letters, take tea or lunch or give dinner parties. And all these will only be details in the store of conveniences that is to be. (WA 726/248)

In this excerpt, the tiring nature of a shopping excursion is acknowledged and Whiteley's was keen to point out that female comfort would be attended to. Indeed, it would be a 'store of conveniences'. This excerpt even makes explicit the intention to create an environment in which female shoppers would feel as though they were 'in their own homes'. Spaces to read, rooms in which to rest, spaces for chit-chat and rooms for refreshments would all have been features of the ideal middle-class home but here they were on a bigger, and quite possibly better scale (few homes would have contained a telephone, for example).

The female shopper did not have to worry that she would feel uncomfortable or be concerned that she may have left something at home because Whiteley's would provide each customer with a home in the middle of the city. Lynne Walker (1995) acknowledges how important this was, by discussing restaurant facilities in London in the 1870s and 1880s. She writes that these served good food in comfortable dining rooms, the most popular style being Queen Anne, because this was strongly associated with domestic settings (Walker, 1995). Figure 7.1 shows a similar scene to that described by Walker, with the restaurant at the new Whiteley's premises imitating some of the popular domestic furnishing styles of the time, so allowing for the body to feel at ease.

This explicit aim to replicate the home and the possibilities for similar behaviour within is further emphasised in the description of the lavish garden that was to form part of the new store.

Who would think, for instance, of designing an Italian garden in central London? It is more like a thought from a poet's idle fancy, than the practical idea of a businessman. Whiteley's will build an Italian garden not only in inner London, but on the roof of the new store itself. On the roof of Whiteley's the visitor, tired of the round of sight-seeing, will find a restful pleasance – a sheltered resort with a velvety lawn where flowers will bloom in gay profusion. Here, far above London's streets, Whiteley's visitors may take

afternoon tea or light refreshments under conditions one might expect to find in Kensington Gardens, and will imagine the busy streets of the metropolis, with their noise and uproar, are miles away. (WA 726/248)

This, along with the illustration of the Italian Garden in figure 7.2, reinforces the comforts that were provided for the body. The embodied, tactile qualities are highlighted, such as a ‘velvety lawn’. The text also provides further confirmation that many considered the Metropolis, not to be an environment replete with delights, but one that possessed many sensory problems such as ‘noise and inconvenience’. Picker has written that the increasing levels of noise in London were a source of worry for Victorians, who made efforts to create soundproof spaces (Picker, 2012). Whiteley’s recognised that the disturbances of the public sphere would be felt because they clashed with the positive values associated with embodied sensations of domestic space. Therefore, the shop was keen to persuade women that it had mitigated such problems in order to encourage their patronage. Rather than having to escape back to their homes in the suburbs, they could escape to their second home of Whiteley’s.

Indeed, a further excerpt from the Souvenir brochure of 1910 placed such an emphasis on restful enjoyment and comfort that one would be forgiven for forgetting that this was a department store:

It will be a rendezvous for old and young. Ladies may walk in for a rest or a chat, to write a letter, to telephone, to send a message, to lounge in the gardens or the pleasant reception rooms, to while away a wait, or obtain a cup of tea. In fact, visitors will go in and out of Whiteley’s as they would go in and out of a club, using the service of the trained staff of six thousand for their comfort, pleasure – and when shopping, for their convenience. (WA 726/248)

Such a comment situates Whiteley’s as being little more than some kind of a leisure club! Of course, profits did matter and, when reading literature which stresses provision for the customer’s needs over profits, not a little scepticism should be shown; one glance at Whiteley’s catalogues indicates that every conceivable item could be bought and the haberdashery alone was said to offer 15,000 items in 1885 (WA 726/14). Whiteley’s certainly did not envisage its female customers leaving

empty-handed. However, many of the spatial provisions were considered to be absolutely necessary in order to make profits. A letter to the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* in 1872 complained that there were very few provisions for women in most department stores (this was at a time when Whiteley's was intending to provide refreshments), and this would mean that they would be disinclined to spend much time and money in the shops:

Many ladies, especially those who do not reside in town, are in the habit of devoting a day to 'shopping', and spend a considerable time in examining the articles submitted to their inspection, and when the attraction is great the purchases are generally in proportion. But sheer weariness, the necessity of rest, and the desire to arrange the toilet not unfrequently, shorten the visit, and prevent even the politest and most assiduous assistant from exhibiting all the attractive articles he would otherwise bring forward... I feel certain the ladies would be pleased if in each of these splendid establishments which adorn our large towns, there was a 'Ladies' Room', fitted with looking glasses and toilet appendages, and provided with a neat and obliging female attendant. A promenade, even in the finest weather, is wearying, and London dust is a disagreeable cosmetic... At the International Exhibition, the Crystal Palace, and all other places of public resort, the 'Ladies' Dressing Room' is a recognised institution, and I am certain that the Shoolbred's, or Peter Robinson's, or Marshall and Snelgroves, or Swan and Edgar's, which offered such an accommodation to their lady visitors would be amply rewarded for the enterprise. (WDTJ, 1872: 17)

The same journal was frequently filled with advice on all manner of comforts that could be offered to create ease for the female shopper. All of this was recognised as necessary if a proprietor wished to increase customer spending. Bearing striking similarities to the advice proposed near the beginning of this chapter concerning the aspect of a house, one correspondent wrote of the need for good ventilation: 'A lady delights in a cool shop, she will go to one as Diana went to the bath. But in the heated ovens, to which custom gives a sanction, the object is to escape as soon as possible' (WDTJ, 1872: 183). The following recommendation was also made:

the chairs provided for the convenience of customers should really be convenient, not fragile constructions on which a stout lady might be afraid to sit...to make her feel as shopping were a torture, to which she should, for comfort's sake devote as little time as necessity would permit; but chairs moderately luxurious, permanently comfortable. (WDTJ, 1873: No page)

Comfortable chairs, such as were discussed earlier as features of the middle-class home, were important because, without their provision a woman might devote 'as little time as necessity would permit' to shopping. Spending was not something to rush out of the home for but it depended upon the ability to enjoy an embodied sense of home, even when absent from it.

Whiteley's was by no means alone in offering homely comforts to women. Liberty's department store was opened in 1875 by Arthur Lasenby Liberty, who gradually expanded the store over several years from just half a unit on Regent's Street to multiple properties on Regent Street and Great Marlborough Street (Ferry, 1960). Yet Liberty's has so frequently been discussed in terms of its visual innovations.⁸⁰ This makes it a useful example for testing the argument concerning the tactile, bodily provisions of department stores. Sonia Ashmore (2008) claims that Liberty's fashioned an aesthetic image for itself which allowed women to shop for new identities through what they saw. The shop provided a space in which women could enjoy social activity and status because the goods on sale spoke of aesthetic qualities more than use value. Shopping here allowed one to acquire, 'non-material, "artistic" values' (Ashmore, 2008: 78). Krista Lysack also claims that Liberty's provided a safe version of an Eastern, colonial identity, with its goods acting as 'signifying surfaces' that could be purchased (Lysack, 2008: 27). Liberty's has overwhelmingly been characterised as a store which aimed to form the visual tastes of the nation and to sell status and identity, more than just tangible objects.

Liberty's brought the colours and patterns of the Orient to middle-class women who would likely never visit the Empire. From its genesis to the present day, Liberty's has enjoyed a reputation of being at the forefront of aesthetic design. However, as a space

⁸⁰ Alison Adburgham (1975) offers a detailed history of Liberty's from its genesis to the 1970s.

in London, Liberty's offered more than this to women in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Like at Whiteley's, there was a strong concern to provide comfort. A Liberty's Art Fabrics catalogue published in 1887 printed a letter at the back that was received from a female customer. While there is no way of verifying this letter, its contents reveal the possible experience enjoyed by one visitor, and it certainly highlights the nature of the visit that Liberty's wished to offer to its customers:

The quiet peace which steals over you on wandering about is due to the clever and dainty air and appearance. Then there are easy chairs and Turkish divans by the dozens, and you are invited to rest by a soft-slippered, noiseless young lady, who wears a pretty draped apron of some art fabric, and has her head adorned with a silken cap or half-snood of neutral colour, each one being different, and the silk-crowned heads resembling mosaics. No one even vaguely suggests that you purchase a single article, and you are treated as a guest, the proprietors loving art for art's sake, while being in a worldly sense, compelled to turn their tastes into practice '£ s d'. Everything is quiet and soothing to your senses, and to a nervous man or woman what a class of cheer lies in silence, in soft footfalls and the quiet closing of the doors. When every nerve tissue has been jarred by useless racket and discordant jingles, what a wondrous eloquence lies in the sound of a subdued voice! (WA 788/29/2)

This excerpt also moves away from ideas of selling (here, the owners are reluctantly 'compelled' to turn their hobby into a fiscal affair), to stressing that Liberty's wished to offer women a multi-sensory experience. Much of this was, again, connected to tactile and embodied sensations. In addition, it is clear that the sensory experiences detailed both stand in complete opposition to those of the nineteenth-century city and bear a strong relationship to the embodied sense of space formed in the home. Indeed, this excerpt is strikingly similar to the earlier work cited by Stallard (1913), who discussed the ideal properties of a restful house in terms of movement, relaxation, doors that shut well, soft carpets and a lack of noise. When Merleau-Ponty (2002) speaks of habit memories as relieving the body of the need for constant cognitive reflection, this also means that any environment that allows habit memories to function facilitates smooth bodily and mental sensations. In Liberty's, a familiarity with Stallard's work and a reading of the catalogue would not have been necessary, as

those similarities between the home and the shop would have been immediately obvious to the perceiving body.

However, as noted above, Liberty's has been discussed most frequently in terms of the exoticism that it offered. At first these exotic experiences may appear to have been quite alien to the English middle-class home, hence why the shop has been spoken of in terms of aestheticism. Even when accounting for their tactile aspects, is it possible that Liberty's was making such provisions before the trends were adopted within homes? This is an important question to address if the argument concerning the making of a home in the department store is to stand. Many households probably did come to embrace certain fashions through this shop. Liberty's sold Oriental goods but also used them to decorate the shop. In doing this, Liberty's provided an experience of Eastern décor and helped women to understand its potential in the home. The shop famously housed an 'Oriental Bazaar' and an 1898 catalogue for this stated that women could find all manner of bric-a-brac there (NAL L113 (54)). It was advertised in this way in *Sylvia's Home Journal*: 'The spacious basement of Chesham House is now illuminated by electric light, and fitted up exclusively for the display of Porcelain, Ivory, Bronzes, Lacquerware, Brassware, fans and every description of Eastern miscellaneous knickknaks. A visit of inspection solicited' (*Sylvia's Home Journal*, 1887: insert).

Despite these novel aesthetic fashions, Liberty's overwhelmingly drew on domesticity when providing for women. The oriental furniture styles were visually new but they were deployed so as to offer familiar, homely experiences of comfort. If there was something original, women could learn how to appropriate these ideas in their own houses, because everything was firmly grafted onto the domestic setting. Çevik (2010) discusses this through a case study of the Turkish chair, noting how American and European audiences adopted a Turkish-style sofa at this time yet tamed it, associating it only with bodily comfort and ignoring the foreign and potentially 'dangerous' origins of the furniture. The new was rendered harmless and was easily assimilated with the body. A similar occurrence can be seen in a comment made in *The Daily Telegraph*, and re-printed in the 1887 Liberty Art Fabrics Catalogue,

We live in an age of Eastern magnificence without its history. We are as luxurious as sultans without their faith. We recline in chairs draped with Moorish stuffs, and we ask Liberty's to bring us the glories of soft colours imagined by the artists as Indian looms. (WA 788/29/2)

Particular attention should be paid here to the chairs and soft colours that allowed the English to live as the sultans but, 'without their faith'. Liberty's allowed familiar bodily enjoyment of the home to be mixed with aspects of the new, while the totally alien, such as foreign faiths, could be ignored.

This strategy was also at play in the café. Like Whiteley's, Liberty's offered refreshment facilities but here there was a continued stress on the Eastern influence as this was imagined as an Arab tearoom. Ashmore claims that this allowed the customer to imagine being in the East: 'This was an environment intended to sensually absorb the shopper and in which the shopper could re-imagine him or herself' (Ashmore, 2008: 84). There is some truth in this but the provision of this tearoom was a further way of making the female body feel very much at home. Here that most English of activities could be enjoyed. As the advert in figure 7.3 shows, this was an 'Arab' tea room but it was one in which 'tea and biscuits' between the hours of 12 and 6pm was still the norm.⁸¹

Despite their differences, both Whiteley's and Liberty's encouraged embodied sensations of the home to be replicated through arrangements of space and objects, which allowed an ease of passage into the city for middle-class women. Although Liberty's may seem to have offered something more exotic, this exoticism was always tamed and the main elements were akin to those of the home. Cox and Hopley write of the department store, 'These large stores, with their opulent designs, seductive displays and luxury goods, seemed to be far removed from the two other worlds that the Victorians held most dear: home and work' (Cox and Hopley, 2014: xiii). Yet even Liberty's, which has frequently been seen as the most exotic and alternative of department stores, did not use its features in order to break women from their

⁸¹ Fromer (2008) provides a fascinating account of the associations of tea with domesticity and morality in the nineteenth century and how this very foreign product was rendered British by stressing its Imperial origins, rather than it being specifically Indian. This again allowed it to be associated with the home as the Empire was spoken of in terms of a family.

attachment to the home but to duplicate domestic space and encourage a re-performance of home.

Freedom of the city?

It is well understood that department stores aroused fears of the growing autonomy and public presence of women. Elaine Abelson (1992) has discussed how female shoplifters were diagnosed as suffering from kleptomania, a pathological condition that allowed men to bolster their reasoning that a woman's place was in the home rather than the city. Crossick and Jaumain (1999) also write that the very size and grandeur of the new department store buildings were potent symbols to men that the natural order was being turned upside down and that women were starting to leave their proper environment. Similarly, Christopher Hosgood (1999a, 1999b) argues that depictions of women in the press as manic shoppers, especially during the sales, formed an attempt to rehabilitate male dominance as men feared that department stores were allowing women to have too much autonomy.

Yet, as demonstrated, the new department stores of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries actually provided a very homely site for women because of the bodily interactions that were encouraged. However, the anxiety that these shops evoked, overwhelmingly among men, reveals that this provision was not welcome, despite its feminine character. In the souvenir brochure for the laying of the foundation stone at Whiteley's in 1910, the new 'beautiful building' was dedicated to 'the women of this country' (WA 726/248). The same brochure said of the new store, 'To such a treasure house of endless charm as Whiteley's will be, all the roads of the world will lead' (WA 726/248). It also stated, 'The secret of Whiteley's success is the observance of this simple rule. The interests of the customer are zealously guarded, and always placed first' (WA 726/248). These remarks show, not a grudging tolerance of women in the city, but an active welcome. Stating that all roads would lead to Whiteley's was an obvious allusion to 'All roads lead to Rome'. This sentiment would not have been lost on the Victorians who so often characterised London as the Imperial Rome (Betts, 1971). Benjamin Disraeli wrote in his novel of 1844, *Coningsby*, 'A great city, whose image dwells in the memory of man, is the type of some great

idea. Rome represents conquest' (Disraeli, 1983: 177). Now the fear was that all roads were leading to a seat of power won through a conquest by women.

Although it has been stated that the real impact of the department store was fairly small in many respects, when discussing reactions to middle-class women venturing into the city it is the sensory performance of home which must be at the forefront of the discussion. That this was a root cause of male distress can be seen by returning to one particular incident involving Whiteley's. Whiteley's success attracted much negative attention. Several authors have noted that this was because it was perceived as creating an environment which lured women out of the home and therefore contributed to a decline in female morality (Rappaport, 2000; Cox and Hopley, 2014). When fears were voiced about department stores and their effects on women, Whiteley's often topped the lists (Rappaport, 2000). However, it has been argued continually in this work that the subject is not just formed through the action of the environment on a person but through the meeting of self and space. This means that the complaints that were voiced should be viewed in terms of the sensory activity that was being facilitated for women.

As noted earlier, the *Warehouseman and Draper's Trade Journal* discussed and approved of Whiteley's plans to provide food and drink facilities (including alcoholic drinks) in the shop in 1872. The journal was in favour of this plan and noted that shopping could be pleasurable but that women needed 'relaxation and rest' and 'toilet conveniences' (WDTJ: 1872: 17). These facilities were found in the middle-class home and they provided regularity to a woman's orientation of space. If these facilities were provided, reasoned the journal, a woman out shopping could avoid the sensory inconveniences of the public sphere and step from one home to another. In other words, an encounter with an alien space would be avoided and her bodily techniques would be exercised with ease.

Outcries accompanied these plans, however. Local shopkeepers expressed concern because of the potential impact on their own businesses and men railed against the proposed sale of alcohol (Rappaport, 2000; Cox and Hopley, 2014). Erika Rappaport (2000) has written extensively on this incident and she notes that Whiteley defended his plans by asserting that he was offering a safe place for women. Whiteley remarked

that, without his refreshment facilities, women would have to go elsewhere in London, which might lead them down the road of prostitution (Rappaport, 2000). It was, no doubt, an exaggeration to suggest that women would resort to prostitution if Whiteley's did not provide these facilities. However, the claim that the shop was providing a safe place is what deserves attention. Middle-class men agreed that a safe place was needed for women, yet they wanted this to be the home (Davidoff and Hall, 2002). The home was to be the place where they could rule:

Yes, wherever a true wife comes, home is always around her. The stars may be over her head; the glow-worm may be the only fire at her feet in the night-cold grass, but home is where she reigns, it is her true place and power. It is the grand sphere for women's consecration and usefulness. (Kirton, 1882: 162)⁸²

Similarly, Samuel Smiles wrote, 'The home is the woman's domain – her kingdom where she exercises entire control' (Smiles, 2009 [1871]: 30). Kirton and Smiles were writing in praise of women and their natural situation in the home. However, in providing the same facilities as the home, shops such as Whiteley's were not only potentially rendering the home redundant but they were also allowing women to perform home in the city through their senses. This would extend their sphere of influence by making this their 'true place and power' (Kirton, 1882: 162).

In light of the discussions on Whiteley's and Liberty's, it is clear that these shops were providing very little that was new for women. This though was the danger! Writings on the department store have overwhelmingly stressed the shock of the new (Crossick and Jaumain, 1999). Although there were many complaints about women spending their husbands' money, what the department store offered to the body was not a wholly novel experience. A totally new space may have caused less anxiety to men as it would have been more difficult to adjust to. In providing a traditional bodily experience, men worried that it would be all too easy for women to advance their domain. It was not the disengaged *flâneuse* who endangered the male control of the public sphere, but the tactile, female body, engaging with space in a proximate way. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the department store, where she enjoyed the

⁸² Kirton is here partly plagiarising Ruskin's words in *Sesame and Lilies* (1907 [1865]).

soft carpets, luxurious chairs and refreshments, and felt little rush to return to the suburbs.

Anne McClintock (1995) observes that domesticity is not only a space but that it is also a power relation, a question of domination and civilisation. However, this process of domination is done by men, to women (McClintock, 1995). In taking the home to the city in the form of the department store, the female body was now at risk of dominating and colonising a male space through performed domesticity. By the end of the nineteenth century, rising fears of an increasingly powerful female population and of male emasculation caused men to adopt a negative attitude to the place of women in public. Much of this centred, not on the visual, but on a very bodily and sensory rhetoric. Reinforcing this claim, Lynne Walker comments, 'External controls and regulation of women's access to the public sphere were nowhere more direct than in the refusal of local government to provide public lavatories for women in the West End' (Walker, 1995: 77). Local vestries justified their refusal to provide these facilities by claiming that women suffered less physical discomfort from the need to urinate and so would not be harmed if toilet facilities were not provided. This would help to preserve the natural order of society because women could not dwell in that space (Walker, 1995). The same can be said of department stores but, as private enterprises, the male public had less control over these.

A striking parallel with the department store can be seen in the gentleman's club. Just as the department store has frequently been seen as offering women an opportunity to break free from the bonds of domesticity, the club has similarly been conceived of as aiding the male rejection of domesticity (Tosh, 1996). John Tosh (1996) notes that, while the male attitude to the home was positive, forming a refuge from the harsh world of the public sphere, by the end of the nineteenth century there was a retreat, due to a feeling of rigidity and a sense that women were becoming too powerful there. This led to the popularity of clubs, imperial service and adventure (Tosh, 1996).

Amy Milne-Smith (2006) has reassessed the clubs to argue that men found an alternative or even an additional home in these spaces. Clubs, while theoretically situated within the public sphere, actually provided a form of domesticity that men had become used to. Much of this was connected to the comforts provided: 'In their

luxurious clubhouses, men not only sought out all the amenities of home but often found the emotional comfort traditionally associated with family' (Milne-Smith, 2006: 798). She cites libraries, dining rooms, entertainment and bedrooms as providing alternative sites of male domesticity.⁸³ Milne-Smith does not adopt a theoretical approach for her work but, in the evidence that she supplies, it is clear that men had also developed certain embodied responses to comfort and space through the environment that was provided at home.

This similarity between the club and the department store was highlighted in a song of 1876, written by Edwin Page and Vincent Davies entitled 'Shopping'. This satirical duet between a fictional man and wife, Algernon and Maud, detailed each party's complaints concerning the activities of the other. Algernon claims that he will go to the club because he is bored at home, to which Maud responds that she will go shopping. Both clearly consider these two environments to form their respective second homes (Page and Davies, 1876). Algernon complains that Maud is spending too much money, yet Maud retorts that Algernon does the same by eating and drinking at the club. The comic verse comes to a resolution when the couple agree to cease their respective outings and to stay at home: 'We'll be the happiest couple in town. A deuced Darby and Joan, by Jove!' (Page and Davies, 1876). While a fictional song, it would have resonated with listeners because the similarity between the two activities was recognised.

The department store gave to many Mauds what the club offered to thousands of Algernons: a home in the city. However, providing for men's bodily needs there was not problematic because it was considered to be a man's natural home. His performance of home through the body in space was legitimate. Milne-Smith (2006) claims that the comfort provided by the clubs did not bolster the home but weakened the male attachment to it because clubs offered all the comforts of home, and more. Men who frequented them had the opportunity to stay for as long as they wished, even sleeping there. The key point is that men had every right to stay in the city. It could be

⁸³ Neither Tosh nor Milne-Smith's ideas have met with universal acceptance. For example Huggins (2006) claims that there was never a real embrace of respectable domesticity among middle-class men and that clubs were a space that allowed more debauched pursuits.

both their public and private space and they could stake a claim to it. For the Victorians, this was the natural order of things.

Like the club, department stores provided for proximate, bodily comfort, yet middle-class women potentially had every reason to be happier there than in the home. As noted, the middle-class woman learnt how to sense space in the home through movement in and interaction with it. However, this was a constant labour. Straitened finances could mean that ideals of comfort were desired, but not always met. The department store therefore provided a domestic setting but one that was better in many ways; nothing was lacking, such as the telephones at Whiteley's that were mentioned earlier. More than this, the middle-class woman could truly realise the leisured ideal that she was supposed to enjoy. Here, her labour was not necessary. While criticised for taking them out of the home, the facilities and the services of the department store ironically created the material setting for the performance of the ideal middle-class woman that was so lauded by men. Here she could truly be a leisured testimony to her husband's wealth.

Whether leisured consumption is empowering though is unclear (Darke, 1994). Joanna Bourke's (1994) work on the working classes discusses the power exerted by women in their homes through productive activity. Many embraced housewifery and supported a breadwinner wage for men as this allowed them to stay at home where they enjoyed greater freedom, better living standards, and more parity with the men from their role in the household than would have done if working for a wage. Gordon and Nair (2000) show how middle-class women had a similarly productive role in the home. Although it has been shown that shopping allowed women to deploy skills of tactility to make wise judgements, much of consumption is largely a passive activity, which adds another complicated factor to the meaning of shopping.

Caution must also be observed when claiming that the department store started the process of breaking down female attachments to the home. Unlike men at the club, women had little option but to return home at the end of each day, however comfortable a shop was. In addition to this, while some women were spending more time outside the home, the facilities of the department store did nothing to challenge a woman's place and activities in the home. In many respects they reinforced them,

such as interior decoration and taking tea. Habits that are sedimented remain familiar as long as bodily activity sustains these (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Just as past spatial experiences of the home affected those of the department store, so those shop-based experiences reinforced bodily habits of the home. This situation is similar to the shopping practices discussed earlier, where goods bought in the shops were intended to be used in the home. Indeed, just as the home relied on consumption, so the department store depended upon the home as the place that would swallow up the endless piles of goods that it could supply. Ultimately, at the end of a day at the shops, a middle-class woman's destiny was to return to domesticity, a pattern that would remain largely unchanged for many decades to come.

A city for all women?

The previous section ended on a rather inconclusive note, claiming that the effect of the department store on the place of women is complex. This is not to sit on the fence but it is a reminder that to speak of the public sphere as empowering and the private sphere as oppressive is too binary. In its economic and social meanings, it has been and still remains a complicated matter. Nevertheless, what can be said is that middle-class women did at least start to take strides towards greater public visibility towards the end of the nineteenth century, and department stores played some part in this by enabling a smooth transition to the city. Women's bodies could increasingly feel at home in urban spaces because of the sensory experiences there, thereby starting the slow process of normalising their position outside the home.

However, in this final section a discussion focusing on the classed basis of this is needed. As this thesis is primarily centred on the middle classes, very little has so far been said about the working classes. As explained, this is because the middle classes benefitted most from rising wages and the expansion of consumer culture. Yet, as the thesis draws to a close, it is important to consider the implications of the department store for working-class women who, after all, did continue to make up the majority of the female population and with whom middle-class women had contact in the department store. If shopping assisted the tentative beginnings of increased economic freedom and leisured enjoyment of the public sphere for women then this was not on a united female front.

While Merleau-Ponty's work has been commended for the framework that he provides for understanding perception, he has been criticised for not engaging sufficiently with questions of social structure. It is true that these aspects are often more implicit than explicit in his writings. Yet perception does not only provide an awareness of the wider world but of the self. In what is termed the 'reversibility thesis', Merleau-Ponty claims that cognitive reflexivity occurs through an interaction between the body and the world. Pre-personal encounters with the world bring about a recognition of the self because the body 'touches' (for the purposes of this work, in a literal sense) the world but the world also touches the body. This means that the subject and knowledge of the self are not produced through cognition but through the environment, including interactions with things and with people (Dillon, 1997: 106-110). In this case, the middle-class woman learned about herself from interactions with the world around her.

Dillon (1997), defending Merleau-Ponty against accusations of focusing on the individual, notes that these experiences can allow the creation of a sense of community, based on the transfer of corporeal schema. This can be achieved because groups can be formed through similar or divergent sensory experiences. We can know others by starting with the same sensory apparatus and experiencing the same world (Dewey, 1922; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This can then work to further co-existence. Laurie Spurling expands upon this to explain that human communality is possible through materiality, because we all share perceptions of the same objects, space and time and this means that we understand the existence of the 'generalised I', that being who is not 'me' but who 'I' recognise because of the shared world inhabited (Spurling, 1977: 42). However, shared experiences are rarely open in a society but are bounded, and the world is not always perceived in the same context because subjects approach it with different embodied habits. This can have the effect of widening difference, here in terms of class. Merleau-Ponty goes on to write, 'All that we are, we are on the basis of a *de facto* situation which we appropriate to ourselves and which we ceaselessly transform by a sort of escape which is never an unconditional freedom' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 198). The freedom for shared perception is limited because of the situation in which the subject finds himself or herself.

Although department stores did not overtly exclude the working classes, the comfort experienced by the middle classes depended upon their habit memories from home. Without going into an in-depth study of the lower classes, it is safe to say that they would have been unlikely to interact with these spaces in the same way, because of the differences in their wider lives. No subject sees the world with a God's-eye-view and individual encounters and perceptions are based on a personal involvement with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Working-class woman possessed a different interior world, which did not match that which was provided in the department store.

More than this there was a further and more serious way by which the working classes were excluded and rendered invisible, and by which class membership could be reinforced. The rising public presence of women, and their increased movement into urban centres coincided with and rested on the growth of working-class women as shopworkers. It is difficult to calculate the number of women employed in shopwork, as married women were often involved on a casual or part time basis which was not enumerated on the census. However, by 1931, 544,121 women were listed as shopworkers in England and Wales (Roberts, 1988). Whiteley's alone employed 4000 staff in 1914 (Winstanley, 1983). This adds a further complication when speaking of the department store as helping female advancement, especially in terms of enjoying public spaces. The middle-class pleasures of luxury furnishings and spaces depended on the work of the new army of shopgirls. The way in which these women approached such spaces and objects was as workers and this meant that their experiences were very different.⁸⁴ It is now well documented that shopgirls in many department stores (including Whiteley's) overwhelmingly lived in dormitories, with poor food, comfort and washing facilities, an arrangement that was only ended by the Shop Hours Act of 1906 (Whitaker, 1973). In 1910 a survey suggested that most worked a gruelling 60-65 hour week and an Act of 1913 only suggested limiting this to 64 hours a week, although this often was not enforced (Roberts, 1988). Some of the worst horrors of shopwork were detailed in novels of the time, which specifically reference bodily discomforts. The following excerpt, taken from Zola's novel of 1883 *The Ladies' Paradise (Aux Bonheur des Dames)* vividly describes the labours of the novel's protagonist, Denise Baudu:

⁸⁴ Holcombe (1973) does discuss middle-class women who entered into shopwork but this was often a last resort.

At first she had to learn to cope with the terrible rigours of work in the department. The parcels of clothes made her arms ache so much that, during the first six weeks, she would cry out with pain when she turned over at night, utterly worn out, her shoulders black and blue... Such was her life now: she had to smile, put on a charming, gracious manner, and wear a silk dress which didn't even belong to her; ill-fed and ill-treated, she suffered agonies of fatigue, in continual fear of being brutally dismissed. (Zola, 1995: 122-123)

Although Zola's work is set in France, based on the Bon Marché, English novels do not offer a much better picture. In Whipple's *High Wages*, the new shop assistant, Jane, is presented with her grim lodgings, kippers, a loaf, margarine and tea, of which it is noted, 'Shop assistants did not expect a great deal in nineteen-hundred-and-twelve' (Whipple, 2009 [1930]: 19). The conditions of shopworkers remained poor long after the end of this study. Even in 1931, the year in which Cecil Robert's novel *Bargain Basement* is set, female shopwork was still painted as a tiring and difficult job:

I shall transfer you to the Bargain Basement... There is a lot of nonsense talked about the Basement. The air is perhaps not as good as it should be, though that's a matter of opinion... Here is an assistant's guide which you must study thoroughly. You will clock in at 8:45. Some time in the morning, if you are on the second luncheon hour, you will get twenty minutes. (Roberts, 1931: 44-45)

These excerpts reflect the gross disparity between the understandings of space within the department store as enjoyed by middle-class female customers and working-class assistants, and much of this centred on bodily and tactile experiences. Commodity fetishism is described by Anne McClintock as, 'the central social form of the industrial economy whereby the social relation between people metamorphoses into a relation between things' (McClintock, 1995: 170). It has a mystical quality, whereby a commodity is able to bring about a change, rendering labour invisible. This has been primarily discussed in a visual way; McClintock (1995) cites nineteenth-century adverts for products that portrayed racial progress or domestic improvement. However, commodity fetishism can also be seen as operating within the department

store. The potential social relation between people that Merleau-Ponty discusses as arising from bodies inhabiting a shared world arguably declined here. This occurred through the divergence in experiences of material goods among the two groups of women. The tactile enjoyment of a soft carpet in Liberty's or sitting in Whiteley's restaurant was something to be relished by middle-class women only. In addition to this they were encouraged to appreciate material goods but not to think about those who served them, or of the workers' relationship to these objects.⁸⁵ No unity with workers was encouraged as their sensory worlds were so different, and identification with working-class women on the shop floor was discouraged through pleasant bodily experiences, which made it so easy to forget the labour that supported these.

An example of this can be seen in a comment made in one of Liberty's catalogues, *Silks, Eastern and Western of 1896*:

The modest pittance which secures all the requirements of the native craftsmen, and the Company's extensive transactions in Eastern products, enables Messrs. Liberty to offer these miscellaneous silks, albeit of the finest texture, soft, and delightfully delicate to the touch, at a cost, which will be found on comparison to barely exceed that of a cloth or linen. (*Silks, Eastern and Western, 1896: 11*)

Although this comment refers to those producing goods overseas, it is still relevant. While knowing that the shop was furnished for the customers' enjoyment with goods from the East, customers were scarcely encouraged to consider the tactile engagement of the workers. Instead, all they needed to do was to enjoy the physical properties of the goods, from which all traces of labour were removed. How could the suffering hands of a worker at the loom be understood when the silks that were so 'delightfully delicate to the touch' hid all traces of this? In the same way, how could the pain of a shopgirl, stood behind the counter for hours on end, be of consequence when the shopper was seated on a comfortable chair? An account of Owen Owen's large drapery in Liverpool details the way in which customers were treated:

⁸⁵ Nor is this to forget the working-class women in service who did not enjoy even the opportunity to go out and savour the leisured interiors of the department store. In 1851 there were 1,224,419 domestic servants in England alone (Roberts, 1988).

A floorwalker...would conduct the customers to the required department and then draw up chairs for them to relax while the transactions were carried out. In wet weather, one of the many page boys on duty would shelter the patrons as they approached the main doors and guard umbrellas until the customer's return. (Davies, 1983: 93)

This can be contrasted with an Act of 1899 which obliged shops to provide one seat for every three shopgirls, but was rarely enforced (Winstanley, 1988). Such a contrast can also be seen in the satirical cartoon from *Punch*, shown in figure 7.4, in which a customer, having moved from a seat in a carriage to one in the shop, gives her chair to a shopgirl. In this way, the perceptual, tactile world did not bring about social cohesion but instead deepened divisions. As the perceived world constitutes the only world for a subject, even though there may be an acknowledgement of a transcendent reality beyond this, if something remains beyond the subject's perceptual experience then it can remain largely absent from their sphere of concern or interest (Dillon, 1997).

The implications of this are important. Rosalyn Diprose argues that Merleau-Ponty's focus on openness towards the world makes reciprocity possible. She explains this by noting that recognising our necessary and mutual openness to the world can help true generosity of feeling to others: 'in a field of intercorporeality, a being given that constitutes the self as affective and being affected, that constitutes social relations and that which is given in relation' (Diprose 2002: 5). However, in order for this to happen, there must be a recognition that being-in-the-world involves other humans, meaning that the body is produced through the intercorporeal transfer of actions of the body (Kruks, 2006). In an extremely class-stratified society, opportunities for this to happen were few.

Increased movement into the public sphere could have encouraged this. However, because the department store provided an enclave of middle-class domesticity in the city, opportunities for openness, through both material goods and human interactions remained rare. The middle-class home encouraged women to engage their bodies in a particular perceptual and classed world. This cloistered world was replicated in the

department store, where labour value was even further removed from the accoutrements of domesticity. The enjoyment of sitting in a soft chair for afternoon tea was not mirrored in the experience of the one who served it. If the conclusions drawn from this chapter about the impact of the department store on the place of women in society and their role have been ambivalent for middle-class women, their working-class sisters, now also removed from many of the positive aspects of domestic work (Bourke, 1994), had even fewer reasons to celebrate.

Summary

This chapter commenced by arguing that experiences of the department store cannot be understood without returning to the middle-class home, as this was the environment in which women spent the majority of their time. The priority afforded to comfort, a woman's role in this and its effects on her embodied, perceptual abilities were analysed. This was then contrasted with the public sphere which, rather than being a place that women wished to rush out into, was uncomfortable because it clashed with the embodied comfort of home. This was why 'enclaves' of comfort were increasingly created in towns and cities as the nineteenth century wore on. Nowhere was this truer than the department store. Using Whiteley's and Liberty's as examples, it was argued that visual enticements could only attract women on the basis of their novelty, but they could not keep them there. The shops therefore imitated the middle-class home, offering an embodied sense of comfort that would resonate with their habit memories and entice them to stay.

The effects of this on the place of women in society were then discussed, as department stores have so often been linked to women's economic freedom and their normalised presence in the city. This matter remains complex as these shops did help to increase and to normalise the place of women in public but this rested on them becoming passive consumers rather than producers of space. In addition, the comfort offered by the department store reaffirmed the 'correct' occupations for women and so bolstered the dominance of the home, showing again that 'public' and 'private' are complicated categories of analysis where consumerism is concerned. Finally, consideration was given to women as a whole. Despite the focus on the middle classes, the working classes made up the majority of women. As more middle-class

women ventured into department stores, this required a band of working women to service them. Their experience of space differed from that of the middle classes and their suffering was often hidden by the enjoyable tactile and embodied experiences to be had by wealthier women. This has therefore also provided a novel way of understanding commodity fetishism which moves away from purely visual models to showing how tactile sensations can also render labour invisible.



Figure 7.1 - The restaurant at the new Whiteley's, Queensway. *Architectural Review*. March 1912: 172.



Figure 7.2 – The Italian roof garden at the new Whiteley’s. Souvenir of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Premises of Wm. Whiteley Ltd. Queen’s Road. October 1910: 18. WA 726/248.

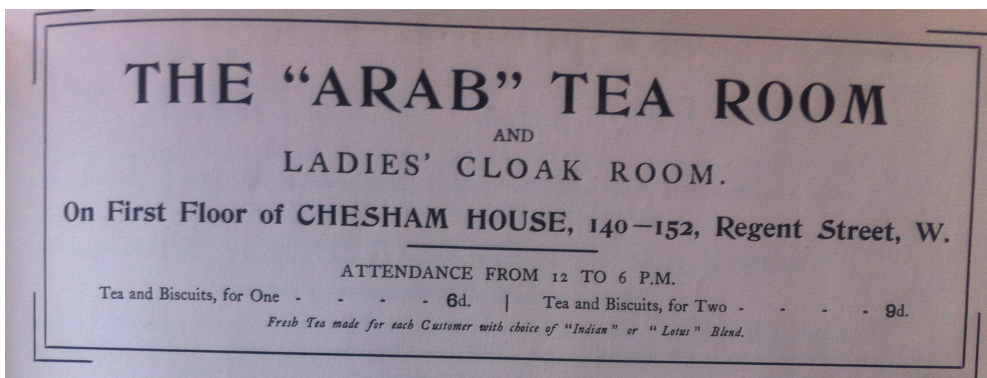


Figure 7.3 Advert for Liberty's Arab Tearoom. Liberty’s ‘Cashmere’ Catalogue. 1896: 56. NAL LIB (39).



TAKING THE LAW IN ONE'S OWN HANDS.

Fair but Considerate Customer. "PRAY SIT DOWN. YOU LOOK SO TIRED. I'VE BEEN RIDING ALL THE AFTERNOON IN A CARRIAGE, AND DON'T REQUIRE A CHAIR."

Figure 7.4 – 'Taking the law in one's own hands'. *Punch*. 24 July 1880: 35.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

Concluding remarks

This thesis commenced by questioning the emphasis placed on vision in studies of nineteenth-century consumerism, and with a desire to examine how the sense of touch was used. It was argued that the visual paradigm has been developed on the basis of male sensory practices and then transposed onto women, without paying proper attention to the gendered nature of many sensory experiences. In addition, and influenced by Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology, it was claimed that attempts to analyse the middle-class female shopping experience ignore the wider context of women's lives and the effects that this had on the formation of the sensorium and shopping practices. Therefore, the thesis first examined the practice of needlework, one of the main domestic activities of middle-class women, in order to argue that this created very tactile habits of perception and ways of approaching the world.

Although these skills were intended to be used in the private sphere, middle-class women deployed them when shopping for fabrics, which formed one of their chief areas of expense. Rather than shops bowling women over with their visual displays, consumers needed to be astute and they employed the sense of touch so as to judge quality and value in the face of an unregulated market. Moving on from this, the place of the skin in the hygienic clothing movement of the final quarter of the nineteenth century was analysed. The skin was given such high importance by nineteenth-century scientists and medics because of its role in the wider health of the body. Using the Jaeger Company as a case study, it was shown how clothing could be sold on the basis of this relationship to the skin, but that female consumers could negotiate these attempts by assessing the feel and overall comfort of fabrics. Finally, attention was turned to the space of the department store to argue that, far from enticing bored women out of their homes with visual novelties, these shops imitated the tactile comfort of middle-class domestic interiors in order to provide women with a home from home in the middle of the city. Throughout the whole work, it has been shown that sight was not as dominant as has often been claimed and, in focusing on touch, material aspects of consumerism have been placed back on the research agenda.

Tactility has therefore been shown to be far from marginal to shopping practices in the nineteenth century, and it was even more important than sight at times. When buying fabrics, for example, sight could often not be trusted and it was too risky to rely on the visual when wise purchases were needed. Similarly, department stores recognised that ocular displays could play a role in attracting women out of curiosity but attending to the needs of the body mattered most if they wished to keep customers. Why the sense of touch could be deployed so well and exert such an influence on the shopping practices of middle-class women though was because of their wider life experiences. Judging fabric and clothing on the basis of touch was possible because of the amount of time that women spent sewing at home. Similarly, the comfort of the department store was valued because of the experiences of comfort that women had invested so much time in both crafting and enjoying in the home.

The thesis therefore makes a powerful argument for historical studies on consumerism that begin outside the shops and that analyse multiple aspects of life. Each individual experience is only the sum of its parts and shopping was no exception. The way in which women participated in the consumer world was strongly influenced by their lives and activities in the home. This argument was bolstered further by incorporating additional issues that affected consumer activity into each chapter, for example, economic policy, manufacturing and adulteration, ideas on health and governance, and concerns over public space. This has allowed richer understandings of consumerism to be formed but it has also shown the centrality of consumerism to many other facets of life.

Understanding and explaining these arguments has been aided by the deployment of phenomenology and, in particular, the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Applying his theories to rigorous archival research has helped to explain that the tactile experiences and perceptions of shopping came about through interactions between the subject and her world, which became sedimented as habit modes of perception. This is why sewing at home was the focus of chapter 4 and was analysed before shopping was even broached. Frequent and repetitious needlework instilled habit memories of comprehending the world through finely tuned skills of tactility. This also had the effect of limiting the sensory horizons of women, and causing them to be attuned to

some experiences more than others. When choosing goods and entering shopping spaces, their perceptual abilities were stimulated by the tactile and touch was used as a skill of evaluation.

Through the arguments advanced here, this study has therefore made a strong contribution to showing that historical studies are not only compatible with, but can be very much enhanced by the application of social theory. The explanation of why touch mattered, and how histories of the senses more generally can be understood has been demonstrated by using phenomenological theory. Conversely, extensive historical research can ‘flesh out’ the bones of theory, which often lacks solid, empirical examples. The research in this thesis has demonstrated the outworking of Merleau-Ponty’s ideas in practice, in addition to clarifying certain aspects of phenomenology. This was particularly the case in the final part of chapter 7, which discussed the ethical dimensions of Merleau-Ponty’s work and the limits of the potential for shared intersubjectivity that existed between women of different classes. This was explained by offering a novel understanding of commodity fetishism, whereby divergent tactile experiences hid labour value and diminished the potential for female unity.

The thesis is also important for understanding women in history. In many respects, it is a shame that ‘women’s history’ has to exist because it is a reflection that, for too long, the study of women has not been an integral component of historical studies. However, the work contributes to showing simply that their experiences matter and should form a normal part of any study. This is especially true when considering modernity. For too long, descriptions and analyses of this have been based on understandings of male life. Vision has been a key part of this, because it has been associated with male-dominated areas, such as science. Moving the focus to touch and women does not represent a step backwards to the pre-modern but instead shows that there were multiple experiences of modernity in the nineteenth century. For the women in this study, the sense of touch was a skill that was put to use when shopping, often in a very expert manner. This means that we need continually to consider the possibilities for gendered experiences of modernity, not speaking of one as representing progress and the other as being backwards, but of difference.

Yet the focus on habit means that we may also need to question whether we can speak of divisions between the modern and the pre-modern altogether. The time span of this study has roughly encompassed the ‘long nineteenth century’. Very rigid time constraints were not imposed however because of the emphasis on continuity and habit. For example, while both the hygienic clothing movement and the growth of the department store were features of the final quarter of the century, skills in needlework, attention to the home and shopping in draper’s establishments spanned the whole century. Sewing and shopping in small establishments continued to exist alongside ready-made garments and department stores. The continuities throughout the century are evident in the wide range of sources used in the thesis. Paintings from the start of the nineteenth century sit comfortably alongside shopping guides and novels of the early twentieth century and reveal a continuity of practices. Similarly, concerns with the comfort of homes and the health of the skin that were evident at the beginning of the 1900s were replicated in the furnishing of department stores and the marketing of hygienic clothing almost 100 years later. To speak of ‘breaks’ and ‘revolutionary’ moments can make for attractive book titles and exciting arguments, but it can ultimately be inaccurate, hiding continuities and the effects of sedimented habits that allow life to be lived smoothly.

Related to this is the division between the public and private spheres, said to have developed in the eighteenth century and accelerated and intensified in the nineteenth century. The reality of this division has been a key concern throughout the thesis. Studies of the place of women in the nineteenth century have often spoken of the division in terms of the spaces that were appropriate for each gender. However, this thesis has argued that there was a constant back-and-forth interplay between the two spheres, something that has been made evident by focusing on tactility. Habit memories and skills that were developed through sewing within the home could be used to judge fabrics in public but this then served to further those activities in the home. In a similar fashion, public health discourses that could not invade the private body and home were mobilised in commerce, to be taken up by the private consumer in the home. Finally, domestic spatial experiences were drawn upon for understanding and enjoying new department stores but these worked so as to endorse the place of women in the home again. This means that when we speak of a public-private division, we need to remember that in some ways this is a ‘necessary fiction’, useful

for thinking about society but in reality far more complex. Everyday life was fluid; the private served the public and vice versa.

A further and more nuanced way of discussing the public-private division has come out of this work. It is true that there were spatial divisions but the public-private split was also a question of embodiment. For middle-class women, private space was represented in domestic surroundings but it also became embodied through constant interactions therein. This means that the home, its associated activities and sensations became part of the female self. The strength of the division between public and private therefore becomes more tenuous when we consider that women were able to feel at home in public and to exercise their private, embodied habit memories when outside the home. In turn, those habit memories were reinforced within the public sphere and so public habits could re-enter the private home. This thesis has therefore raised the question of whether it may be more appropriate to speak of public and private in terms of embodied abilities for accessing space. The sensorium is key in this because, as has been argued, the senses are the only way by which the world can be known.

Finally, the place and agency of women has been considered. Literature on shopping has frequently posited this activity as either liberating women because of its entertaining qualities, or of oppressing them with spectacles of goods that they could not resist. Women themselves have also been positioned as goods on display in this new visual wonderland. Yet, when viewed in relation to the aforementioned comments on the division between the public and private spheres, it is clear that such arguments become more complicated. Women could use skills in evaluating goods, but the ruses of the market were never far behind. Likewise, shopping allowed women to go out to buy goods and to enjoy spaces outside the home, but the fabrics that represented a key area of expense and the domestic interiors of the department store all firmly reinforced the position and activities of women within the home.

In addition, if shopping did at least help to normalise the increased presence and activities of women in public then this was on the basis of consumption. Although women were still overwhelmingly buying goods that they would need to work with in the home, a gradual shift away from a producer to a consumer economy was beginning. This has implications for the skills and the autonomy of women. Moreover,

the middle classes did not make up the majority of women. If speaking of any form of advancement for women through shopping, whether that be in terms of economic autonomy, personal enjoyment or the use of skills, this must always be tempered by an acknowledgement that this was very much on a classed basis. Although middle-class women were vastly important to the expansion of commerce in this period, they did not make up the majority of females. What they enjoyed in these shops often rested on the back-breaking labour of those women who did not have their privilege of birth. All of these questions of female progress remain very complex, and this thesis has quite possibly finished with more questions than answers. However, if one does claim that shopping played any role in at least giving some women the chance to leave the home for enjoyment, it must always be with the sober remembrance of those who remained excluded from their world.

Future work

It is now important to probe some of the possible directions for future research that have become evident over the course of writing this thesis. Three particular questions stand out.

First, and leading on from the final point in the previous section, there has been a strong emphasis on the middle classes alone. Yet the social and cultural formation of the senses, and the multiple experiences of modernity to which this leads have been stressed. This means that the arguments set forth cannot be applied to all women. The experiences of working-class women when shopping may have differed because of their wider lives and occupations. A study on the formation of working-class women's senses, the principal influences in this, and how they participated in consumer culture in this period would thus merit further study.

Second, in order to rebalance the emphasis placed on sight, touch has been focused on. Yet three more senses do exist. Hearing, smell and taste have not been discussed in this thesis, both for reasons of space and because a finely-developed sense of tactility was considered to be so important in middle-class women. Yet the sensorium does work as a whole. This thesis must therefore be viewed as contributing to the still emerging project of understanding the place of the senses in consumerism. How

women (and indeed men) of all sectors of society mobilised the other senses and how these were used in the rest of life offers so much potential for future research. It was appropriate to study touch because of attention being directed towards fabric and comfort. Yet there were other areas of expense when shopping, which may have necessitated the use of the other senses in a prominent way. To name but one example, there is little work which explores whether taste was ever used to assess quality in light of food adulteration.

Finally, no attempt has been made here to deny the visual innovations that did start to develop in commerce in the long nineteenth-century. Many of these have been discussed though and it has been argued that far too much emphasis has been placed on their effect. However, it is certainly true that visual developments and technologies for marketing did grow as the twentieth century wore on. In addition, the twentieth century saw an increase in women working outside the home, a less pronounced theoretical division between public and private spheres and a decrease in skilled activities such as sewing. This accelerated in the post-war era. What this has meant for the sensory skills used when shopping and the items bought would make a very worthwhile study. The senses and their potential abilities do not disappear but they can be re-educated in the light of social and cultural changes. Detailed analyses on consumerism and the senses throughout the twentieth century would therefore be very valuable, for consumer, sensory and women's histories. This would help to show if there really ever has been an overwhelming shift to the visual in commerce. For now, that answer is unknown. Yet, if the work of this thesis and the initial comments on 'showrooming' occurring more than two centuries later are any indication, it can scarcely be doubted that the 1900s will also prove themselves to have been a great feast for all the senses.

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