The Arrival of the Experiential Consumer:
A Journey Through Modernist Commercialism and Literary Modernism

by

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary academic project investigates the origins of the experiential consumer, an important figure who emerges in the early twentieth century in the metropolises of Western Europe, to model a new kind of modern consumption: experiential consumption. Closely linked to the experiential consumer are the imbrications between the groundbreaking approaches gaining prevalence in both the spheres of commerce and high modernist literature, specifically, the urban marketplace in the former, and the texts of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce in the latter. The study begins with an examination of how the internalization of the commodity form came to shape a consumer-oriented consciousness for the modern subject. The other key element in the development of experiential consumption as an increasingly significant mode of consumption, involves the evolution of late-nineteenth century aestheticism, which further promoted aesthetic engagement in modern individuals. At the outset of the 1900s, an important cultural institution gained sufficient everyday influence within the cityscape to provide a pivotal space for cultivating a new consumerist ethos based on experiential consumption: the department store. Though the connections between art and commerce are analysed in relation to the appearance of a new programme in the marketplace – modernist commercialism – which relied on some literary techniques and ideals, this thesis project also evaluates how the tensions in this relationship are addressed from a literary perspective. Thus, the study explores both Woolf's and Joyce's fascination with experiential consumption, including their treatment of it through the depiction of their most famous characters – Clarissa Dalloway and Leopold Bloom – who are crafted as exemplars of the modern subject as an experiential consumer. The investigation also includes how economic and commercial ideas, namely marketplace logic and a consumerist orientation, influenced their work as high literary modernists.

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Introduction

The primary purpose of this academic project is to trace the genealogy of the experiential consumer, specifically how this modern figure of the early twentieth century became shaped by modernist aesthetics, and further, how this figure influenced the related depiction and treatment of experiential consumption in modernist literature. Accordingly, this necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, one that requires the synthesis of insights from a few different fields of inquiry: literary criticism, history, sociology, economics, and consumer research. Advancing a theory of modern consumption is at the very centre of this study, particularly one of a unique kind – experiential consumption. And though in some form it had generally always existed, as a discrete social phenomenon, it began to appear more visibly in fin de siècle Western Europe. By the time of the most seminal texts in high modernist literature, namely those of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, the figure of the experiential consumer, and the ideals of experiential consumption, which this type of modern subject is based on, appears in full view. Crucially, the literary and commercial spheres are closely tied together through the experiential consumer, an outcome accomplished by the reciprocal aesthetic solutions offered to each in relation to this figure. The challenge for the commercialist was to liberate commercialism from crass market activity and elevate it into something more dignifying. Thus, for commercialists, an effective practice had been to employ literary strategies and techniques to present a special brand of commercialism; it involved a modernist style predicated on a non-commercialist ethos and a dematerialist aesthetic, which focussed on facilitating and marketing aestheticized experiences as an integral part of shopping. The result was the emergence of a programme that requires a new conception – modernist commercialism – and at its core, was catering to the experiential consumer. On the other side, for literary modernists, the challenge of better understanding and

depicting the modern subject had proven to be inseparable from a modern world increasingly characterized by experiential consumption. And for this, commercial ideas became valuable; for example, Woolf's understanding of microeconomics in the treatment of the interiority of her characters, or with Joyce's knowledge of advertising culture to effectively situate the changing psyche of the modern individual in the cityscape. In other words, these fields are drawn into an alliance of mutual benefits; the literary aids in ennobling the commercial, and the commercial helps ground the literary in the approachability and immediacy of everyday subjective life. And precisely at this intersection, stands the experiential consumer, straddling both spheres with the values of experiential consumption factoring into both sites of cultural production. To productively conceive of this in another way, the experiential consumer is a logical corollary to an attempt in reconciling elements of high culture and low culture, and its linkage to a network of tensions which animate modernity: between art and commerce, between aesthetics and everyday life, between literature and economics. Central to this thesis project is the premise that chronicling the origin story of the experiential consumer, and its association with modernist commercialism, offers an array of insights into better understanding the aesthetics of the everyday, and its connections to the underlying nature of these dichotomies in the modern world. Ultimately, the uniqueness of this project resides in its analyses of the elements of an experiential economy through the lenses of modernist literature and commerce.

An emphasis on Western European society, and the time frame involved of the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, is apposite to the project. The flâneur – the forbear of the experiential consumer – is a cultural figure distinctly linked to the urban centres of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In fact, the flâneur's initial rise to cultural prominence can be largely credited to Charles Baudelaire, specifically the inclusion of this figure

in his text *The Painter of Modern Life*. And tethered to this geographical relevance with the flâneur is a commercial form indigenous to these same locations: the arcades. It is no coincidence that the advent of the department store as an important cultural institution, having been inspired by the arcades, also first took root in Western Europe, before arriving in the United States and elsewhere around the world. For this reason, analysis of the department store will factor significantly in the study. Simply put, flânerie began as a uniquely Western European social conception and set of activities. Accordingly, the early part of this project incorporates the theoretical formulations of Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer, key thinkers who all investigated the evolving social dynamics of modernity within Europe's major cityscapes. Furthermore, an evolution and expansion in flânerie, its influence on experiential consumption as an emerging mode of consumption, its effects on cultural productions of all kinds, was bound to gain resonance in the works of literary artists of the same regions. While the showcasing of experiential consumption is not limited to the modernist texts of Woolf and Joyce, these writers present the most comprehensive portrayals of this type of modern subject, and additionally, as something which is most effectively captured within the novelistic form. And though it is also certainly true that all of modernism's arts were gradually being drawn closer towards commercialism, as referenced earlier, the literary, its techniques and tools, its emphasis on subjectivity and narrativity, tendered the best available partnership for a modernist commercialism which could nurture the experiential consumer.

The imbrications between literary modernism and the market have indeed been granted a reasonable share of scholarly criticism. Andreas Huyssen's conception of the "great divide," which had posited modernism's insistence on a separation from mass culture – out of a fear of

cultural contamination – has already been breached by a good number of critical interventions.[1] Lawrence Rainey, in *Institutions of Modernism*, provides a useful counternarrative to this dated notion of modernism's supposed aversion to aspects of popular culture. Rainey demonstrates that literary modernists were adopting principles of consumer culture to their own advantage. Rather than rejecting the commodification of art altogether, instead they positioned their texts as a unique market offering: the literary work as a special kind of commodity, a valued collectable, converting it into an investment.[2] Rainey's study takes the marketization of modernist texts as a primary issue of analysis. In the collection of essays in Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt's *Marketing Modernisms*, the emphasis is on promotional activities engaged in by writers and publishers.[3] A study by Catherine Turner mostly falls in alignment with the previous ones – the focus rests on marketing activities – but in her work, she addresses the marketing campaigns of various American publishers in promoting modernist authors in the interwar period.[4] Yet, these studies focus on cultural institutions and their connections to the marketing of modernist works, the mechanisms that conveyed modernist literature to a public readership, such as through advertisements. But these investigations are not focussed on how cultural institutions shaped the actual written texts themselves, for example, the way in which commercialist ideals and principles influence the writing of modernist literature, one of the objectives which forms an elemental aspect of this project. Accordingly, this study includes a consumerist perspective from inside the text, of how the textual content is treated in relation to consumer culture, and what

[1] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii.
[2] Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 39.
[3] *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading*, eds. Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).
[4] Catherine Turner, *Marketing Modernisms Between the Two World Wars* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

inferences can be drawn in its endeavour to connect with a readership. Featuring prominently in these inquiries will be an exploration of the modern subject as an experiential consumer in the high modernist texts of Woolf and Joyce.

One notable study has indeed worked from a textual analysis perspective in its treatment of a key aspect of consumer culture. In *Advertising Fictions*, Jennifer Wicke examines the evolving relationship between advertising and literature, spanning from the Victorian era to the period of high modernism. Wicke's central argument is that a dialectical interaction occurs between these elements, and that it is characterized by three stages: first, in the late nineteenth century, advertising uses literature as a model for its own discourse; then, by the time of Henry James' major works, literature and advertising are in conflict, with the former on the defensive; finally, when *Ulysses* arrives, advertising is sufficiently ubiquitous to all forms of cultural production that it begins to colonize literature.[5] Not surprisingly, in approximate synchronicity with this chronology is the coinciding process of increased levels of aesthetic agency for the modern subject, an issue germane to this thesis project. Additionally, the phenomena analysed by Wicke also correspond to a transition from realist novels to high modernist literature. As already suggested by the earlier reference to modernist commercialism, emerging consumerist sensibilities had become conducive to participation in a modern world progressively shifting away from a materialist perspective to a culturalist one, brought about in part by a shift from an economy based on a production paradigm to a consumption paradigm. And vitally, the culturalist perspective attracts much receptiveness to matters involving the experiential. All of this pertains to a crucial premise of the current study: the expanding influence of a culturalist or dematerialist

[5] Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 124.

orientation, from the closing decades of the 1800s to the time period of high modernism, led to a diminution of the strict pursuit of material consumption, and the associated rise of the experiential consumer.

John Xiros Cooper provides another useful study exploring the permeable boundary between popular culture and modernist literature. In "Modernism in the Age of Mass Culture and Consumption," Cooper argues that advertisers actually borrowed aesthetic ideals from modernist writers to develop a highly successful marketing technique: "the moment of aesthetic bliss, the modernist renewal of the romantic sublime, rather than defending the incomparable aesthetic experience … becomes the most potent marketing technique in the arsenal of the very commercial ethos it was meant to resist."[6] In other words, Cooper seems to believe that advertisers borrowed from artists of modernism the principles of amplified aesthetic experiences, and then adapted them into a marketing strategy that significantly shaped consumer culture. Though it is productive to examine links which connect marketers and literary modernists, it does not seem clear whether commercial advertisers were in fact drawing from the "aesthetic experiences" of modernist literature, or if it was not the case that this rhetorical approach originated earlier among commercialists – and it is this project's contention that modernist commercialism, specifically in the department store, occurred as a concurrent phenomenon in both spheres of commerce and literature – likely spurred on by the same modernist conditions which the early chapters of this study will explore.

[6] John Xiros Cooper, "Modernism in the Age of Mass Culture and Consumption," *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 313.

In the early 1900s, an important component of daily reality had been for the modern subject to function as a consumer. For this reason, chapter one presents an investigation of the modern individual's internalization of the commodity form, a process that helped establish a subjective view in which the modern individual came to perceive everything as commodities governable to its logic, consumable in nature, including ones of the immaterial variety – such as experiences – and ultimately towards the horizon of an experiential economy. While this has attracted attention in recent years in the field of consumer research, it had already been given treatment many decades earlier within the modernist period, by both commercialists and literary modernists. However, the other crucial historical development to the origin story of the experiential consumer is the evolution of late nineteenth-century aestheticism, and its effects in promoting aesthetically engaged consumption; specifically, it was instrumental in shaping the modern individual as both consumer and aesthetic agent, a subject whose inclinations encouraged functioning as a participant in a milieu becoming more suitable to a culturalist bearing, and less so to a materialist disposition. In other words, this activation of aesthetic agency prompted a transformation in the consumer experience because the modern subject moved beyond the mere acquisition of material items.

A constructive way in which to express the confluence of these developments is to think of "economic man," an important construct of this particular time period, merging with the aesthetic subject to bring about the experiential consumer. With this in mind, the focus of chapter two involves an analysis of key thinkers within the aesthetic movement – John Ruskin, William Morris, Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater – and the ways in which their aesthetic ideals fostered for the modern subject an enriched engagement with the aesthetic potential available in everyday life. For example, the work of these aesthetes promoted a democratization of aesthetics, a

mainstreaming of aesthetic principles, influencing the modern subject's conception and handling of daily experiences. For these thinkers, though critical of capitalism, their aesthetics – still constrained within a materialist structure – had proven more useful in anticipating and promoting a dematerialized and culturalist conception of the commodity, so that in effect, it dovetailed with a consumerist ethos which sped the growth of market culture. This chapter includes a notable instance of this paradoxical situation, rather microcosmic of the overall situation: an exploration of Morris' Kelmscott Press and the production of its ornately crafted books, and how it unwittingly became a prime exhibit of Thorstein Veblen's critique of conspicuous consumption.[7]

Though a consumerist-oriented consciousness, in conjunction with ideas from aestheticism, had encouraged greater interest in aesthetic agency for modern individuals, yet another core element was needed for the nascent experiential consumer; specifically, an important cultural institution that could provide both modelling and a training ground for experiential consumption as an emerging dominant mode of consumption. Mainstream access and exposure within the arena of daily life were also essential for this cultural institution. Thus, chapter three analyses the department store as an important locus within the cityscape. If we consider some of the most impactful cultural forces of the early twentieth century, such as spectacle, advertising and commodity consumerism, what makes the department store unique is the way in which it combines them to produce an exemplary modern urban space. While Walter Benjamin had evaluated the fading status of the flâneur and the department store as this figure's final scene, it was the first one for the experiential consumer, as it presented a full manifestation of a new consumerist ethics based on an experiential orientation. An entirely new symbolic order

[7] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 163-64.

was being staged within the marketplace; theatricality, performativity, and fantasy became key constituents of a new commercial code, forming the semiotics of the department store. Though the shelves may have been stocked with material commodities, the marketing of experiential goods emerged as the centrepiece of the enterprise. Essentially, a non-commercialist ethos, one rooted in a dematerialist aesthetic had been strategically used. This approach, as will be demonstrated, was in concert with the method used in the work of various literary modernists.

The relationship between art and commerce, and how it played out in the marketplace with commercialists relying on literary techniques and ideals, was also garnering scrutiny from the opposite side. Accordingly, the next two chapters address this relationship from a literary perspective. Chapter four evaluates Virginia Woolf's approach in reconciling the tension between art and commerce, something specifically manifested in her fascination with experiential goods and experiential consumption. Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf's most iconic character, functions as an exemplar of the modern subject as an experiential consumer. And just as the promotion of experiential consumption is championed in the commercial sphere, much the same occurs in a number of Woolf's texts. The dematerialist aesthetic, while initially detectable in the aesthetic movement of the late 1800s, gains greater force in Woolf, as shown in her memorable rebuke of "materialist" authors. Crucially, Woolf can be seen as a sophisticated thinker of economics, particularly in microeconomics, an understanding important to the handling of the interior life of characters in her stories. One pivotal way in which Woolf establishes primacy for experiential commodities is in the tactic of depicting how material goods function as a gateway for a more highly valorised experiential good. Moreover, through examining Woolf's treatment of everyday life, its daily routines, especially in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse,* in addition to some of her shorter texts, it evinces the position that elements

of consumer culture can enter into a meaningful engagement with both art and aesthetics. Put another way, participation in an experiential economy obviates the crasser aspects of market culture, registering a uniquely modernist kind of resistance.

The fifth and final chapter turns to James Joyce and the many imbrications between aesthetics, the everyday, and market culture featured in his works. Though Joyce's favourable interest in consumer culture has been regarded as less ambiguous among critics than that of Woolf, its highly extensive role still remains largely underappreciated. Similar to Woolf, Joyce exhibits his fixation with market culture by revealing its strong connections with quotidian life, and again, like his modernist peer, often filtered through a consumerist lens. Also, just as in the world of modernist literature, Clarissa Dalloway becomes an experiential consumer par excellence, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* emerges as an exemplar of this modern figure. Yet, as this chapter will show, the influence of market economics on Joyce was even greater. The stylistic treatments of the everyday in early Joyce, indeed, bears much resemblance to that of Woolf; however, Joyce gradually evolves into a writer who later employs radically different literary techniques. A key strand of this chapter involves exploring the ways in which Joyce's considerable exposure to commercialism – including a variety of actual business ventures – shaped his writing techniques and practices. In this vein, a market culture ethos was not only evident in Joyce's selection of subject matter in *Ulysses*, and in the techniques presented in the written work itself, but further manifested in his savvy commercialist instincts for the marketing of the text, including its commercial afterlife, and its eventual reception in the academic community.

Nowadays, instances of experiential consumption as a standard quotidian activity are so commonplace that it passes without much notice. One need not look any further than the ubiquity

of participation in the social media landscape alone to validate this conclusion. The project at hand is intended to get at the origin, the early processes of how experiential consumption as a dominant consumer mode first came into fruition. And to do so requires a hybrid of a cultural study and a literary study. In broad terms, the early parts of this project primarily involve theorizing, with issues of subjectivity and aesthetics at the forefront. The middle of the project more heavily leans on the research associated with primary historical documents in market culture, a good deal of which include advertisements and other market related material. Afterwards, all of this theorizing and research is applied to close readings of consumerist ideals and experiential consumption in some of the high modernist works of Woolf and Joyce.

Chapter One

The Interiorization of Commodity Culture

The genealogy of the experiential consumer is the central preoccupation of this study. This cultural figure, although somewhat distinguishable and visible from its previous iterations, such as the nineteenth-century flâneur, only emerged as a distinct modern type of subject in the early decades of the twentieth century, making appearances in both mainstream European society and in various seminal texts of high modernist English literature, namely those of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Eventually, this same figure again receded into the background, drifting out of focus, yet not anymore on account of marginality, but rather on the ubiquity in representing the standard mode of daily life in the modern world. Crucial to the origin of the experiential consumer is the confluence of two historical developments in the later nineteenth century: the modern individual's internalization of the commodity form, and the evolution of aestheticism in promoting aesthetically engaged consumption. The initial one was instrumental in establishing a subjectivity which encouraged the perception of all things as commodities, and accordingly as consumable, extending to those of the nonmaterial kind, with even the inclusion of experiences. The second helped cultivate the consumer subject into an aesthetic agent who could engage in a modern society becoming progressively less materialist in its orientation, and increasingly more culturalist, headed towards the horizon of an experiential economy. This chapter will primarily address the role of the commodity and market culture in the advent of experiential consumption as a major trend in modernity, while the matter of aestheticism will be taken up in the next. Since the crux of the later sections pertains to a theory of modernity based on a consumer-oriented consciousness which valorises experiences as a primary object for consumption, it is constructive to begin with a close examination of the scholarship on experiential consumption.

In presenting this material first, it allows for the consideration of useful concepts in evaluating the treatment of experiences in the high modernist era.

Understanding Experiential Consumption

As illustrative of the potential percipience, and challenges, in associating notions of experiential consumption with the early twentieth century, the literature only began appearing in this relatively underdeveloped subject area near the end of that century and strictly from an economics perspective with marketing and consumer behaviour researchers leading the way. Despite their commercialist agenda, these experts have borrowed ideas and concepts from the social sciences and philosophy to support their work in developing this nascent field. In "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption," a study widely viewed as initiating this area of research, Morris Holbrook and Elizabeth Hirschman evaluated the significance of affective elements in the acts of consumption. The primary aim of their study was to offer an additional paradigm to help account for consumer behaviour in measures that had previously been limited to the "information processing model," which presupposes a highly rational consumer whose behaviour is dictated by such considerations.[1] In contrast, they chose to address the mostly overlooked factors: fantasies, feelings, and fun, with an "experiential perspective [that] focuses on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private in nature."[2] By closely examining the configuration of activities associated with consumption, attention is directed to the experiences created by a product for the one actually consuming it.[3]

[1] Morris B. Holbrook and Elizabeth C. Hirschman, "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun," *Journal of Consumer Research* 9, no. 2 (1982): 132.
[2] Holbrook and Hirschman, "Experiential Aspects of Consumption," 136.
[3] Holbrook and Hirschman, 137.

A crucial insight of their study is in its discussion on the esthetic nature of experiential consumption, where the product is appreciated for its own sake as something separate from utilitarian function.[4] In other words, for the consumer, a "play mentality" is sufficient and it overrides the lack of material gain.[5] On this point, we can draw a useful connection to the sphere of aesthetics in the art world: the idea of product enjoyment for just its own sake, parallels the aesthetic credo of "art for art's sake." Throughout this thesis project, it will be asserted that the rationale for experiential consumption – including those detached from traditional market activity – is in the rich subjective engagement it provides, even if devoid of specific utility or economic benefit. Another critical takeaway from these researchers is in the elaborations they make on the issue of the consumer's acts of playfulness. Here, they bring into the analysis the psychological concept of "associative hierarchies," an emotive phenomenon that pairs neural events with specific experiences: "[w]hen extended to the experiential perspective, this contiguity principle suggests that sensations, imagery, feelings, pleasures, and other symbolic or hedonic components which are frequently paired together in experience tend to become mutually evocative."[6] As we consider either the work of Baudelaire and Benjamin, or any other treatments on flânerie, it will become apparent that such activity does elicit responses which reinforce the behaviour of the experiential consumer in a manner congruent with associative hierarchies.

Building on the research of experiential consumption is the work of Antonella Caru and Bernard Cova. The main contribution of their study "Revisiting Consumption Experience," resides in its attempt to present a more expansive articulation of the topic, namely in exploring experiences which are not viewed as "extraordinary," and further, in also expanding the scope to

[4] Ibid., 138. For these researchers and others in this section, "esthetic," rather than "aesthetic" is the preferred term.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

consider experiences that fall outside the boundaries of market activity. Confirming the commitment to this approach is their early philosophical discussion on the nature of experience, allowing them to evaluate it "as a central element of the life of today's consumer, a consumer who is looking for sense."[7] The suggestion is that experiential consumption involves an extension of the economic cycle, in that after material consumption, the process is replicated with subjective experiential components. The other important implication is that the modern consumer actively takes a role in constructing an enriched life through the development and consumption of experiences. But while they are referring to a contemporary context, a central premise of this chapter is that this type of consumer – the experiential consumer – first appeared much earlier in the modernist period.

Importantly, this type of figure provides a useful index for better understanding the transition between the modern and the postmodern, one which has attracted theoretical interest, for example, as notably expressed in the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman and his notion of "liquid modernity." Though Bauman had been a long-time postmodern theorist, he eventually settled on an idea based on "liquidity" to analyse the changes in the modern world. For Bauman, modernity was characterized by this movement away from more traditional societies based on stability and certainty, with gradual shifts caused by increasing levels of fluidity and malleability and its effects of destabilization to the current order; hence, in this understanding, modern societies change progressively from states of solidity to greater liquidity.[8] This formulation has been sufficiently influential as to even inspire some work in the field of consumer research.

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[7] Antonella Caru and Bernard Cova, "Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept," *Marketing Theory* 3, no. 2 (2003): 270.
[8] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 6-7.

Fleura Bardhi and Giana Eckhardt, in affiliation with Bauman's paradigm, though their usage of it with consumerism casts it in a more sanguine light, develop their notion of "liquid consumption," which they define "as ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized," while solid consumption is "enduring, ownership based, and tangible."[9] For these researchers, in concert with Bauman's general metaphor, they conceive of various forms of consumption as residing on a spectrum between solid and liquid states. Bardhi and Eckhardt's work is prompted by the need to account for consumer behaviour in our contemporary growing digital landscape, and with the spread of global mobility.[10] Thus, we can view the appearance of the experiential consumer as one of the earliest indications of this progression towards various forms of liquid consumption. All of this evinces a crucial idea: in the modern world, it is difficult to separate experience from the act of consumption, as the two become increasingly intertwined by the conditions of modernity.

Caru and Cova, deepening their analysis of the consumption experience, outline the four major stages which are constitutive of it: the pre-consumption experience, largely based on planning and imagining; the purchase experience, which relates mostly to choice and payment; the core consumption experience, anchored primarily within sensory responses; and the remembered consumption experience, featuring nostalgia and the activity of recollection.[11] While all these stages hold sway, it can be argued that the initial stage of the "pre-consumption experience" is most fundamental to the experiential consumer, and which most closely embodies the spirit of flânerie, in effect, creating this very mode of consumption. It is because of this first

[9] Fleura Bardhi and Giana Eckhardt, "Liquid Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 44 (2017): 582.
[10] Bardhi and Eckhardt, "Liquid Consumption," 582.
[11] Caru and Cova, "Revisiting consumption experience," 271.

phase that an experiential good often outstrips the perceived value of a material commodity. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that experiential offerings are likely to produce greater levels of satisfaction and happiness than those provided by material goods. In a study by Leaf Van Boven and Thomas Gilovich, they found that experiential purchases were viewed more favourably than material ones: "experiences make people happier because they are more open to positive reinterpretations, are a more meaningful part of one's identity, and contribute more to successful social relationships."[12] Returning to Caru and Cova's work, perhaps its most instrumental feature is in their formulation of the distinction between "the consumption experience" and "the consumer experience," in which the former may or may not include a market relation, thus moving beyond a conception of experience that is wholly dependent on commercial offerings, whereas the latter is specifically attached to market-related transactions.[13] It is through reviewing sociological typologies of consumption – featuring one's different connections to family, the community, the state, and the market – that they arrive at this dichotomous relationship between consumption experiences and consumer experiences. Another key function of arranging this dichotomy is to help account for the ideological slant in consumer research that valorises "extraordinary" experiences, which are intended to secure marketing objectives.[14] For Caru and Cova, ultimately, it is about ensuring balance in understanding phenomena along the continuums of the ordinary to the extraordinary, and the non-commercial to the commercial.[15] Here, these researchers are expressing an interest that had emerged with substantial enthusiasm in literary modernism. Writers from this era, particularly during the high

[12] Leaf Van Boven and Thomas Gilovich, "To Do or to Have? That Is the Question," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 6 (2003): 1193.
[13] Caru and Cova, "Revisiting consumption experience," 276.
[14] Ibid., 277.
[15] Ibid., 282.

modernist period, had exhibited a fascination with the ordinary in everyday life and its intersection with the marketplace; in other words, they presaged the increased fixation on the quotidian and its confluence with market culture, which would become a crucial object of analysis for consumer researchers many years later.

In tackling experiential consumption from a perspective that challenges some of the theoretical underpinnings of the existing scholarship, namely the functionalist assumptions attached to the investigation of experiences, appears the work of Clinton Lanier and Scott Rader. Though they note the upgraded status of the experiential literature, they "contend that this understanding is still somewhat circumscribed by an overriding functional perspective … [and instead suggest] that we reconsider consumption experiences from a broader two-dimensional perspective that explicitly examines the relationship between the structural and functional aspects of these experiences."[16] The parameters of structure and functionality, and how various experiences are situated within these axes, are at the core of their study; the structural dimension entails the relations affiliated with specific cultural forms; the functional dimension involves the resulting consequences that arise from these forms.[17] Using this model, Lanier and Rader identify four different types of experiences: liberatory, performance, adventure, and stochastic. Experiences characterized by anti-structural relations, such as instability and disorderliness because they fall outside the expected norm of an established conventional cultural form, but which nonetheless promote functional consequences intended to compensate for its anti-structural tension, can be viewed as liberatory (e.g., science fiction convention) in nature.[18]

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[16] Clinton D. Lanier and Scott Rader, "Consumption Experience: An expanded view," *Marketing Theory* 15, no. 4 (2015): 492.
[17] Lanier and Rader, "Consumption Experience," 493.
[18] Ibid., 494.

Alternately, a performance experience (e.g., retail environment) is thought of as one in which adherence is maintained with both the structural relations and the promotion of functional consequences that buttress these structural relationships.[19] The stochastic experience (e.g., casino gambling) is similarly aligned with a structured cultural form, but deviates in reference to its anti-functional consequences.[20] Finally, the adventure experience (e.g., long-term backpacking), largely drawn from Georg Simmel's work, are consumption experiences in which anti-structural relations are addressed in tandem with the manifestation of anti-functional consequences; here, the consequences ignore any efforts to ameliorate the anti-structural tension through an alternative cultural form, since resistance to all cultural forms is its *raison d'etre*.

With all this in mind, we might consider some preliminary implications of applying this framework to the activities of the flâneur. As we will later explore, the flâneur interfaces with the structured cultural forms of the urban marketplace, and yet this figure also strives to maintain personal autonomy by clinging to an experiential economy – largely eschewing material consumption – that can function outside of it, to affect an anti-structural relationship. To a certain degree, the consequences of flânerie are functional, as naturally, the flâneur is hoping to achieve the predictable results of an enjoyable excursion into the sights and sounds of the cityscape; but nonetheless, the flâneur can never be certain of the unknown, and of the potentially disordered experience that may reside around the next street corner. In reality, the uncertainty of the next encounter is a primary motivational factor for the flâneur. It is precisely the fungibility of flânerie that defines its appeal, one that has helped establish the experiential consumer as a standard figure of our contemporary world. Flânerie is the most flexible and

[19] Ibid., 495.
[20] Ibid., 496.

customizable type of experiential mode. Upcoming sections will show that it contains, depending on what actually transpires in any given flâneuristic mission, elements of the four types of experiences proposed by Lanier and Rader's framework, an outcome for some activities, that these researchers acknowledge is possible.[21]

Although it was during the early twentieth century that the first indications that experiential factors were becoming pervasive in consumer society, it was not until several decades later that economists took notice of what early flâneurs, various literary modernists, and even some pioneering members of the business world had already come to understand in a much earlier era. And while it is true that Holbrook and Hirschman's landmark study marked the starting point of consumer research interest in this area, it would take almost a couple of decades later, nearing the end of the century, before this development would receive sufficient appreciation as to warrant bold treatment. In a 1998 edition of the *Harvard Business Review*, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, using the very title of their work, present such a claim: "Welcome to the Experience Economy." The general argument posited by Pine and Gilmore surrounds the belief that society is transitioning into a fourth stage of economic development; the agrarian economy was based on raw commodities; this led to the industrial economy, which converted materials into manufactured goods; then the service economy appeared as consumer demands increased; and as the next logical step, they insist we are moving to an economy based on experiences.[22] In their view, businesses need to make adaptations to accommodate the realities of this newest phase: "the next competitive battleground lies in staging experiences."[23]

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[21] Ibid., 493.
[22] B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August (1998): 97.
[23] Pine and Gilmore, "Experience Economy," 98.

The premise that structures Pine and Gilmore's study is that experiences are anything but nebulous, and accordingly should be handled in the same manner as all other tangible commercial elements. "An experience," they explain, "is not an amorphous construct; it is as real an offering as any service, good, or commodity."[24] This conception of experience precisely evokes Woolf's and Joyce's handling of it in their works; in fact, within the context of all their preoccupation with consumer culture, later chapters will explore how these high literary modernists frame an experience as a distinctly tangible offering.

The business objective is to incorporate dramaturgical principles to create a memorable event, one in which services are used as the stage, and goods become fashioned into props.[25] A notable aspect of their analytical perspective is the assertion that "experiences" are not delivered, as typical of services, but instead are "staged." In this vein, since experiences are strictly internal to the consumer, unlike products and services which are externally situated, the consumer engagement is endlessly variable: "no two people can have the same experience, because each experience derives from the interaction between the staged event (like a theatrical play) and the individual's state of mind."[26] This foregrounds the significant imbrications between theatre, commerce, and the selling and consumption of experiences. As we will see later in this thesis project, the case study on Selfridges demonstrates that using the store as a "stage" and the "goods as props" – to present and sell an experience – was an approach, that while highly neoteric for its time, had already appeared many years in advance of Pine and Gilmore's work.

In terms of a qualitative evaluation of experiences in relation to a paradigm, these researchers rely on two continuums: active and passive participation; absorption and

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 99.

immersion.[27] While the first spectrum requires little explanation, the second one is somewhat nuanced. Though a consumer may be deeply absorbed into an event, such as a spectator in the grandstand of a horserace, the consumer at ground level of this same event enjoys an immersive engagement that is far different.[28] Depending on the positions activated within these continuums, experiences are categorized as entertainment, esthetic, educational, or escapist.[29] Passive participation combined with absorption lead to an entertainment experience, whereas the same measure of participation coupled with immersion produces an esthetic experience. Active participation that also includes absorption yields an educational experience; however, an escapist experience emerges when this level of participation intersects with an immersive environment.[30] For Pine and Gilmore, the richest experiences contain qualities of all the different realms, which form a "sweet spot" near the location in which these spectra meet.[31] And in the pursuit of staging the strongest experiences, they prescribe a thematically oriented approach: "the theme must drive all the design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified story line that wholly captivates the customer."[32] Not surprisingly, here, some literary elements are broached; a crucial strand of this academic project insists that the literary, the commercial, the theatrical, and the experiential all converge in the modern world to form an influential nexus. To strengthen the theme, they advocate techniques that engage all the senses so that the experience becomes more memorable.[33] This material will prove useful in showing why the flâneur is the experiential consumer's forebear. Specifically, it will be

[27] Ibid., 101.
[28] Ibid., 101-02.
[29] Ibid., 102.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 103.
[33] Ibid., 104.

instructive to return to the notion of engaging the various senses as flânerie activates these in ways that are unrivalled by other activities. Walking (tactility in motion), watching, listening, taking in the scents, and perhaps even purchasing a coffee or snack item, activates all the sensory perceptions. As for storyline and theme, it will be explored how a defining characteristic of flânerie is the inextricable link between the flâneur and narrativity: the flâneur's movements through the urban space constitute a kind of textual composition.

The Internalization of the Commodity Form

Although the early twentieth century may have been afloat in mass-produced commodities of all kinds, and certainly the growing effects of consumer culture were felt everywhere in the western world, it still remains true that the impact of the commodity form had long been an influential force on the human subject. However, it is the pervasiveness with which the commodity form becomes internalized during this period that is rather decisive in the ways it begins to alter human consciousness. That all of this should happen at this time is hardly a matter of happenstance as it coincides with a crucial juncture in the evolution of industrial capitalism: one that featured a transition from a production focus to one heavily based on consumption. In fact, some experts have located the birth in the techniques of modern advertising, such as the opening up of "the sphere of Culture" to establish "new territory for producing exchange value," in response to the emerging problems of "overproduction" and "underconsumption."[34] Marx's analyses of the commodity and commodity fetishism took as their chief interest a production orientation, not on the commodity as an object of consumption, which absorbed the thinking of critics like Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno. Probing into the latter offers

[34] Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially* (London: Routledge, 1992), 17.

a better understanding of the deepening reach of the commodity form within the psyche of the modern subject.

This focus on the modern individual and activities of consumption is not simply a matter of consumer behaviour or the ways in which people interact with marketplace economics. The implications spread much further to include dominant modes of human subjectivity, and how these can work to shape the nature of daily life. Fuat Firat and Nikhilesh Dholakia have written extensively on the evolution of consumption in market society. In one study, they track various modes of human subjectivity over recent centuries, which offers key insights about the process of the commodity form becoming internalized. Firat and Dholakia explain that "conceptually constructed frames embed in our consciousness, [then] become second nature, and continually shape our subjectivity."[35] The notion of "conceptually constructed frames" is particularly useful in evaluating unified patterns of thinking that can be inspired from exposure to ubiquitous elements of society. Firat and Dholokia articulate the different versions from "the toiler-laborer-desirer subjectivity," to the enlightenment era "citizen subject," and the most recent version of the current "consumer subject."[36] They conclude that the economic sphere of activity prevailed over its counterparts in the political and social domains because it was the aspect of human culture that could best control the material world and minimize the power of nature.[37] In relation to modern consumer subjectivity, it is primarily about "approaching life in terms of seeing oneself as a maker of choices among available marketplace alternatives [rather] than succeeding in consuming more."[38] More directly to the point, "[t]he rationality of the [modern] consumer,"

[35] A. Fuat Firat and Nikhilesh Dholakia, "From consumer to construer: Travels in human subjectivity," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17, no. 3 (2017): 505.
[36] Firat and Dholakia, "From consumer to construer," 505-07.
[37] Ibid., 509.
[38] Ibid., 507.

they contend, "making choices in the market to maximize multiple purposes … such as status, lifestyle, meaning, and to communicate identities – has become the dominant existential rationale."[39] While some of these characteristics have become more clearly visible in recent years, they did not spring up overnight, and are linked to a progression of preoccupations that first gained prominence in the early 1900s. Aspects of conveying lifestyle and identity were certainly discernible enough within the modernist art movement, such as in the coterie of Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury.

Even Firat and Dholakia, working from an economic perspective, allude to the connections between everyday life and the art world. In discussing the demands of the market, which requires the devotion of all energy to its economic activities, they note the potential for disillusionment among artists in their creations: "Directing energies that had the potential of creating valued experiences in everyday life to producing for the market with a singular rationale and its intellectualization – including, for example, artworks – led to disenchantment of everyday life."[40] Indeed, this does express the frustrations of many of modernism's artists with their anxieties over market influences both hampering and threatening their work. Continuing on this theme of how the prospects of quotidian life were placed at odds with commercial logic, they concluded that "[f]or anything to find value, it had to be divorced from everyday life – to have an objectified, commoditized presence; to have some degree of permanence and materiality; to become a thing that could be presented in the market."[41] It can be argued that some high literary modernists, and this academic project proposes Woolf and Joyce in particular, were "directing energies" into the representation of valuable everyday life experiences in their texts, as

[39] Ibid., 510.
[40] Ibid., 514.
[41] Ibid.

commodifiable things with a "commoditized presence." And with this standard in mind, the modern consumer subject, in ways depicted in high modernist literature, could find the consumption of everyday life experiences rewarding. As later chapters dedicated to these high modernist authors will reveal, they genuinely held an interest in market relations and how this mediated quotidian matters.

Another critical feature of Firat and Dholakia's conception of the consumer subject and its influence on subjectivity is the notion of personal autonomy, one that engendered the very concept of experiencing freedom. They argue that "market choice became the primary criterion that constituted the freedom of the modern subject."[42] An important implication in equating personal liberation with consumer choice is the possibility that the consumption of experiential commodities, including those of everyday experiences, can be viewed, in part, as a mode of resistance against a market culture so heavily soaked in material commodities. A final point from their study requires consideration, and it hinges on a crucial development on economic-based subjectivity: material culture led to consumer culture, and concomitant with this alteration the latter promoted a focus on the consumption of intangibles and services, such as the products of communication technologies.[43] The key insight is that all of this prompted the evolution of a consumer orientation, progressing from "the material to the symbolic."[44] It is difficult to overstate the relevance of this movement towards symbolic forms of consumption, in large measure because it is a strong indicator that the internalized commodity form had reached higher levels of abstraction within the modern individual's consciousness. And principally associated with the early signs in the growth of symbolic consumption in the modern world is a critical

[42] Ibid., 511.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

paradox: the more deeply the commodity form was internalized within modern individuals, the further it advanced the process of dematerializing commodities and its linkages to experiential consumption. There is no small measure of irony in the situation that as the commodity occupied a greater presence within the human psyche – and the framework of consciousness – that it should inspire an increasing register of immaterial perceptions of it. The dematerialization of commodities eventually became so pervasive that it underpinned entire sectors of the economy, such as the service industry and in areas of technological research and development.[45]

Long before Firat and Dholakia, cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin also analysed dominant modes of subjectivity, but from a different angle of the modern subject as an artistic consumer. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin advances the view that human perceptions adapt to the material conditions surrounding them, which shift over time: "During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well."[46] Perception is conditioned by whatever modes form a substantial part of daily reality, and thus, the subjective lives of individuals are deeply affected by environmental factors, such as technological developments. Although Benjamin employs different language, preferring to speak of "the mode of human sense perception," what essentially emerges is an alternate expression for articulating a framework of human consciousness. From here, Benjamin evaluates the effects of technology on an individual's psychological reception of an artistic

[45] This has led to ideas about theoretical reformulations of capitalism, such as "cognitive capitalism," based on informational and knowledge paradigms. The following is an example of a study in this topic area. Yann Moulier Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*, trans. by Ed Emery (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).
[46] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn and ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 222.

product, identifying how new processes shape the audience engagement with it. Central to the different examples he examines is the concept of the "aura," which is best defined as the original artwork's singular "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be," a distinctive quality that separates it from the copies subjected to mechanical reproduction.[47]

Elaborating further, Benjamin attempts to uncover the element of human subjectivity that accounts for this willingness to readily dispense with the aura in the embracement of artistic reproductions. For Benjamin, humans seem to crave a desire to perceive an equality in all things, even at the expense of the particularity in things that define their very nature: "To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction."[48] And from this conclusion, a highly telling inference can be drawn; since the human mind is inclined to evaluate things in relation to a sense of equality between them, it indicates a proclivity to apprehend everything in terms of "exchange value," a bedrock principle governing commodity form dynamics. In essence, this cognitive need to create equivalency is an entrenched perceptual tendency, demonstrating further the modern subject's propensity for internalizing the commodity form, and the conditioning which consolidates such patterned thinking.

Another vital index in which the internalized commodity form manifests itself within human consciousness is the effects it has on the perception of experiences. Georg Simmel's work offers analyses of the modern individual's interaction with the panoply of sweeping changes in

[47] Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 220.
[48] Ibid., 223.

the urban space of fin de siècle Europe. For Simmel, this period gave rise to emergent subjective patterns, one of which he explores in his essay "The Adventure." He outlines the different elements that characterize an adventurous experience, however, in exploring its structural features, signs of the commodity form begin to make appearances. A major quality that distinguishes this type of experience, as Simmel evaluates it, involves the sharp demarcations that bound its starting and concluding points. "We ascribe to an adventure," he writes, "a beginning and an end much sharper than those to be discovered in the other forms of our experiences. The adventure is freed of the entanglements and concatenations which are characteristic … [o]f our ordinary experiences, [where] we declare that one of them is over when, or because, another starts."[49] According to Simmel, the adventure possesses independence from the continuity of events that are associated with typical experiences; it is the "alien" feature of the adventure, seemingly plucked out of context, that separates it from the temporal chain of other kinds of experiences.[50]

Compounding the significance is the way Simmel then applies this to connections between the adventure and artworks, arguing that "the essence of a work of art is, after all, that it cuts out a piece of the endlessly continuous sequences of perceived experience, detaching it from all connections with one side or the other."[51] Both the artistic work and the adventure are unified by an autonomous and self-sufficient form, each one secured internally by a core "interwoven with the uninterruptedness of that existence," producing the sense of a fully integrated unit.[52] Consider how this resembles chief aspects of the commodity form; for example, evaluate how

[49] Georg Simmel, "The Adventure," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 222-23.
[50] Simmel, "The Adventure," 223.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

the adventurous experience is torn from the context of ordinary life, and appears as an "island" separated from it. Indeed, this conjures up reflections of how the commodity is sundered from the context and conditions of its productive origins. And certainly, the autonomous nature of this subjective template, as articulated by Simmel, does parallel the commodity's perceived appearance of a self-contained existence. Though the emphasis may be directed to the adventure experience, which he ultimately concludes is based upon a structural form and not on its specific content,[53] the fingerprints of a highly internalized commodity form are all over the levers of the modern individual's subjective apparatus.

Through the commodity form's impact on subjective orientation, a particularly crucial abstraction begins to exert influence: the metaphorical abstraction of the modern individual as commodity. One of Simmel's interests in his trenchant investigations of modernity involved the promotion of commodities, a matter taken up in his work "The Berlin Trade Exhibition." Although he addresses the exhibition's many representational and display elements, perhaps the most intriguing insights, which seem to descend upon Simmel in almost epiphanic fashion, are the affinities and parallel conditions that link together the modern individual and the commodity. Simmel explains that "[i]ndeed it strikes one as curious that the separate objects in an exhibition show the same relationships and modifications that are made by the individual within society. On the one side, the depreciation of an otherwise qualified neighbour, on the other, accentuation at the expense of the same."[54] Here, Simmel is showing how perceptions in a commercially soaked culture are blurring the very boundaries that separate humans and commodities. He further develops the comparison, pointing out that "on the one side, the levelling and uniformity due to

[53] Ibid., 229.
[54] Georg Simmel, "The Berlin Trade Exhibition," *Theory, Culture & Society* 8, no. 3 (1991): 122.

an environment of the same, on the other, the individual is even more accentuated through the summation of many impressions; on the one side, the individual is only an element of the whole, only a member of a higher unity, on the other, the claim that the same individual is a whole and a unity."[55] Though the passage is remarkable for the ties it identifies between the modern individual and the commodity, the most salient point emerges from its final reference where the human preoccupation with originary tension is highlighted. The human impulse to assert one's own individuality and uniqueness, while remaining aware of occupying only a single term in a greater hereditary sequence that extends far beyond oneself, is an existential analogue that inclines the individual to see themselves in commodities. With all this perceptual transposition, Simmel seems to be insinuating that the modern world, especially as depicted in the world's exhibitions, humanizes the commodity and commodifies the human.

Nuancing the personification of objects, Benjamin evaluates how the world's fair is structured as an educational environment for this pursuit. "They [world exhibitions] are a school," he writes, "in which the masses, forcibly excluded from consumption, are imbued with the exchange value of commodities to the point of identifying with it: 'Do not touch the items on display.'"[56] In an earlier passage from the same work, Benjamin sets up how this kind of fixation helps establish the modern subject's identification with the commodity: "He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others. The enthronement of the commodity, with its luster of distraction."[57] These are the specific qualities of the world's fair that "open[s] a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. The entertainment

[55] Simmel, "The Berlin Trade Exhibition," 122.
[56] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 18.
[57] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 7.

industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity."[58] Benjamin, in some of his notes in *The Arcades*, expands on this by using even stronger language to characterize the kinship between people and commodities, ultimately settling on the following assessment: "Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself."[59] He was not expressing an isolated conclusion as he worked through the implications of what this empathic sensibility for inanimate things suggests about other aspects of engagement with modernity; for example, he claimed that "[t]he flâneur is the virtuoso of this empathy," which he connected to various activities of flânerie, a discussion that will form a later section of this chapter.[60]

If empathy with the commodity is an element of the modern subject's relatability to it, then we can inspect another issue that magnifies this condition. Aside from the exchange value of the commodity, central to its structure is the fetishized autonomic status that conceals any productive origin, giving it the appearance of a naturally occurring entity. When looking directly into the commodity, it is because of this feature that modern individuals see themselves reflected back. At times, individuals have a tendency to steal away any signs of productive origin when it comes to matters of garnering credit. Much of this centres on presenting personal characteristics as naturally ingrained, rather than culturally produced. In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu analyses the sociological implications of "taste" formation, and its function in acquiring and securing social class status. "The ideology of natural taste," Bourdieu writes, "owes its plausibility and its efficacy to the fact that, like all the ideological strategies generated in the everyday class struggle, it naturalizes real differences, converting differences in the mode of acquisition of

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 448.
[60] Ibid.

culture into differences of nature."[61] Put another way, this drive to hide the true process behind the development of certain refined qualities like taste, is part of an ideological ruse that is no different than the magical conception of a commodity that gave birth to itself. For this reason, Bourdieu notes that the only kind of cultural relation that will be given any degree of acknowledgment is the type "which least bears the visible marks of its genesis," so that it is understood "that true culture is nature."[62] Though Bourdieu's emphasis is on class-enforced distinctions, he demonstrates the truth of its socially constructed nature; with the absence of real differences in the actual "nature" of social groups, it reveals how various characteristics like the attitude of the flâneur or the experiential consumer can be embraced by the modern subject regardless of social class or status, showing how this mindset transcends class boundaries to produce some democratizing effects.

The Revaluation of Experience

As the modern world of the early 1900s was under drastic reconstruction from an acceleration in the shift to a society based on consumption, an interesting set of dynamics began to coalesce around the nature of "experience." A central premise of this study involves the movement in this era towards the commodification and consumption of experiences, but to support this claim, it is necessary to venture beyond just an investigation of the internalization of the commodity form, and to explain the circumstances that encouraged and made possible the emergence of such sensibilities. And it would be difficult to find circumstances any more determinative, ironically, than those that led to the very degradation of experience itself. The

[61] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 68.
[62] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 68.

mechanization of modern life, nowhere more apparent than in the industrial sector, was the key element that signalled the downgrading of experience. Though Marx may have primarily concerned himself with the detachment of the labourer from the fruits of his labour, Benjamin ruminated upon a different type of alienation altogether: not the division of labour, but the division of the labourer, specifically, the unmooring of workers from their own experiential engagement. In evaluating the plight of the unskilled worker, whom Benjamin considered the most disconnected of all those exposed to the conditions of factory life, he notes their extreme level of estrangement. "The unskilled worker," Benjamin writes, "is the one most deeply degraded by the drill of the machines. His work has been sealed off from experience."[63] If it is true that workers – depending on their various skillsets – encountered varying degrees of being "sealed off from experience," then it stands to reason that a desire to reconnect with some experiential depth is only a natural reaction to this harsh vocational reality; hence, there existed strong motivation to reinvest in the consumption of experiential goods as compensation. In another text, Benjamin goes even further than just noting the disconnection from experience, to actually describing its degenerative course. He argues that "[t]he process of the atrophy of experience is already underway within manufacturing. In other words, it coincides, in its beginnings, with the beginnings of commodity production."[64]

Although the negative factors of a mechanized existence were heavily pronounced within the industrial environment, a decline in the value of experience was becoming a common affliction in the urban setting as well. Just as the labourer was forced to contend with and adapt to the characteristics of factory life, the urban dweller also faced challenges with the radical

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[63] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn and ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 176.
[64] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 804.

transformations underway in the cityscape of the early twentieth century. Simmel's most influential work, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," examines the effects of the barrage of urban stimuli on human subjectivity. In Simmel's view, the most impactful feature of city life involves the disruption to human consciousness produced by "the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions." [65] Simply put, it is the stimulatory assault of the myriad "onrushing impressions" that necessitates the modern subject's acquisition of a defense mechanism, one that offers protection regardless of a person's natural disposition.[66] "Thus the metropolitan type of man which, of course, exists in a thousand individual variants," writes Simmel, "develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him. He reacts with his head instead of his heart."[67] These ideas are associated with what Simmel terms the "blasé attitude," a perspective of detached insouciance towards modern living.[68] Here, some important implications arise. If this "protective organ" allows the modern urban subject to cope with the dizzying sensory overload, it also becomes an unintentional catalyzing agent in a process that contributes to the blunting of experience. In other words, though perceptual habituation may be essential to survival in the urban milieu – through its filtering of extraneous sensations – it still functions as a primary threat to the acquisition of meaningful daily experiences.

While Simmel evaluates many of the elements of modernity and the metropolis, Siegfried Kracauer concerned himself more specifically with the formulation of cultural products and their

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[65] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), 410.
[66] Simmel, "The Metropolis," 410.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 413-14.

effects on the subjective lives of urban citizens. For Kracauer, a bombardment of sensations was deliberately engineered by the entertainment industry for the development of its offerings. In "The Cult of Distraction," he focuses on the immense popularity of theatres that in the 1920s began sprouting all over Berlin. Consider for a moment how Kracauer's description of the cinema mirrors in its artificially crafted form the sensory overload that Simmel had expressed about the city: "Spotlights shower their beams into the auditorium ... The orchestra asserts itself as an independent power, its acoustic production buttressed by the responsory of the lighting. Every emotion is accorded its own acoustic expression and its color value in the spectrum."[69] A deliberate attempt is made to exhaust the viewer's ability to process the influx of sensations, which Kracauer concludes is intended to induce the shutdown of thinking. "The stimulations of the senses," he explains, "succeed one another with such rapidity that there is no room left between them for even the slightest contemplation."[70]

The exploitation of cultural "distraction" in urban society, first studied by Kracauer, continued its progression and became even more readily visible by the 1930s, prompting Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno to provide a thorough articulation of it as part of their culture industry thesis. Although we are moving a little chronologically further from early twentieth-century Europe, it remains instructive to sketch forward – from its origins – the same process of degraded experiences, which illuminates both our understanding of earlier sociocultural dynamics and the evolved form of the phenomenon. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the chief cause of the great decline in the goods of culture is industrial capitalism: "The power of

[69] Siegfried Kracauer, "The Cult of Distraction," in *The Mass Ornament: Wiemar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 324.
[70] Kracauer, "The Cult of Distraction," 326.

industrial society is imprinted on people once and for all. The products of the culture industry are such that they can be alertly consumed even in a state of distraction."[71] Put another way, because consumers are conditioned to the principles and structure of the industrial work environment, the pre-packaged formula of culture products can be easily apprehended and digested without any conscious effort. Thus, everything in society, including cultural products, succumbs to the "schema of mechanical reproducibility."[72] Building on this point is their assertion that "[e]ach single manifestation of the culture industry inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them … [and to ensure] that the simple reproduction of mind does not lead on to the expansion of mind."[73] Crucially undergirding Horkheimer and Adorno's argument about the culture industry is their claim that the true purpose of entertainment involves the imitation of the workday experience after it has concluded, an aim intended to prime its repetition and to consolidate its governing logic: "mechanization has such power over leisure and its happiness, determines so thoroughly the fabrication of entertainment commodities, that the offduty worker can experience nothing but after-images of the work process itself."[74] With this in mind, "the only escape from the work process in factory and office is through adaptation to it in leisure time."[75] And a substantial part of this "adaptation" to leisure time is to ensure that the consumer remains an unthinking agent, one whom, we can infer is disconnected from any depth of experiential engagement. Much like Kracauer's observation about the uniformity of response, the programme behind these cultural products involves eliciting prescribed reactions rather than inviting genuine experiences. Though the products of literary modernism, especially those of the

[71] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott Gunzelin and ed. Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 100.
[72] Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 100.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 109.
[75] Ibid.

high modernist period, such as the works of Woolf and Joyce, certainly resist the general debasement of the cultural commodities these theorists evaluate, it would still seem reasonable to note the limitations imposed by the far greater volume of goods from which they are differentiated. However, the influence of these texts is amplified by the ways they advocate for a reclamation of everyday experiences, a treatment further enhanced in its refraction through a consumerist ethos which had been greatly expanding in mainstream society as the early twentieth century progressed.

The primary value of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique involves their exposing of subpar cultural products, the mechanisms which help foster society's acceptance of such inferior cultural goods, and the ways this reveals the diminishment of experiences in the modern world as a whole. In their view, this is orchestrated by capitalism to reinforce its hold on society, but the very market culture ethos at its core, also provides remedies to these conditions. It is the internalization of the commodity form and consumerist ideals which affects a form of subjectivity that treats experiences as objects worthy of consumption, and in doing so, promotes the prospect of enriched experiential engagement. Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of modernity relies on the use of a productivist model, thus, it is no accident that productivist terms repeatedly appear in their analysis ("workday," "mechanical reproduction," "worker," "work process"), mostly prefiguring the modern subject as a producer, much as Marx had. However, these critics underestimated how the paradigm had already shifted to a consumerist one, and though they still insisted on evaluating the modern individual as mainly a producer in both the factory and office, the modern subject had already become primarily a "consumer," and deeply influenced by a consumer-based consciousness. Despite capitalism's drawbacks, through its situating of the modern person as an agent of consumption, it inscribed within its structure the possibility in

which inferior cultural goods could be consumed, and ultimately, rejected in favour of better experiential options. As will later be shown in returning to Kracauer, even some of the deleterious features and consequences of low-grade cultural offerings, such as superficiality, distraction, and boredom, can be used to trigger a hankering for deeper experiential engagement.

Despite all the circumstances of modernity that combined to degenerate experience for the urban subject, there were nonetheless paradoxical qualities within them which also created opportunities for the revaluation of experience, a fact that is revealed by some of the same theorists who while identifying the dangers, also worked through modernity's antinomic features, namely Simmel and Kracauer. For Simmel, the modern city was quite influential in cultivating a deeply interiorized mental life for the individual, an assertion he sets up by introducing two interesting sociological concepts: the "objective spirit" and the "subjective spirit." The objective spirit is the aggregate of modern culture's elements, which is largely shaped by society's institutions and practices, particularly those rooted in tradition and history, a truly pervasive force that threatens personal autonomy.[76] Conversely, the subjective spirit emerges from within the individual as a response that militates against the demand for uniformity imposed by the objective spirit. In this vein, Simmel reaches a trenchant conclusion: "The most profound reason … the metropolis conduces to the urge for the most individual personal existence … [is because] the development of modern culture is characterized by … the 'objective spirit' over the 'subjective spirit.'"[77] The objective spirit as he assesses it, will only continue to expand, strengthening the need to develop and insulate human subjectivity.[78] With the growing hazard to the expression of one's individuality, the modern subject has little choice but to

[76] Simmel, "The Metropolis," 422.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 423.

marshal everything within oneself to maximize a distinctly original persona. “This results in the individual's summoning the utmost in uniqueness and particularization,” Simmel argues, “in order to preserve his most personal core. He has to exaggerate this personal element in order to remain audible even to himself.”[79]

Other elements of urban life also promoted individuality, such as the need to resist the city’s potentially homogenizing effects on one’s personality: “man is tempted to adopt the most tendentious peculiarities … of ‘being different’ of standing out in a striking manner and thereby attracting attention.”[80] In addition, the metropolis, with its more cursory kind of personal encounters – relative to those typical of a small town – further amplified the need to be “strikingly characteristic” in presenting oneself, so as to compensate for the brevity involved in these interactions.[81] With the expansion of an interiorized mental life, the protection of subjectivity, and the motivation to develop individuality, Simmel is in effect laying out the very prerequisites that would not only incentivize the modern urban dweller to pursue meaningful experiences, but also which would supply them with the attributes that facilitate enriched experiential engagement.

Kracauer’s work similarly identifies the beneficial possibilities that can also emerge from some negative features of modernity. Although he had critiqued the vacuous nature of various cultural products, most notably the cinema, and how these “raise distraction to the level of culture,” prospects for mitigation do materialize.[82] In Kracauer’s view, a primary characteristic behind the phenomena of “distraction” is the heavy emphasis on externality, which he does not

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 421.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Kracauer, “The Cult of Distraction,” 324.

regard as inherently troublesome; instead, he sees this as making plainly obvious the transparency of the techniques, and consequently, showing earnestness in their blatancy of function: "This emphasis on the external has the advantage of being sincere. It is not externality that poses a threat to truth."[83] For Kracauer, it is precisely this sincerity of intent that presents liberating potential; since the audience can (and should) easily observe what is transpiring, they will be compelled to affect change and ameliorate the social conditions of their society. And because "externality" holds up a mirror to the modern subject, it can become a major factor in motivating action. "Here, in pure externality," maintains Kracauer, "the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions. Were this reality to remain hidden from the viewers, they could neither attack nor change it."[84]

Another interesting treatment of "distraction" is offered in Kracauer's work "Boredom," in which a counterintuitive move is made to represent the former as a threat to the surprising benefits associated with the essay's title. Again, he envisages something redemptive in the externalized and superficial elements of his society; here, the advocacy involves the value of boredom. Kracauer argues that most people might prefer the idea of avoiding distraction (in the negative sense of his assessment) long enough to feel the luxury of boredom, but that the agents of distraction are loath to satisfy them: "But although one wants to do nothing, things are done to one: the world makes sure that one does not find oneself."[85] It seems that the interests serving distraction are far too powerful to allow one "to be as thoroughly bored with the world as it ultimately deserves."[86] Nonetheless, Kracauer does consider what might unfold if the individual

[83] Ibid., 326.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Siegfried Kracauer, "Boredom," in *The Mass Ornament: Wiemar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 332.
[86] Kracauer, "Boredom," 332.

should "find oneself," and it reads like an experiential playground: "In the evening one saunters through the streets, replete with an unfulfillment from which a fullness could sprout. Illuminated words glide by the rooftops, and already one is banished from one's own emptiness … [i]f only it were allowed to disappear!"[87] Kracauer is insisting that the ability to embrace boredom, and return to one's own subjectivity, operates as a gateway to experiential delights: [i]f however, one has the patience … to legitimate boredom, then one experiences a kind of bliss that is almost unearthly. A landscape appears in which colorful peacocks strut about, and images of people suffused with soul come into view."[88] In other words, the emptiness of the modern urban experience, a recurring thematic concern in his writings, would be satiated by the awakening of the individual's perceptions of the everyday, calling to mind, much like will be shown in the work of Woolf and Joyce, belief in the unharnessed potential of the quotidian.

Issues surrounding the revaluation of experience were given some direct attention by Benjamin as well. In connection to this, he tendered some insight behind the advent of the feuilleton as a popular literary genre. In his view, urban life had been maligned with a similar kind of "atrophy of experience" as to what he had concluded about industrial life, and for this reason his language concerning its amelioration, of which the feuilleton served a primary role, is tinged with pathological connotations. Benjamin explains that "the feuilleton … inject[ed] experience – as it were, intravenously – with the poison of sensation; that is to say, highlighting within ordinary experience the character of immediate experience."[89] It is as though the conditions of modern city living had devalued the currency of subjective engagement, and that the feuilleton was needed for reawakening its readers to the experiential potential that abounds

[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 334.
[89] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 803.

throughout the urban space, which was always hiding in plain sight. For Benjamin, the feuilletonist "renders the city strange to its inhabitants. He is thus one of the first technicians called up by the heightened need for immediate experiences."[90] This inability to capitalize on experiences and capture the immediacy within them, is not limited to the besieged worker or the emotionally numb urban dweller, even the artist is vulnerable. At one point in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin quotes Pierre Hamp's stinging harangue of the obliviousness of the Parisian artistic community in detecting the enriched stimuli of their own surroundings: "The artist seeks eternal truth and knows nothing of the eternity in his midst .... Instead of waiting to visit the Bay of Bengal to find objects to exclaim over, they might have a little curiosity about the objects they see in daily life."[91] Indeed, this attitude of extracting experiential potential from every available resource, does hold much in common with Benjamin's claim about the feuilleton's function, something that Hamp further articulates when he makes the recommendation of "walk[ing] out your front door as if you've just arrived from a foreign country; to discover the world in which you already live; to begin the day as if you've just gotten off the boat from Singapore and have never seen your own doormat or the people on the landing."[92]

Baudelaire and Benjamin's Flâneur: The Forebear of the Experiential Consumer

Fundamental to this academic project is the assertion that the evolution from material consumption towards a greater appreciation for experiential consumption, occupies a pivotal cultural moment in the formation of modern consumer society, including the contemporary version in which snapping a photograph of a restaurant dinner plate – and its almost instant

[90] Ibid.
[91] Quoted in Benjamin, 437.
[92] Quoted in Benjamin, 437. It appears that the underlying link between Benjamin and Hamp is the view on the importance of immersing oneself within the benefits offered by immediate experiences.

appearance on a social media platform to advertise the meal experience – is a common daily sight in our society. It is through investigating this crucial transitional period, in charting the genealogy and development of the experiential consumer, that much can be gleaned about this critical component of consumer culture. The devaluation of experience, for all its negative consequences, did succeed in reawakening a desire within the modern subject to reconnect with rich experiential engagement, and it was in the avatar of the flâneur that this type of consumer first made an appearance. Charles Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life* provided an early notable treatment of this figure who ambled his way through nineteenth-century Paris, delighting in the city's ambience. "The crowd is his element," Baudelaire explains, "as the air is that of birds and water of fishes."[93] For his flâneur, the urban space represents the ultimate comfort zone: "it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow … To be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home."[94] For Baudelaire, beyond being in his element within it, the flâneur is energized by "the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electric energy."[95] Benjamin had taken great interest in the flâneur, both in Baudelaire's conception, and in formulating his own. While discussing Baudelaire's work, he noted the distinction between the mere pedestrian who would accept being "jostled by the crowd," and the flâneur who "demanded elbow room," refusing to relinquish the indulgent perambulations of a man of leisure.[96] Benjamin goes on to make another key distinction between this figure and typical members of the urban mass. The frenetic tempo of the urban milieu (as in Simmel's "onrushing impressions") with its fast moving "traffic involves the individual in a

[93] Charles Baudelaire, The Painter of Modern Life and other essays, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 9.
[94] Baudelaire, *The Painter*, 9.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Benjamin, "On Some Motifs," 172.

series of shocks and collisions … [which causes] nervous impulses [to] flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery."[97] But unlike the negative impact this causes for the average city dweller, for the flâneur, as previously mentioned, the stimuli actually function as a source of fuel for enhanced interaction.

On this issue of the flâneur's relationship with the crowd, Benjamin's work includes other insightful observations. In analysing the depiction of the crowd in Edgar Allan Poe's literature, Benjamin identifies a feature of it which reflects how the industrial paradigm shapes the behaviours of the urban mass: "These are less the movements of people going about their business than the movements of the machines they operate. With uncanny foresight, Poe seems to have modeled the gestures and reactions of the crowd on the rhythm of these machines."[98] While these individuals might be mimicking the machinery of production and instantiating the routinization of daily life through it, Benjamin is quick to declare that the flâneur stands apart, refusing to participate in the choreographed imitation of industrial life. He argues that "[t]he flâneur … has no part in such behavior. Instead, he forms an obstacle in its path. His nonchalance would therefore be nothing other than an unconscious protest against the tempo of the production process."[99] Benjamin makes this claim more explicitly when he comments that "[t]he idleness of the flâneur is a demonstration against the division of labor."[100] The flâneur not only disrupts the patterned behavior of the crowd, but in doing so, becomes an early antecedent of the modern experiential consumer.

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[97] Ibid., 175.
[98] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 337-38.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 427.

In evaluating some other figures of modernity in relation to the flâneur, Benjamin identifies a unifying feature that sheds light on a valuable approach for interacting with the modern metropolis. Benjamin writes that "[t]he spontaneity common to the student, to the gambler, to the flâneur is perhaps that of the hunter … that of the oldest type of work, which may be intertwined closest of all with idleness."[101] The notion of linking the flâneur to the hunter is instructive, not for the least reason that as a specialist in dialectical images, Benjamin manages to cleverly draw a parallel between the most primitive figure in history with one of the most modern; the flâneur can be seen as a "hunter" in the modern urban setting, because he is aiming to capture new experiences. A flâneur, much like in the spirit of a hunter, patiently awaits the opportunity to seize upon a targeted prize, in this case, an experiential reward.

There are some other roles relevant to the discussion. Benjamin positions the flâneur as an "advance scout" of sorts within the marketplace, one who provides needed commercial insights: "The flâneur is the observer of the marketplace. His knowledge is akin to the occult science of industrial fluctuations. He is a spy for the capitalists, on assignment in the realm of consumers."[102] Benjamin is presenting the flâneur as someone equipped with special personal abilities and acumen to evaluate business development, for both present circumstances and potential upcoming trends, a source of valuable information long before the appearance of consumer research techniques. This idea of the flâneur working undercover and functioning as an intermediary in the commercial sphere is not an isolated reference. "In the person of the flâneur," writes Benjamin, "the intelligentsia becomes acquainted with the marketplace. It surrenders itself to the market, thinking merely to look around; but in fact it is already seeking a buyer."[103] The

[101] Ibid., 806.
[102] Ibid., 427.
[103] Ibid., 21.

premise follows that since commerce is penetrating every aspect of modern existence, and accordingly, everyone is seeking to manage this fact to their benefit, the flâneur's unique repertoire is associated with successful adaptation to new urban realities. Similarly connected with this discussion on "spy" work and activities of surveillance, is Benjamin's commentary about the detective: "Preformed in the figure of the flâneur is that of the detective."[104] For Benjamin, flânerie, with all its associations of aimlessness and laziness, is the perfect guise in which one could mask their deliberate surveillance and keen investigative instincts on whatever became the selected object of attention. He explains that "[t]he flâneur required a social legitimation of his habitus. It suited him very well to see his indolence presented as a plausible front, behind which, in reality, hides the riveted attention of an observer who will not let the unsuspecting malefactor out of his sight."[105] With all of this plasticity in the various roles in which the flâneur can function, it is hardly surprising that the figure of the flâneur has been utilized in recent years as an investigatory concept in the field of urban ethnography. Charles Soukup has written about how the methodological practices of the flâneur can be adopted by ethnographers to investigate complex cultural phenomena. For Soukup, a key strength of this relates to the syntheses achievable in the analysis of everyday life with larger societal structures: "The ethnographic flaneur is a mindful observer of contemporary culture shifting between a careful attention to cultural micro-practices and abstract conceptualizations of macro-structures."[106] It is in examining this liminality of the original flâneur, and this figure's heir, the experiential consumer, which grants important insights into better understanding modernity and

[104] Ibid., 442.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Charles Soukup, "The Postmodern Ethnographic Flaneur and the Study of Hyper-Mediated Everyday Life," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42, no. 2 (2012): 240.

the ways it was influenced by the dynamic interaction between the quotidian and commodity culture.

Whether we discuss Benjamin's commentary on the hunter, the spy, or the detective, ultimately, what unifies these figures is the clandestine vantage point from which they pursue their work. And here, we do well to reflect on Baudelaire's description of a key source of the flâneur's inspiration and joy: "to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial [!!] [sic] natures which the tongue can but clumsily define."[107] The impression surfaces that this pleasure is of such a royal and exclusive variety, that the "spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito."[108] With Benjamin linking these figures to a defining feature of Baudelaire's flâneur, a key inference can be drawn about his view on the essential elements which form this kind of urban interaction: the cultivation of detached reflection and the condition of maintaining an anonymous presence. However, this is particularly significant because it is in charting the changes in these specific qualities, which crucially demonstrates the evolution from their conception of the original flâneur, to the experiential consumer. This new modern figure both craves fuller immersion and the shedding of a desire to remain unnoticed by others in public, as a later section of this chapter will reveal.

Orientations of Experience

The revalorization of experience was a key step on the path towards the induction of experiential consumption as a growing force within consumer culture, but still, an additional factor was needed to accelerate this movement, and it involved a new orientation towards the

[107] Baudelaire, *The Painter*, 9.
[108] Ibid.

perception of experience. For the most part, in the modern era leading up to the early twentieth century, experience was something that could be more readily apprehended and trusted well after the fact of actual events. Giorgio Agamben in *Infancy and History,* for a different context, presents insight as to how this attitude towards experience might have developed. Agamben locates the discrediting of everyday experience in the ascendency of scientific investigation and scientific knowledge as institutions in the modern world. Simply put, experience was only perceived as legitimate to the degree it could be demonstrably validated, and once achieved, subsumed into scientific knowledge, and thus, expropriated for the benefit of science.[109] "The scientific verification of experience which is enacted in the experiment," writes Agamben, "… responds to this loss of certainty [in experience] by displacing experience as far as possible outside the individual: on to instruments and numbers … [and consequently] traditional experience thereby lost all real value."[110] The notion of displacing experience far from the immediate grasp of the modern individual, was precisely why a certain measure of temporal distance and personal reflection had been needed to consolidate an event as a lived experience. Essentially, this phenomenon indicates that a largely retrospective orientation towards experience had been in practice.

One of the ways in which this retrospective orientation manifested itself in society was through the sudden growth of the souvenir industry in the very heart of the era that Agamben referenced. Walter Benjamin in his work on the Parisian arcades noted this: "The things sold in the arcades are souvenirs (Andenken). The 'souvenir' is the form of the commodity in the

[109] Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993), 17-18.
[110] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 17-18.

arcades. One always buys only mementos of the commodity and of the arcade."[111] It seems that Benjamin is suggesting that the souvenir had emblematized the consumer's experience within this urban space. The function of any souvenir is to commemorate an event for the chief purpose of recollecting the experience at future points – as a physical object outside the individual – and which is intended to initiate a "looking back" at what experientially transpired as materially verifiable.

However, the common orientation towards experience began to change as the commodity form became increasingly internalized within human subjectivity, and as the values of consumer society deepened their roots. Eventually, the concept of experience came to be felt as something that was actually consumed; in other words, rather than experience being conceived of as something that just occurred, and only truly distinctive in a retroactive sense, it began to acquire properties of perceived possessiveness – one was having or possessing an experience as something consumable. All of this infused experience with an immediacy that rendered it more acutely felt in the present moment. And if it was indeed consumable, just like other commodities, it could be similarly anticipated, sought after, and procured. We can call the emergence of this new modern sensibility the prospective orientation towards experience. Though the initial effects of this became detectable by the early 1900s, its influence on market culture greatly increased as the century progressed.

One of the initial effects of the prospective orientation to experience is how it invited flânerie. The spirit of the flâneur is so strongly characterized by this forward-looking attitude that mere possibilities alone seemed to overtake this individual. Consider Benjamin's apt description

[111] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 864.

of the flâneur in action: "An intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next streetcorner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name."[112] At the core of this passage is an emphasis on "anticipation," which functions as the fuel of flânerie because the prospect of what lies ahead, and not yet encountered, is indicative of the prospective orientation to experience. The quote implies that with every step of the journey, the appeal of material commodities begins to fade in relation to the growing prospects in the consumption of experience.

In returning to Agamben's critique of modern existence, still another implication of the prospective orientation to experience surfaces. "Modern man makes his way home in the evening," writes Agamben, "wearied by a jumble of events, but however entertaining or tedious, unusual or commonplace, harrowing or pleasurable they are, none of them will have become experience. It is this non-translatability into experience that now makes everyday existence intolerable."[113] However, one of the effects of the prospective orientation, specifically as embodied in the activities of flânerie, is its ability to convert mere events into actual experiences. It largely accomplishes this through a subjective mode that already prioritizes form over content, so that what actually occurs is less relevant than in the perceived structure in which it is expected to appear. Here, it is useful to return to Simmel's essay "The Adventure," where he evaluates various experiential elements and the possibilities inherently situated within them. Simmel explains that "life as a whole may be perceived as an adventure. For this, one need neither be an

[112] Ibid., 417.
[113] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 14.

adventurer nor undergo many adventures [because for] such a remarkable attitude toward life, one must sense above its totality a higher unity."[114] In his view, the adventure as an experiential form is unlimited in its applicability to the modern individual's engagement with life: "The adventure is a form of life which can be taken on by an undetermined number of experiences."[115] Above all else, for Simmel, "[t]he decisive point … is that the adventure, in its specific nature and charm, is a form of experiencing. The content of the experience does not make the adventure."[116] Thus, the crux of Simmel's central argument is spelled out with the incisive claim that adventure is an experiential mould or patterned structure, and that it contains the same subjective characteristics, irrespective of the content of the experiences; simply put, adventure is all about form, and not content. These ideas are all linked to the flâneur's prospective style of engagement with the modern world, one which is already heavily predicated on foreseeing the possibility of upcoming experiential prospects, and while the specific content of them may remain a mystery, the expected form is anything but mysterious, which enables the streaming of occurrences and events into a pre-set experiential form, thus granting them subjective integration into meaningful experiences.

An Evolution from Material Consumer to Experiential Consumer

To more fully flesh out the experiential consumer, it is useful to delineate the distinctions between material and experiential modes of consumption. There are a number of general principles that best characterize each mode: in material consumption, the objects act on the consumer, but in experiential consumption, conversely, the consumer acts on the objects;

[114] Simmel, "The Adventure," 225.
[115] Ibid., 227.
[116] Ibid., 229.

material consumption is mostly defined by distraction, while experiential consumption is best defined by contemplation; and though material consumption occurs in the traditional marketplace, acts of experiential consumption spread far beyond the marketplace and influence the subjective life of the consumer. Still, there remain other significant differences that warrant further examination. Much can be understood by evaluating varying levels of consumer participation; the experiential consumer is far more active than the passive behaviour associated with the material consumer. David Frisby concludes that "[t]he flâneur as observer cannot therefore be reduced to the passive spectator, to the mere idler or to the gaper (badaud) … [as] the activity of watchful observation in the modern metropolis is a multifaceted method for apprehending and reading the complex and myriad signifiers in the labyrinth of modernity."[117] In the transition from material consumer to experiential consumer, the gaper is linked to the former, while the perceiving mind of the flâneur is congruent with the latter. Revealingly, an experiential consumer curates the urban stimuli into intelligible arrangements.

With this emphasis on observational skills, an instructive way to explore the issue is through contrasting approaches to tourism and touristic impulses. In *The Art of Taking a Walk*, Anke Gleber provides an investigation into various flâneuristic activities of Weimar Germany. "The flaneur distinguishes himself—or herself—from … passive tourism," explains Gleber, "as a figure who not only pursues her impulse toward drifting, but also feels compelled to retrieve these urban images in her mind, reflect on the impressions encountered, and seek to preserve them in a writing of letters or light, on either celluloid or the page."[118] This assessment depicts

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[117] David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 38. Frisby has extensively studied some of the key thinkers in this chapter (Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin), specifically in relation to their ideas about social theory and the modern metropolis. An important example is Frisby's *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[118] Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Wiemar Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 132.

the experiential consumer as fixated on actively encoding the observations into a format which enables deeper and repeated consumption, rather than allowing them to disperse into obscurity. For Gleber, the critical distinction is that tourism involves the passive "consumption of sites," but flânerie involves "a reflective, creative response to the sights of modernity."[119] Simply put, the experiential consumer personalizes consumption through active engagement.

Another way to conceptualize this active engagement which separates the experiential consumer from the material consumer is to also track an analogous relationship in the evolution of different forms of flânerie. Mary Gluck identifies two distinct types of flâneurs, both of whom made appearances in the nineteenth century: the popular flâneur and the avant-garde flâneur. The first version, from around the 1840s and based largely on depictions from the commercial press, gave way to the second kind, inspired by the aesthetic visions of artists as in the prototype expressed by Baudelaire.[120] For Gluck, the crucial point of distinction is that the popular flâneur had located creative potential within a detectable external reality which existed in the real world, while the avant-garde flâneur understood this no longer existed and apprehended the need to dismantle the component parts of the appearances of modernity and reconstitute them into an artistic work to harness its potential.[121] According to Gluck, "[m]odernity had ceased to be a social text … it had become an aesthetic text, that needed to be freshly created by the artist's imaginative act."[122] We can see this as analogous to a similar evolution which occurred in approaches to modes of consumption, with the changing material consumer reacting to the conditions of modernity and grasping the need to use artistic imaginativeness to access a deeper

[119] Gleber, *The Art of Taking*, 132.
[120] Mary Gluck, "The *Flâneur* and the Aesthetic Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-century Paris," *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 5 (2003): 54.
[121] Gluck, "The *Flâneur*," 77.
[122] Ibid.

experiential meaning which was no longer exclusively contained within just the material aspects of objects.

The active participation of the experiential consumer is further appreciated through analysing urban legibility, specifically the acts of both "reading" and "writing" the cityscape as a text. Gleber's study applies various textual metaphors to city life: "What distinguishes the flaneur from these other figures of the street can be read in the literary difference of his project, his attempt to both read and write about the phenomena that he sees."[123] Here, this figure's enchantment with reading the city as a visual text derives from functioning as a flaneur-writer.[124] In reaching these ideas, she borrows from Franz Hessel, a friend of Walter Benjamin, who had written various texts of his own about flânerie in Berlin. Hessel had articulated a comprehensive, and perhaps, the most thoughtful expression of urban semiotic legibility: "Flanerie is a way of reading the street, in which people's faces, displays, shop windows, cafe terraces, cars, tracks, trees turn into an entire series of equivalent letters, which together form words, sentences, and pages of a book that is always new. In order to really stroll, one should not have anything too specific on one's mind."[125] Thinking about flâneuristic authorship is useful because it associates modern experiential consumers as agents actively involved in "writing" their own experiences.

Corresponding to the textual composition of the city, essentially involving a subjectivist framework, is the parallel that Gleber also draws between flânerie and the cinematic experience. She argues that "[t]he flaneur personifies a perspective that … is closely affiliated with the gaze of the camera, renders the sensitivity of a director who records his own vision, and repeats the spectatorship of a moviegoer who perceives the images of reality as an ongoing film of

[123] Gleber, *The Art of Taking*, 51.
[124] Ibid., 4.
[125] Quoted in Gleber, *The Art of Taking*, 66.

modernity."[126] Through the use of descriptive tags related to this metaphor, she distinguishes the "passive passerby" from the "active director," with the second of these crafting an urban experience with technical precision.[127] Whether we conceive of the flâneur as both a moviegoer and the urban director of a personal film of flânerie, or as both reader and writer of an urban text, all of this prefigures the condition of the experiential consumer who, during the advancement of the twentieth century, played a larger role in the customization of experiences. It is important to insert a caveat about the dangers of ocularcentrism and how the fixation on the purely visual, not only indicates a quality of the material consumer but interferes with the prospect of immersive consumer engagement. Estelle Muriel has conducted a study focussing on the sensory perceptions of nineteenth-century flânerie in Paris and London, and the ways it augments flâneuristic pursuits. In Muriel's assessment, a fully embodied approach to flânerie enables this figure to function as a sort of "seismograph" in capturing the dynamism of the modern city, which she characterizes as a metabolically active entity.[128] Thus, Muriel explains that the "*flâneur*'s whole body is a perceptive surface which lets things in. He makes his way through the sounds, smells, tastes and textures of the city as well as through its sights."[129] The key takeaway involves Muriel's insistence on the necessity of engaging all sensory perceptions to fully connect the flâneur's mindscape with the cityscape.[130]

Another pivotal quality that separates material consumption from an experiential mode of consumption involves the factoring of creative elements in the latter. Pierre Bourdieu argues that "[t]he naive exhibitionism of 'conspicuous consumption', which seeks distinction in the crude

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[126] Ibid., 6.
[127] Ibid., 157.
[128] Estelle Muriel, "A body passes by: the *flâneur* and the senses in nineteenth-century London and Paris," *The Senses and Society* 12, no. 2 (2017): 169.
[129] Muriel, "A body passes by," 169.
[130] Ibid., 173.

display of ill-mastered luxury, is nothing compared to the unique capacity of the pure gaze, a quasi-creative power which sets the aesthete apart from the common herd."[131] The notion of a "quasi-creative power" located within the "pure gaze" identifies an interactive and creative kind of consumption that is experientially based, rather than the materially based and passive exhibition of conspicuous consumption. Bourdieu advances another key insight on the matter: "The pure gaze implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world, which, given the conditions in which it is performed, is also a social separation."[132] Most saliently, this encompasses a refined way of looking at the world that encourages and supports experiential consumption. Instead of becoming consumed by objects, as is often typical of material consumption, this "quasi-creative power" reverses the process and allows the experiential consumer to incorporate objects into one's artistic vision of quotidian life. "And nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished," writes Bourdieu, "than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal … the ability to apply the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic to the most everyday choices of everyday life."[133] The implications of class dynamics are relevant to this discussion. For Bourdieu, the key feature behind the "pure gaze" is the valorising of form over function, and the upper class with their financial security could afford the luxury to value an object for its form, as opposed to members of the working class whose more challenging material needs required a fixation on the utility of things. But as the middle class grew and increased their financial stability, he understood how this attitude could become more broadly adopted in contesting and conferring status. In this way, the experiential consumer is largely classless, as the

[131] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 31.
[132] Ibid., 4.
[133] Ibid., 5.

mindset and approaches to daily life are the most fundamental features of this figure. While it remains inarguable that resources and class position play some part in determining the content of experiences, or its hoped-for function for that matter, it does not actually determine the attitude and approach towards experiential consumption. Thus, whether in connection to Bourdieu's "pure gaze" or the structural mould of Simmel's adventurous experience, the attitude in prioritizing and valuing form over function or content is a touchstone element in the mode of experiential consumption.

It would be remiss to conclude this chapter's treatment of the flâneur without wondering about the eventual fate of this figure. In Priscilla Ferguson's estimation, the flâneur is something of a historical anomaly, a figure produced by the conditions of a certain time and place, and one who simply disappears on account of the changing circumstances in fin de siècle Europe.[134] Ferguson writes that "the *flâneur* comes and goes with the [nineteenth] century, moving on, and then off, the streets of Paris … [either] enmeshed in the snares of mercantile capitalism or withdrawn in solitude."[135] Perhaps there is another explanation; the flâneur did not actually disappear, but instead evolved into the modern experiential consumer. Nowadays, the experiential mode of consumption has become such a commonplace fixture of our contemporary world that it passes on without much thought. It is no small irony that at one time, the flâneur relished his unique status as part of a tiny minority and revelled in his incognito. But now, in the guise of the experiential consumer, this figure has become sufficiently ubiquitous to remain unnoticed for the very opposite reason. As Benjamin scholar, Susan Buck-Morss, synoptically notes, "[i]n our own time, in the case of the flaneur, it is not his perceptive attitude which has

[134] Priscilla Ferguson, "The *flâneur* on and off the streets of Paris," in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 39.
[135] Ferguson, "The *flâneur* on," 39.

been lost, but rather its marginality. If the flaneur has disappeared as a specific figure, it is because the perceptive attitude which he embodied saturates modern existence."[136]

Theatricalities of the Modern Cityscape

While new modernist orientations to experience had been pivotal in the evolution towards an increased emphasis on experiential consumption, the physical structure of the urban space was also instrumental. Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* argues that the modern subject functioned as a passive consumer of the collection of images and messages, which are produced by the economic totality of the spectacle to create a unified and reified market consciousness.[137] For Debord, "spectacular society," and all its negative consequences, are ultimately the result of the "autocratic reign of the market economy."[138] But the modern cityscape as the chief locus of "spectacular society" and its market economy featured a modern subject who was becoming increasingly active as an experiential consumer, one demanding a more interactive role in this expanding theatrical space. The modern experiential consumer owes much to a tradition of theatrics which enlarged over time in the cities, and that became a fundamental aspect of the modern cityscape, nowhere more emblematic than in the proliferation of world exhibitions sprouting up from one global urban centre to the next. And though we should not forget that the flâneur gave rise to the modern experiential consumer, not all modern subjects possessed the same set of sensibilities. Yet the gateway towards better appreciating and adopting some tendencies of flânerie still appeared to them through the theatricalities of the urban stage. In other

[136] Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," *New German Critique*, 39 (1986): 104.
[137] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 15, 23.
[138] Guy Debord, *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcom Imrie (London: Verso, 1998), 2.

words, even for individuals lacking inclination to detect the experiential potentialities of their surroundings, the actorly nature of the urban setting initiated them into the experiential economy, eventually cultivating these qualities just the same. From a contemporary perspective, we might be desensitized to the crucial connection between physical spatiality and theatrics, given our digital landscape in which an audience is always present via social media, however the conditions of the early twentieth century amplified the ways public spaces functioned as theatrical sites of mutual spectatorship.

Before considering how urban sites of heavy foot traffic, such as train stations, arcades, museums, and department stores, could be interpretable in theatrical terms, it is essential to first investigate conditions that increased the modern consumer's receptivity to the performative aspects of the urban stage. One of the key factors for this involved a heightened imaginative mindset, a feature explored at length by Colin Campbell in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism.* At the heart of modern consumerist impulses, argues Campbell, is a romantic ethos, which first took root in eighteenth-century western Europe. Associated with this is his concept of "imaginative hedonism," which ventures beyond the boundaries of mere sensory gratification, more crucially, to activate the processes of emotional engagement. "The key to the development of modern hedonism," he writes, "lies in the shift of primary concern from sensations to emotions … [and thus] emotions have the potential to serve as immensely powerful sources of pleasure."[139] For Campbell, the individual's imaginative mindscape is the key to understanding modern consumption: "Individuals employ their imaginative and creative powers to construct mental images which they consume for the intrinsic pleasure they provide, a

[139] Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 69.

practice best described as day-dreaming or fantasizing."[140] Essentially, he views the modern consumer as a "dream artist," whose daydreams are sufficiently convincing that "individuals react subjectively to them as if they were real."[141] The actual consumption of tangible goods only fit into this process as fuel for the imagination. Campbell insists "that individuals do not so much seek satisfaction from products, as pleasure from the self-illusory experiences which they construct from their associated meanings."[142]

Certainly, these notions of daydreaming and fantasizing as fundamental to the modern consumer's experiences provide indications of how individuals were primed to interact imaginatively with the theatricalities of their urban surrounding. The invention of personas and the supplementing of encounters with fictive seasoning – in addition, to all the other enticements of assuming creative license – would naturally help guide one's interactions within the city. Still, we might do well to investigate these notions of romanticism with other elements of market society. In Georg Simmel's text *The Philosophy of Money*, he offers a critical insight into one of the peculiarities about currency; it is the essential blankness of money, its inherent lack of qualitativeness, that most structures and calls out to the endless possibilities that it engenders. "The mere possibility of unlimited uses that money has, or represents," explains Simmel, "on account of its lack of any content of its own, is manifested in a positive way by the restlessness of money, by its urge to be used, so to speak."[143] Thus, we can conclude that money possesses a romantic characteristic in that it functions as the ultimate placeholder of potentialities; it only occupies a space which perpetually reminds us that something else more alluring can eventually

[140] Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic*, 77.
[141] Ibid., 78.
[142] Ibid., 89
[143] Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby and ed. David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004), 212.

be substituted in its spot. Accordingly, money can be seen as a reinforcing agent that works in tandem with the imaginative hedonism of the modern consumer.

The activation of imaginativeness works to not only sensitize the modern subject to the theatricalities of the cityscape, but also makes its stage-like features both interpretable and inviting to them. Much of this theatricality is based on the expansion of exhibitionary space in the urban setting. Revealingly, in many of Benjamin's notes for *The Arcades Project*, he evinces a fascination with physical structures built for the purposes of assembling large crowds. Benjamin writes that "[t]he most characteristic building projects of the nineteenth century – railroad stations, exhibition halls, department stores … all have matters of collective importance as their object."[144] He goes on to claim that the flâneur experiences an attraction to these "everyday" structures because "the appearance of great masses on the stage of history was already foreseen."[145] In fact, Benjamin connects the downfall of the arcade's cultural relevance to changes in the city which had the impact of expanding exhibitionary space: "Reasons for the decline of the arcades: widened sidewalks, electric light … [and] culture of the open air."[146] All of this adds a new dimension to the subjective experience of the modern consumer: the perception that consumers are engaged in a performance. Thus, exhibitionistic behaviour was encouraged, and the range of performative possibilities enhanced. Benjamin insightfully concludes that "[t]o the flâneur, his city is – even if … he happened to be born there – no longer native ground. It represents for him a theatrical display, an arena."[147]

[144] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 455.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 88.
[147] Ibid., 347.

That the modern individual would participate in a series of performances, and increasingly doing so as a matter of routine, eventually became a sufficiently visible aspect of dailiness that it attracted scholarly inquiry. Most prominent in this research area is the work of Erving Goffman, specifically his text *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman's seminal academic study of microsociology incorporates dramaturgy and theatrical tropes to explore everyday life and the performative elements that constitute the presentation of multiple selves. The "performance" for Goffman "refer[s] to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers," a process summarized by his concept of "impression management."[148] While the basic premise is that the individual is consciously orchestrating a performance for the consumption of others, Goffman explains how a social performer can be "taken in by his own act."[149] Though fully buying into one's own performance resides at one end of the spectrum, Goffman suggests that even "cynical" performers who are unconvinced by their own performances, through repetition, are eventually self-coaxed into accepting the illusion of their crafted acts.[150] A crucial through-line of the study is that social performers present for observers an idealized impression of themselves. As an example, he references the way this is often revealed in the process of social mobility, where the ability to affect idealized impressions aids in the upward movement to higher social classes.[151] Part of this idealized impression is to create the appearance that desirable qualities exist in a state of naturalness; thus, different performers, such as business executives, try to give the impression that proficiency and poise

[148] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 13.
[149] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 10.
[150] Ibid., 12.
[151] Ibid., 23.

were always possessed as innate personal qualities.[152] If this sounds familiar, it is because it echoes our earlier analyses of the commodity form and the masking of production origins, the way the commodity appears to exist as a natural and autonomous item, and how this formulation suggests a strong resemblance to our earlier investigation of the internalization of the commodity form and its impact on human subjectivity.

Another quality about the nature of social performances that Goffman addresses is the special bond, or more accurately, the perception of it, between performers and their audience. As support, he includes the example of the typical interaction between patient and doctor, where the patient apparently "experiences" total recall of details from an earlier visit, and accordingly, assumes much the same on the other end from the doctor's perspective. For this reason, the patient feels offended if the doctor does not recollect details of the same encounter.[153] In some cases, an observing audience is not even required as the individual continues to perform in the same manner even without one; in these situations, the performer essentially becomes the observer as well.[154] Goffman claims that "[t]he individual may privately maintain standards of behaviour which he does not personally believe in, maintaining these standards because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present which will punish deviations from these standards."[155] Although Goffman is primarily referencing this phenomenon in relation to moral codes, we can still reasonably conclude how certain ideals, including those of less gravity – such as consumer and social activities shaped within the city – can become socialized deeply enough that "an individual may be his own audience or may imagine an audience to be present."[156] This

[152] Ibid., 30.
[153] Ibid., 31-32.
[154] Ibid., 49.
[155] Ibid., 50.
[156] Ibid.

phenomenon can influence daily behaviours, for example, the impulse to act out an aestheticized everyday life. Simply put, because the modern urban experience is so heavily characterized by all kinds of social exhibitionism, and the growing sense that the modern subject is under constant surveillance, it is as if individuals always imagine themselves attracting the performative gaze, and thus, the "stage" extends to places far beyond the crowded city to include private settings within the domestic sphere. An interesting finding by Thorstein Veblen is instructive about this phenomenon. Though his work is most famous for its emphasis on acts of conspicuous consumption, he does note that often consumers possess fancy kitchen utensils, and other goods of a similar type, despite the obvious fact that these items will remain unseen to outsiders.[157]

In evaluating the specifics of setting as it impacts social interactions, Goffman analyses the different constituents that comprise the former, the notion of different spatial zones: "In our Anglo-American society—a relatively indoor one— when a performance is given it is usually given in a highly bounded region."[158] He subdivides these locations, explaining that the "front region" is the "place where the performance is given."[159] As for defining the "back region," Goffman states that "[h]ere [in the backstage area] the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character."[160] For the purposes of our discussion on the theatricalities of the cityscape, some highly exhibitionistic places in the urban setting, such as large shopping markets (especially department stores), stations for public transportation, and museums, can be understood as "bounded" regions in which performances take place, with the most visible and observed spaces within these locations serving as a "front region." However, there are places within the urban setting, for example, the sidewalk, which can be thought of

[157] Veblen, *Leisure Class*, 115.
[158] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 66.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 70.

more appropriately as a "back region" where social performers can take a break because these spots are not as effective in attracting spectatorship. Goffman claims that "[o]ne of the most interesting times to observe impression management is the moment when a performer leaves the back region and enters the place where the audience is to be found, or when he returns therefrom, for at these moments we can detect a wonderful putting on and taking off of character."[161]

Crucially, what makes the urban performance unique, chiefly as it is conceived for the experiential consumer paradigm which scaffolds this thesis project, is that there are few places in the cityscape where the individual is completely "off stage." Instead, there are just locations where the feeling of being "on stage" is more amplified, or less so; the main effect is that this condition produces a more natural performance, one that is likely to influence the performer and consumer, as these roles become conflated – in more lasting ways – than with the abrupt nature of completely dropping the "act" in a "back region" as described in Goffman's study. Finally, an important takeaway from this discussion on the interaction between the urban setting and sociality involves its connections to artistic modernism. With the quickly evolving cityscape, these dynamics became so consequential as to direct the focus of literary modernists to this subject matter, ultimately inspiring two classic novels in particular, ones which featured "a day in the life" of the modern subject in the city: Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The Reciprocal Performative Gaze

With the nature of modern consumption shaped by the kinds of social performances inspired by the theatrical environment of the urban space, the modern subject increasingly participated in both consumption and performance as inextricably linked activities. As the early

[161] Ibid., 74.

twentieth century progressed, this duality gradually settled in as one of the signature characteristics of the experiential consumer, casting a wider net that extended beyond those who were already predisposed to appreciating flânerie. While interactive engagement is essential to experiential consumption, what elevates this activity to another level is the addition of performative elements. The principal effect is that it brought about the reciprocal performative gaze. It is important to distinguish the notion of the "gaze" applied here, from its treatment in critical theory or sociology, such as the one offered by Michel Foucault in his examination of the panopticon, in which the subject experiences the threatening presence of constant surveillance.[162] In the present context, the modern individual, mediated by the ideals of consumer culture, oscillates between the subject and object positions, and in doing so, both "gazes" and aspires to be "gazed" upon. Since this is all predicated on the desire to both enjoy the opportunity to consume the social performances of others, in addition to presenting one's performances for the consumption of other urban observers, it constitutes a very modern theatrical consumer fantasy for city dwellers.

The reciprocal performative gaze is better understood through addressing one of Benjamin's discussions about early photography. "What was inevitably felt to be inhuman," he writes, "one might even say deadly, in daguerreotypy was the (prolonged) looking into the camera, since the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze. But looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze."[163] In other words, there is a yearning for the reciprocal engagement of the object of our gaze to "look back" at us. Benjamin even factors this in his concept of aura: "Where this

[162] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195.
[163] Benjamin, "On Some Motifs," 188.

expectation is met (which, in the case of thought processes, can apply equally to the look of the eye of the mind and to a glance pure and simple), there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent."[164] It should come as little surprise that in an era when technology (photography, cinema, etc.) fostered an anxiety over detachment and disconnection, that there emerged stronger interest in capturing the aura of social performances. For Benjamin, aura is so significant to the interactions between people that it influences how humans engage with the physical items that surround them. He claims that the "[e]xperience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return."[165] If we apply this kind of thinking to the experiential consumer, others in the city do not simply appear as passive "objects" for their viewership, but instead as agents equally capable of reversing the process to complete the reciprocal performative gaze. An associated notion to consider is that once this kind of theatrical consumer fantasy becomes absorbed into subjectivity, as similarly suggested in Goffman's work, the corollary is that an audience is always felt to be on hand, even when one is not actually present.

The reciprocal performative gaze had the impact of increasing the actorly nature of experiential consumption, resulting in the modern consumer perceiving the cityscape as a theatrical environment, and encouraging movement through its spaces according to directorial cues suggested by this reality. Imanuel Schipper, in tracing the historical figure of the flâneur for implications to contemporary digital technologies, presents his concept of the "performative

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

spectator." Schipper explains that "[b]y walking through the streets and collecting impressions, the [original figure of the] flâneur is constantly producing a story of his lived experiences while being an *acteur* in the play he is currently watching."[166] For Schipper, the flâneur functions beyond the position of "passive spectator of a finished play, he is more a coproducer of that very city life."[167] As Schipper evaluates it, performative behaviour and spatiality are inseparable, because each one conditions the other, altering the evolving dynamics of the interaction: "approaches to space and space production have an effect not only on how we receive space as such, but actually form the way we behave in that space and even what and how we see and understand things, objects, situations and actions in that space … [so that] the space we produce will structure the life-time we spend in it."[168] These points about theatricality and performativity will reappear as elements of crucial importance in a later chapter which closely investigates the social dynamics of the department store.

While the interiorization of different aspects of consumer culture was rather decisive in the advent of experiential consumption as a dominant mode of modernity, particularly in relation to the ways in which the commodity form shaped human subjectivity, all of this would have been far less influential without the catalysing support of contemporaneously emerging aesthetic sensibilities which greatly amplified and enhanced its effects. Thus, it is essential to also attend to the development of aestheticism in the later nineteenth century to complete a detailed account of the genealogy of the experiential consumer.

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[166] Imanuel Schipper, "From flâneur to co-producer: The performative spectator," in *Performing the Digital* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 192-93.
[167] Schipper, "From flâneur to co-producer," 193.
[168] Ibid., 194.

Chapter Two

Proto-Modernism's Acculturation of Everyday Aesthetic Agency

Although the modernist obsession with the everyday became sufficiently apparent by the opening decades of the twentieth century, of which the texts of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce's are among the most exemplary, it was in the earlier Victorian era, with the advent of proto-modernist inclinations, that this development first received intellectual nourishment. An important strand of this proto-modernism is the treatment of everyday experiences, specifically as it was influenced by the evolution of aesthetic thought. The key figures here, who are all indispensable to any discussion of later nineteenth-century aestheticism, are rather revelatory in the tensions they expose. While the group of John Ruskin, William Morris, and Oscar Wilde are all united in their socialist tendencies, an interesting contradiction appears within their political ideals: despite an espousal for socialism (albeit in different forms), in reality, their aesthetic sensibilities were largely incommensurate with socialism; and though they attempted to channel their artistic goals and vision for society into a socialist agenda, essentially, their aesthetic principles were much more conducive to informing approaches of how the modern subject might interact with the everyday. These thinkers express ideas and values that are far more useful in promoting an aesthetically engaged consumer of the modern world, rather than in the engagement of any political doctrine or collective action. This occurs chiefly from the ways in which their work promoted a democratization of aesthetics, a mainstreaming of aesthetic principles, and as such, influential in the modern subject's conception and handling of everyday experiences. Another crucial point is that while their alignment involved the hope of eventually bypassing capitalist and consumerist values for society, their treatment of aesthetics actually functioned to promote a deeper consumer-directed ethos, which over time only helped to

accelerate the growth of consumer culture. This chapter will endeavour to show that while these Victorian aesthetes were responding to materialist conditions, and though certainly prompted by the drawbacks of capitalism, their aesthetics were instrumental in the progression towards a dematerialized and culturalist perspective of the commodity and its associated market relations. Simply put, for all the aspirations of reimagining and resituating the commodity within the constraints of a materialist structure, their ideals were already anticipating and fostering an economic model of dematerialization that would much later result in the development of an experiential economy.

The contributions made by each of these aesthetes were distinct, in some cases involving the extension of an existing sensibility within the group, at other times branching out into new aesthetic territory, and while the discussion will include a more detailed evaluation of each thinker in turn, an adumbration will sketch the overall shape of their impact on notions of early twentieth-century experiential consumption. Ruskin's primary contribution involved his ideas about visual literacy, the understanding and cultivation of the modern subject's faculties which shape perception and influence the appreciation of artistry. For Morris, it all centred on the application of artistry to everyday life, with the emphasis on the modern subject as artist. For Wilde, this expands to an extreme development of individuality, part of which envisions the modern subject as an artist as well, but also as a critic, elevating the position from just practising artistry in daily life, to the status of also critiquing it, so that the modern subject performs and consumes both artistically and critically. And here we can introduce Walter Pater into the mix, since for him, it is all about expressing a belief in the consuming of experiences as the highest tangible good. In fact, we can trace an evolution in these figures. Ruskin was focussed on perceptual subjectivism and perceptual tools, which paves the way in using these for Morris'

programme of practising an artistic daily life. The preceding is taken by Wilde and amplified to a degree – that as a corequisite quality – it must be rooted in hyper-individuality as protection from the masses who might threaten it. With the previous three figures, it is more a matter of chronological and successive developments, affected in some measure by influence. However, with Pater it seems that the main aesthetic currents of the later nineteenth century, of which Ruskin and Morris were formative, coalesced within him to produce the most forceful articulation of experiential consumption as the ultimate pursuit in itself. Thus, Pater is no crass hedonist, but merely an advocate of principles associated with the experiential consumer.

Ruskin's Visual Literacy

Of all the key cultural figures of the Victorian era, perhaps on account of received wisdom, Ruskin seems the unlikeliest candidate for the label of proto-modernist. According to Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls, the disregarding of Ruskin's importance to the story of literary modernism is a natural consequence "to his virtual dictatorship of more than thirty years. To rebel against Ruskin's monolithic reputation was tantamount to rebelling against Victorianism tout court."[1] Simply put, his "patriarchal supremacy" attracted the general backlash from a younger generation towards a Victorian legacy, which he was seen to embody.[2] Going even further, Cianci and Nicholls explain that beyond the man himself, modernists felt even less willing to tolerate "Ruskinism," the canonized version that transformed him "from a radical author into a public monument."[3] Ruskin, insist Cianci and Nicholls, was a crucial factor in the interstitial space between the literary and visual arts.[4] This is a salient point because visuality

[1] Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls, *Ruskin and Modernism*, eds. Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), xii.
[2] Cianci and Nicholls, *Ruskin and Modernism*, xii.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., xiii.

became a key aspect of modernist ideals, not only legitimizing Ruskin as a true agent of proto-modernism, but also highlighting his importance in the formation of visual aesthetics in the second half of the nineteenth century, including its connections to the literary.[5]

To speak of Ruskin in terms of visual literacy or the principles of a kind of learned visual grammar, is to already prefigure instructively the vital confluence of visuality and language. The most helpful angle to get at the crux of this connection is to understand Ruskin's concept of the "innocent eye," the fundamental idea that underpins his theory of visual perception. In *The Elements of Drawing*, Ruskin writes "[t]he whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the innocence of the eye; that is to say, a sort of childish perception of these flat stains without consciousness of what they signify, – as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight."[6] For Ruskin, the ability to consciously recover unfiltered perception, the detection of just raw stimuli, is necessary because of the effects that occur in the process of mediation, which directly involves learned systems of signification. Alexandra Wettlaufer has examined the visual-verbal dialectics present in Ruskinian thought. Just as language is a learned system rather than a natural sign system, Wettlaufer analyses how Ruskin identifies much the same with visual perception, demonstrated in the following quote from him: "everything that you can see in the world around you, presents itself to your eyes only as an arrangement of patches of different colours variously shaded."[7] Thus, as per Ruskin, visual knowledge emerges, Wettlaufer writes, "through tactile experimentation [in] that we learn to

[5] Cianci and Nicholls also insist that it had only been literary criticism's tendency to grant more emphasis to linguistic values over plastic and image-based ones that caused evaluation of Ruskin's influence on modernist aesthetics to be minimized. Ibid., xii.
[6] John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1876), 22.
[7] Alexandra Wettlaufer, "Ruskin and Laforgue: Visual-Verbal Dialectics and the Poetics/Politics of Montage," *Comparative Literature Studies* 32, no. 4 (1995): 517.

associate certain optical sensations with 'facts' such as volume, depth, texture, and distance."[8] Strengthening this further, she leans on Ruskin's assertion that "the perception of solid form is entirely a matter of experience. We see nothing but flat colours; and it is only by a series of experiments that we find out that a stain of black or gray indicates the dark side of a solid substance, or that a faint hue indicates that the object in which it appears is far away."[9] Accordingly, the artist should strive to replicate within the painting the direct unmediated visual stimuli as it first entered the sensory apparatus, as observers will then translate according to their own visual literacy.[10]

For the most part, Wettlaufer investigates this material in order to access the nature of the dialogical interaction between the observer and the observed, and as a related model, between the reader and the text, an analogue that gains support she maintains because in "Ruskin's writings, there is an implicit parallel between the painter's and the author's language, which becomes even clearer as the visual vocabulary is reduced to an equally conventional system that relies on translation and interpretation for signification."[11] Extending this idea, she addresses how words and colours function in similar ways since both signify in a relative sense rather than in absolute terms, thus, reality's vibrating and fragmentary qualities might be captured through the author's juxtaposing of signifiers, leading to the same mandate for the painterly artist: "The author's imperative – no less than the painter's – is to portray what he sees and experiences, directly, before it is translated by the intellect into some semblance of order."[12] With this emphasis on the

[8] Wettlaufer, "Ruskin and Laforgue," 517.
[9] Ibid.
[10] The description that Wettlaufer also ascribes to Ruskinian visuality is rather reminiscent of modernist aesthetics: "The nature of this visual reality that the artist should reproduce is varied, vibrating, relative, fragmentary, and ungraspable." Ibid., 518.
[11] Ibid., 517.
[12] Ibid., 519.

dynamic interaction of shared input between stimulus and processing, Wettlaufer gets specific about the creation of art work, explaining that "[t]he painting is not simply a reproduction of what is there, but rather of the interaction of observer and observed … [and how] Ruskin emphasized that the work of art is the product of an experience that takes place in a continuum, where what we see is as much … [about] the internal state of the perceiver as it is of the external state of the perceived."[13] For support, Wettlaufer quotes Ruskin: "[the] impression on the mind never results from the mere piece of scenery.… It depends on the temper into which the mind has been brought, both by the landscape round, and by what has been seen previously during the day … [and] through the steps which nature has appointed to the preparation for it."[14]

Ultimately, in Wettlaufer's assessment, Ruskin defines perception itself as the interplay of perceiver and perceived, rendering it as dialectical with a grounding in the personal and experiential.[15] What this unmistakably anticipates is the foundational premise of reader-response theory, which does not formally materialize for many years to come. In fact, it closely foreshadows Roland Barthes' conception of the "readerly" and "writerly" texts, with the latter appearing as an element of modernist literature in which both the author and reader engage in shared responsibilities to produce meaning.[16] Put another way, Ruskin is essentially disavowing passive consumption, and by logical extension, promoting active participation in the expanded role for the modern subject in all areas where different forms of consumption occur. If we enlarge the scope to generally reflect on the individual within the conditions of modernity, all this foregrounds the dialectical nature of consuming experience, whether of a natural scene, an

[13] Ibid., 521.
[14] Ibid., 521-22.
[15] Ibid., 522.
[16] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 4.

artwork in a museum, or the sights along a stroll through any urban space, indeed suggestive of the core element in the development of the experiential consumer.

However, this level of aesthetic engagement is not without cost. Given Ruskin's treatment on the dynamics of visuality, the high level of interactivity, one gains the impression that not all the processes involved are facile for the perceiver. Caroline Levine characterizes Ruskin's handling of visuality as labour. "It is Ruskin, of all the Victorian theorists," writes Levine, "who is most insistent that seeing and representing the world demands serious and significant work."[17] In Ruskin's words, "[t]wo lines are laid on canvas; one is right and another wrong … One person feels it, another does not; but the feeling or sight of the one can by no words be communicated to the other: it would be unjust if it could, for that feeling and sight have been the reward of years of labor."[18] For this reason, when it comes to the visual, particularly in offering realism of representation, Levine avers that Ruskin exhibits a "laboring aesthetic."[19] Traditional beliefs and established judgements are at the root of the challenges, all inimical towards achieving fealty in visual expression: "Conventional ways of seeing dangerously cloud and corrupt our vision, and thus Ruskin exhorts us to work assiduously to counteract their influence."[20] Revealingly, Ruskin wonders "[h]ow many people are misled, by what has been said and sung of the serenity of Italian skies, to suppose they must be more blue than the skies of the north, and think that they seem them so; whereas the sky of Italy is far more dull and grey in colour than the skies of the north."[21] Levine explains that according to this conception, people are overly acclimated to "flawed images," not truly seeing nature without diligent effort, which is

[17] Caroline Levine, "Visual Labor: Ruskin's Radical Realism," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2000): 75.
[18] Levine, "Visual Labor," 75.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 78.
[21] Ibid.

best expressed when Ruskin points out that "[w]e are ... constantly missing the sight of what we do not know beforehand to be visible; and painters, to the last hour of their lives, are apt to fall in some degree into the error of painting what exists, rather than what they can see."[22]

This Ruskinian emphasis on avoiding conditioned responses can be described as a programme of perceptual dishabituation, and it has its fingerprints all over modernist literature, particularly in the works of Woolf and Joyce. Later chapters will focus on these authors in detail, but for present purposes, it certainly warrants a prefacing of Woolf's "moments of being," in which a heightened consciousness arises, and the apprehension of sensations and perceptions reaches such intensity that all stimuli are minutely absorbed, made possible through the complete nullification of habit-based processing and its effects. In terms of the experiential consumer, we can link this to the previous discussion on the dialogical interaction between perceiver and perceived, as another crucial characteristic in the development of this type of modern subject.

Considering these main ideas from Ruskin, an important notion in his aesthetics is the construction of meaning, and his focus on visual literacy factors greatly into it. For Ruskin, a definitive factor in the construction of meaning is the role of perception in mediating the process. In a study by Max Saunders, Ruskin's treatment of mediation is viewed as occupying a critical space in the transitional stage between Impressionism and Modernism. Saunders maps out the evolution of nineteenth and twentieth-century literature, and the parallel relationship between Ruskin and Modernism, which is analysed through the lens of "the changing view of 'mediation' from Realism, to Ruskinian Impressionism, through Modernism, to Postmodernism."[23] In order to situate Ruskin's position in these developments, Saunders outlines the transitional process as

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Max Saunders, "'Things Passed Over': Ruskin, Modernism and Autobiography," chapter in *Ruskin and Modernism,* eds. Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 107.

follows: realism rejects art's role in mediating reality; impressionism accepts mediation, but locates it within perception; modernism also accepts this type of mediation, but emphasizes how language and form shape the mediation between subject and object; postmodernism, in total suppression of the object, only accepts mediation and figuration.[24] For Saunders, Ruskin does go beyond Impressionism's acceptance of perceptual mediation, but is incapable of fully embracing modernism's linguistic primacy in the process of mediation. Thus, he argues that "Ruskin represents a turning point between Impressionism and Modernism, because he can just about accept the mediation that is 'reading', but only by displacing reading from its literal, literary sense (of reading a book, a verbal text) onto a figurative, and visual sense: reading a landscape, or a painting, or a person."[25] However, if we use Saunders' transitional paradigm as a guide, it allows us to more fully appreciate Ruskin's contribution to evolving artistic sensibilities. In relating how language impacts the process of mediation between subject and object, with Ruskin's preoccupation with visual literacy, and specifically the verbal connotations of "visually reading," he can be evaluated as not only instrumental to the general emergence of modernism, but to the specific development of the modern type of visual reader who would become the experiential consumer. While Ruskin might not have been explicit in directly speaking about mediation in strict terms of language, he was sufficiently implicit, as shown in his injunction to not allow what has been "said and sung" of Italian skies to affect one's ability to understand environmental surroundings, of which spoken language and written texts are also ever-present.

Morris and the Modern Subject as Artist

William Morris is most notable as the pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement of the nineteenth century, but perhaps most impactful to this work, is that he ushered into society an

[24] Saunders, "Ruskin, Modernism and Autobiography," 107.
[25] Ibid.

attitude that helped aesthetics break through its traditional boundaries of the practised formal arts and into the mainstream, namely, through his championing of the cultural value of infusing daily life with artistry. Significantly, this new way of approaching dailiness was precursive in the development of valorising everyday experiences. Morris believed artistry was inseparable from the general human condition of happiness and contentment, thus, its status as the sine qua non of the everyday is a mere logical corollary. Accordingly, he states that "the true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life, in elevating them by art instead of handing them over to unregarded drudges, and ignoring them."[26] In observing his society, Morris found the miserable vocational realities to be lamentable, identifying the absence of daily comforts, pleasure, and creativity as the most regrettable consequences of it. Wendy Parkins explains that "Morris decried the banal, the shoddy, and the monotonous in Victorian modernity as seemingly inescapable aspects of an impoverished quotidian experience under industrial capitalism."[27] The tonic to this condition was to harness the utopian potential that existed in the domain of daily life. Thus, Parkins argues that the true value of Morris' work resides in his belief that the pursuit of everyday enjoyment warrants the societal reconstruction he was hoping to inspire: "One might even go so far as to claim that it was Morris's insistence on the value of pleasure in daily life that formed the basis of his call for a radical transformation of society."[28] And to achieve this enriched daily life, as Morris insisted, the key was to ameliorate the conditions of work life. "We must begin to build up," writes Morris, "the ornamental part of life – its pleasure, bodily and mental, scientific and artistic, social and individual – on the basis of

[26] William Morris, *William Morris, Poet, Artist, Socialist*, ed. Francis Watts Lee (New York: Twentieth Century Press, 1891), 204.
[27] Wendy Parkins, "Introduction," in *William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life*, ed. Wendy Parkins (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 1.
[28] Parkins, *Art of Everyday Life*, 1.

work undertaken willingly and cheerfully, with the consciousness of benefiting ourselves and our neighbours by it."[29] Morris' ideas are unique, contrastable with other contemporaneous critiques of industrial capitalism and the subsequent demands for systemic transformation, in that these other articulations ignored the importance of a pleasurable quotidian life.[30]

Aside from remaking the nature of work, Parkins notes that an appreciation of everyday objects and everyday locations also factors heavily into Morris' objective of upgrading the quotidian, much of it linked to his writing on interior design, decoration and architecture. On this point, Parkins references Morris' familiar dictum to "[h]ave nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."[31] The practising of aesthetics within the domestic space is of critical importance because it is where the risk of natural habituation to mundanities is most pronounced. In this vein, Parkins maintains that "[a]gainst the familiarity or routine of the domestic environment, Morris seems to impose a more demanding form of interest or attention that should be brought to bear on the minutiae of the home."[32] Most crucially for her is that we must not minimize our view of Morris as just a major figure in the domestic designs of the Victorian period, but that in evaluating his significance to the "art of everyday life," we consider how he envisioned the "imperative to beautify the familiar" as part of a mission to transform everyday social life.[33]

An important source of Morris' programme of investing artistry in daily life involved his egalitarian ethics, and his vision for mainstream society regarding the function of art. In *Hopes and Fears for Art*, Morris invokes some decidedly populist language to express his position

[29] Ibid., 4.
[30] Ibid., 3.
[31] Ibid., 6.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 18.

about an artistic inclusiveness which breaches socioeconomic boundaries: "They [the wealthy] do not know what art means … they think as labour is now organised art can go indefinitely as it is now organized, practised by a few for a few."[34] Morris deemed art as wholly antithetical to classism and elitism, arguing that "if it were otherwise possible that it should be an enduring condition of humanity that there must be one class utterly refined and another utterly brutal, art would bar the way and forbid the monstrosity to exist."[35] In this conception, the very essence of art is equality, its logic governed by access to universal practice, and its existence synonymous with the natural human experience.

Ruth Kinna has evaluated the democratization of art in Morris and its association with his attraction to radical political reform. Kinna writes that for Morris, "[i]n communism, art would be democratised to ensure that necessary labour became joyful and the division between work and leisure was transcended. Everyone would become an artist and art would be embedded in the ordinary activities and behaviours of everyday life."[36] While Kinna strongly connects Morris' socialist politics to his desire for liberating art for the masses, alternately, Mark Bevir downplays this influence on his thinking, viewing it as more tangential. Bevir argues that "the whole idea of Morris having been a Marxist seems to do scant justice to the utopian elements in his thinking. His writings reveal a man much more concerned to imagine a new way of life than to analyze the economic logic of capitalism."[37] In reassessing Morris, he premises his conclusion with an interrogative: "Was he not too much of the visionary, and too little of the social scientist, to be a

[34] William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1897), 175.
[35] Morris, *Hopes and Fears*, 176.
[36] Ruth Kinna, "Morris, Watts, Wilde and the Democratization of Art," chapter in *William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life*, ed. Wendy Parkins (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 93-94.
[37] Mark Bevir, "William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics," *History of European Ideas* 24, no. 3 (1998): 176.

Marxist?"[38] According to Bevir his "concern with romantic fulfilment in daily life led him to reject almost all political action as corrupting of the ideal."[39] A way in which to understand this lack of resolve on direct political action is through the high value Morris places on the interchange between art and the modern self. "One reason for so lauding art" writes Bevir, "was … that it embodied the imagination of the creative individual, and Morris, like most romantics, desperately wanted to fortify the imagination and the creative individual against the mechanical and regimented society he found about him."[40] This focus on the self and its true actualization in Morris' eyes as something only realizable through daily living as an artistic agent, is not entirely congruent with the investment of energy and focus which strong political activism demands. We might also consider that since his politics all revolved around the practicalities associated with a quotidian life of aesthetic enrichment, correcting the misconception of Morris' politics reveals that his thinking was far more germane in offering a model for everyday living, than to any political agenda. And that modus vivendi, above all else, is based on an advocacy of the modern subject functioning as an artistic subject.

This intersection of Morris' politics and aesthetics also includes the matter of how to best evaluate and characterize him as an important cultural figure of the late nineteenth century. In a study by Elizabeth Miller, she conjectures between the possibilities that "[i]f Aestheticism is defined conventionally by its insistence on the autonomy of art and the isolation of individual consciousness … and, consequently, by inwardness, reflexivity, and detachment from socio-political reality, was Morris its adversary or unwitting proponent?"[41] More directly, she sums up

[38] Bevir, "William Morris," 176.
[39] Ibid., 177.
[40] Ibid., 178.
[41] Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, "William Morris, Print Culture, and the Politics of Aestheticism," *Modernism/Modernity* 15, no. 3 (2008): 477.

the paradoxical thorniness of the matter and the implications at stake with the following query: "Was he a socialist trapped in the Aesthetic age, or an Aesthete mired down in socialist propaganda?"[42] Miller examines two of Morris' forays into socialist print for further insight, the *Commonweal* newspaper and the Kelmscott Press. She points out that Morris had concerns that the print industry might be incommensurate with his desired socialist goals, explaining that despite his editorship of the *Commonweal*, he wondered if a medium so deeply entrenched in industrial modernity could be capable of serving as anything but capitalism's apologists.[43] Despite this misgiving, Morris' response was to apply his aesthetic principles and strive to reform print from the inside with these publishing enterprises.[44] Miller cites an example of this attempt at resistance from within the industry in an essay penned by Morris for the *Commonweal*. "The Worker's Share of Art," which appeared in 1885, articulated a theory of art, one suitable to an age of Aestheticism and its connections with industrial capitalism: "artists … are deprived of the materials for their works in real life," writes Morris, "since all around them is ugly and vulgar. They are driven into seeking their materials in the imaginations of past ages, or into giving the lie to their own sense of beauty … by sentimentalizing and falsifying the life which goes on around them."[45]

Miller goes on to describe the basic features of the Kelmscott Press, some of which involved pre-industrial techniques, the inclusion of handmade materials, and the use of ornate typography and lavish illustrations. But, despite its impact of inspiring the eventual appearance of new innovative printers, the publishing scheme proved to be too far in opposition to the mood

[42] Miller, "Print Culture," 477.
[43] Ibid., 482.
[44] Ibid., 483.
[45] Ibid., 485.

of the time period.[46] That Morris' publishing activity began to elicit effects running contradictory to his political programme did not take long to attract attention, and here Miller includes one notable critic of the Kelmscott Press and its methods, Thorstein Veblen, who had used it as a prime example of "conspicuous consumption." Veblen had levelled the following complaint: "these products, since they require hand labour, are more expensive; they are also less convenient for use …; they therefore argue ability on the part of the purchaser to consume freely, as well as ability to waste time and effort."[47] Even critics predisposed to supporting Morris' work, explains Miller, have not viewed the Kelmscott project as an accurate exemplification of his political ideals on account of its pricing and exclusivity.

These inconsistencies in aims and effects in Morris' experimentation with the Kelmscott Press establish a perfect metaphor of how his ideals actually helped initiate a strand of commercialism and consumerism that supported the commodification of aesthetic products, a category which eventually comes to include experiential goods. In this way, Morris can be identified as one of the unwitting intermediaries of a new kind of commercial offering: a consumer good prepared, packaged, and marketed according to a non-commercialist ethos. As the next chapter will address in detail, this foreshadows an approach which becomes a staple of the department store as a cultural form, reaching its highest level of refinement with Selfridges. For now, it is only relevant to note that the fundamental difference between Morris and Harry Selfridge is that the former had been entirely earnest and somewhat naïve in his approach, while the latter understood that both aesthetics and commercialism were merging and becoming

[46] Ibid., 489.
[47] Quoted in Miller, 490.

increasingly inseparable in the modern world and had orchestrated a business enterprise advantageous to that fact.

In Miller's study, she ascribes the incongruities of the Kelmscott Press to the idealistic purposefulness of its founder, one that refused to yield to economic realities. Thus, Miller offers a rationale intended to produce a syncretic conclusion: "Morris could not, of course, truly extricate the press from its capitalist present, but Kelmscott can be viewed as a Utopia based on the premise that the process of production is as politically significant as the product."[48] In alignment with this, Miller also suggests that Morris had other reasons for moving forward with the press despite some of its contradictory effects. "As a utopian thinker, Morris never strictly adhered to a Marxist notion of history," explains Miller, "though he did believe a revolution was coming; with Kelmscott, he skipped over historical process altogether to make books 'in the future already.'"[49] In other words, Morris was intent on pursuing his aesthetic principles, and as someone overzealous in his ideals, forged ahead, even if it was in the absence of the hoped for future conditions that might make his print project more feasible.

For Miller, this impatience and unwillingness to wait for societal change within class structure is instructive in untangling the factors which make Morris a complicated figure in the story of Aestheticism. Thus, Miller identifies the importance of examining the utopian qualities of Morris' print enterprises with the utopian features of Aestheticism, which exposes the tension in the late nineteenth century between revolutionary and reformist political orientations. On this point Miller explains that "[u]topianism shares with Morris's print work and with Aestheticism a revolutionary impulse to create a new social system whole cloth, skipping over process,

[48] Ibid., 491.
[49] Ibid., 494.

eschewing piecemeal reform, and calling into question progressive models of history."[50] Fully aware that engaged print was in no way tenable under capitalism, Morris' response was to create a "marginalized print Utopia" that situated itself beyond the historical present and outside the calcified norms of the publishing industry and book trade.[51] In other words, Morris understood the impossibility of his kind of publishing objectives within a capitalist society, so instead, registered his political resistance and attempted to create an anti-commercial space outside of it with the Kelmscott Press.

However, an alternate interpretation is arguable, for what appears to Miller as evidence of a revolutionary impulse may offer itself up to a very different conclusion altogether. Morris may have tried to create his print utopia because he was not interested in direct political action or revolution-inspiring activities, instead settling for an aesthetic and artistic alternative which spoke to his desire to create everyday artistic things. Certainly, a recurring theme in Morris is the adamant position that beautiful objects needed to be staple features of every household, and of which books, specifically, he had always valorised as a particularly important possession. In essence, the Kelmscott Press served as his aesthetic oasis outside of the political sphere, one in which, echoing the earlier assessments, romantic and aesthetic ideals assumed the highest importance regardless of their contradictory economic and political results.

If we return to Miller's classificatory query of either casting Morris as "a socialist trapped in the Aesthetic age, or an Aesthete mired down in socialist propaganda," it opens up a salient disconnect in Morris' programme, which does more than just complicate his politics and his publishing ventures. While Morris was aspiring to concretely respond to the highly materialist

[50] Ibid., 497.
[51] Ibid.

conditions of his era, his aesthetic sensibilities were more conducive towards an economy moving in the direction of dematerialization and a culturalist orientation of the commodity; associated with this, it is instructive to recall that by this historical period the production-based economy was already gradually giving way to one based on consumption. Morris' espousal of applying artistry to the everyday, his emphasis on the imaginative and creative aspects of the human spirit, had much more to do with experiential dimensions of modernity which were increasing in significance and beginning to forever alter the economy, than in any efforts or notion of reviving traditional methods of craftsmanship. And while his Kelmscott Press may have sought to produce a commodity that hearkened back to an earlier time, the infusion of aesthetics to daily life it was intending to promote and market through these goods was a prelude to a future which would venture beyond purely materialist economic considerations. In striving above all to exemplify how the modern individual should be in daily life an artistic modern subject, perhaps Morris was an aesthetic culturalist trapped in a materialist age.

Wilde's Critical Consumer Subject

To travel forward through the pathway of aesthetics from Ruskin, Morris, and Wilde is to pass by some crucial signposts in the genealogical formation of the experiential consumer and the experiential economy. However, it is in the ways that Wilde adds practices and issues of consumption into Morris' conception of the artistic citizen that greatly accelerates the speed and visibility of the journey. The notion of the modern subject as artist, as expressed by Morris' ideals, in principle, is very much in accordance with Oscar Wilde's aesthetic thought. In Wilde's view, the two components of the premise are indistinguishable. In the "Soul of Man Under Socialism," Wilde writes that "[a]rt is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has

known."[52] While Morris saw art as redemptive in helping the modern individual reunite with a sensuous and pleasurable life, Wilde went even further in vouching for art's agency and understood it as the indispensable catalyst in which the modern self could reach its highest articulative potential: "It is a question whether we have ever seen the full expression of a personality, except on the imaginative plane of art."[53] It appears that Wilde, though inspired by Morris' position on the restitutive benefits of art against the alienating elements of industrial capitalism, greatly expands its role and expectations in the cause of personal development. Thus, Wilde's interest extends far beyond just the use of art to connect modern subjects to their authentic nature, one Morris had seen rooted in creative capacities and activities, but instead demands that art change the very nature of the modern subject.

For Wilde, the key to art's potential resides in its destabilizing effects on habituation and the influence of learned practices, behaviours that threaten personal autonomy. Just as Ruskin voiced his admonition about avoiding the dangers suggestive of a learned grammar of visuality, something similar is paralleled in Wilde's view of art as the safeguard against a routinized perception of experiential life. Wilde writes that "[a]rt is Individualism, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine."[54] It appears rather evident that a pivotal tenet of Wilde's aesthetic project, which he shares with other important Victorian aesthetic thinkers – and with modernist writers such as Woolf and Joyce – is this emphasis on perceptual dishabituation. A crucial prerequisite for Wilde

[52] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1912), 45.
[53] Wilde, *Soul of Man*, 21.
[54] Ibid., 50-51.

in fostering this approach is "to acquire the temperament to which Art appeals. And what is that temperament? It is the temperament of receptivity."[55]

If we analyse Wilde's writing, we arrive at a better understanding of this "temperament of receptivity" and what it entails in its more evolved form. In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde presents an aesthetic philosophy that goes some distance in raising the demands of artistic production, and by extension, individuality. Using the dialogue between the interlocutors Ernest and Gilbert, Wilde discusses his notion of "the critical spirit," a quality that he traces back to Greek classical antiquity. "Without the critical faculty," writes Wilde, "there is no artistic creation at all, worthy of the name … and no one who does not possess this critical faculty can create anything at all in art."[56] According to Wilde, a fully developed version of creativity encompasses within it the mindset of a critic, the latter feature essential to the cultivation of inventiveness: "But there has never been a creative age that has not been critical also. For it is the critical faculty that invents fresh forms."[57] In Wilde's view, creativity must merge with the critical attitude because "[t]he mere creative instinct does not innovate, but reproduces."[58] Though Wilde is rather vague in explaining how the critical spirit ameliorates the repetitive aspect of the creative impulse, the inference can be drawn that since receptivity and open-mindedness are at the centre of the critical method, an ability to adopt multiple viewpoints promotes the invention of new approaches and forms.

While Wilde celebrates "the critical spirit" for its capacity to promote creative production among artists, it becomes clear that his programme of lionizing criticism as a valuable

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[55] Ibid., 69-70.
[56] Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist" in *Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905), 120-21.
[57] Wilde, "Critic as Artist," 123.
[58] Ibid., 125.

endeavour, and the aesthetics he attaches to it, are part of a deeper conviction about the prized role of the critic in modern society, and the ways in which the repertoire of the critic can represent an approach to modernity for the modern individual. Before examining this connection between the critic and the modern subject, a closer exploration of the aesthetic attitude and sensibilities of Wilde's ideal "critic" is necessary. And at the centre of this critic's protocol, which repeatedly appears, are issues involving consumption. When Wilde declared his famous maxim "that Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life," he was essentially expounding an aesthetic principle mainly rooted in consumer behaviour.[59] The modern subject, he noted, was interacting with the world of art in a manner that influenced their lives. It was based on this phenomenon that he wrote of the impact of Pre-Raphaelite paintings on the fashion trends of the later nineteenth century: "We have all seen in our own day in England how a certain curious and fascinating type of beauty, invented and emphasized by two imaginative painters, has so influenced Life that whenever one goes to a private view or to an artistic salon one sees, here the mystic eyes of Rossetti's dream … the passion-pale face of Andromeda."[60] The basic process of this influence entailed the act of a gifted artist inventing a "type," and then consumers of the artwork going on to emulate it through their various choices and actions.

Although, at first glance, this may suggest the sense of a passive form of consumption, Wilde's approach, one inspired by criticism, actually involves active engagement with a focus on exploring the fullest range of possibilities, and thus, the consumer acts like a critic of sorts. Wilde explains that "[t]he true critic will … seek for beauty in every age and in each school, and will never suffer himself to be limited to any settled custom of thought, or stereotyped mode of

[59] Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," in *Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905), 32.
[60] Wilde, "Decay of Lying," 32.

looking at things. He will realize himself in many forms, and by a thousand different ways, and will ever be curious of new sensations and fresh points of view."[61] In other words, the critic functions as the ultimate consumer whose highest responsibility is to constantly shop around for the maximum number of expressive modes; essentially, Wilde is advocating for a critical kind of consumption, and its guiding principle is the refusal to exhaust options. Therefore, Wilde writes that "[t]hrough constant change, and through constant change alone, he [the critic] will find his true unity."[62] It is this enterprising spirit towards consumption which is the basis of Wilde's elevation of the critic to the level of the artist. For this reason, he maintains that "[t]o the great poet, there is only one method of music – his own. To the great painter there is only one manner of painting – that which he himself employs. The aesthetic critic … can appreciate all forms and modes."[63] Wilde seems to suggest that while the artist may be prone to the potential blind spots induced by their own productive immersion, the decidedly fluid consumer stance of the critic enables a fuller vision of aesthetic appreciation.

A central way that Wilde's aesthetic ideals can be understood as predicated on consumerist ethics is through the recurrent notion of "sampling," which stylistically shapes much of his text *Intentions*. If we consider this collection of essays, his most comprehensive treatment on aesthetics, the standard critique it evokes – of being riddled with inconsistencies and incongruities – is quite revelatory in demonstrating this element. It is likely that Wilde found the charges flattering. In fact, at the conclusion of the text, he appears to be inviting the critical invectives himself: "Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in aesthetic

[61] Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," 190-91.
[62] Ibid., 191.
[63] Ibid., 206.

criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth."[64] It is Wilde's refusal to assume fixed positions, views, and beliefs – his obsessive compulsion to avoid consistency at all costs – that ultimately signals his status as a critical consumer, an attitude he models. It is such a radical commitment to aesthetic dabbling, that even the critic's thoroughness is worth sacrificing in order to preserve the essence of sampling. In reference to literary reviewers, Wilde writes that "[i]t is sometimes said of them that they do not read all through the works they are called upon to criticise. They do not. Or at least they should not … To know the vintage and quality of a wine one need not drink the whole cask. It must be perfectly easy in half an hour to say whether a book is worth anything or worth nothing … One tastes it, and that is quite enough."[65] Here, Wilde even directly and consciously employs the language of consumption to link the critic to the sampling consumer.

Related to this relentless sampling, it would seem, is the fixation on also resisting the prospect of complete consumer satiety. It is no textual coincidence, that *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, its composition in close proximity to that of *Intentions*, features a scene in which Lord Henry muses on about a consumer product that Regenia Gagnier has evaluated as Wilde's treatment of the cigarette as the "perfect commodity."[66] Offering it to the novel's titular character, Lord Henry makes the following declaration: "You must have a cigarette. A cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?"[67] It is noteworthy that Wilde's overall rhetorical programme in *Intentions,* one best characterized by sharp meanderings, is not unlike the shopper sifting through the goods at

[64] Ibid., 263.
[65] Ibid., 126.
[66] Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 14.
[67] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 77.

the market, and while one commodity might be enticing for a moment, interest is always tentative and contingent on the potential allure of the next item, similar to a shopper who continues to browse about. In this vein, the darting discursive movements in these essays are akin to the darting movements of the shopper in the marketplace, unsystematic and spontaneous, but always faithfully explorative. In all of this, the image takes shape of a never satisfied aesthete who embodies the perpetual consumer, so if he is inconsistent and superficial, changing with the trends, it is in consonance with the marketplace actions he mimics.

On the surface of *Intentions*, a particularly curious feature involves its thematic preoccupation with promoting activities traditionally viewed as secondary to notions of direct agency; there is the valuing of thoughts and words over actions. "It is very much more difficult to talk about a thing," asserts Wilde, "than to do it. In the sphere of actual life that is of course obvious. Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it."[68] For Wilde, the ability to provide meaningful representation may actually matter more than the object of its reflection, something analogous to his conception of the critic's connection with the work of art. Wilde maintains "that to do nothing at all is the most difficult thing in the world, the most difficult and the most intellectual. To Plato, with his passion for wisdom, this was the noblest form of energy."[69] Though it may seem puzzling that Wilde would rely so heavily on paradoxes of this nature throughout his aesthetic formulations, a return to his consumerist ethics is instructive. It appears that Wilde is intimating that the function of criticism is linked to a credo of creative consumption. In other words, whether in the hands of the critic or the critical consumer, an imaginative form of consumption can function as generative. Carolyn Lesjak has assessed some

[68] Wilde, The Critic as Artist," 127.
[69] Ibid., 170.

of Wilde's engagement with various economic concepts. Lesjak analyses how his non-utilitarian ethics pushed against the conventions of the Victorian era. Setting up the productivist milieu of that time period, Lesjak explains that "[p]leasure is opposed to abstract labor, but simultaneously defined by it negatively – as that which is not work – as capitalist logic colonizes ever greater domains of experience."[70] According to Lesjak, Wilde registers his resistance by redefining some economic elements: "Oscar Wilde provides a counter-narrative to Victorian conventions by imagining, also through Art, an expanded notion of needs and use which privileges pleasure and the imagination over utility."[71]

All these points of intersection between criticism and consumption in Wilde's writing, which are suggestive of his aim to elide the boundaries between the critic and the consumer, seem prompted by the mainstream opinion of the secondary status of these roles in relation to conventional creative production. Wilde makes this transparent enough when he claims that "it is only the Philistine who seeks to estimate a personality by the vulgar test of production."[72] Just as the critic is undervalued in Wilde's estimation because of pejorative perceptions, much the same beleaguers the consumer, but in Wilde, not only do these roles merge together, even the modern subject interacting with the world is drawn into association with these aesthetic ideals about criticism. Wilde writes, "[t]hat is what the highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history as it is concerned simply with oneself."[73] Thus, qualities of interiority and introspection are validated in their own right, and along these lines, the activity

[70] Carolyn Lesjak, "Utopia, Use, and the Everyday: Oscar Wilde and A New Economy of Pleasure," *ELH* 67, no. 1 (2000): 180.
[71] Lesjak, "Use, and the Everyday," 180. It seems that to some degree Wilde had viewed consumption as a form of creative labour, or creative consumption. Earlier it was noted that Morris had conceived of labour, revalued as pleasure, but Wilde appears to be reassigning consumption as a type of labour which provides pleasure.
[72] Oscar Wilde, "Pen, Pencil and Poison," in *Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905), 65.
[73] Wilde, "Critic as Artist," 138.

of self-reflection is imbricated in criticism. Wilde claims that "[Criticism] is the only civilized form of autobiography … [because it involves] the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind."[74] Accordingly, it can be seen that this foregrounding of subjectivity in Wilde's aesthetics is tied to characteristics that foster the development of the experiential consumer. The act of imaginative subjective engagement is sufficient for Wilde, even if its impact is limited to oneself.[75] The critical mindset, in its association with either the critic, the consumer, or the modern subject, is self-validating, since it ultimately signifies a useful mode in which to approach modern living. Interestingly, while Wilde had been a key part of Aestheticism's emphasis on artistic isolation and artistic autonomy, he seems to have extended a modified version of the movement's famous slogan to the modern subject as a critical consumer: to critique and consume aesthetics for one's own sake.

If we step back and evaluate the various aesthetic strands that weave through *Intentions,* a pattern emerges, and it involves more than just ideas about art and consumer economics. The text's treatment of criticism seems to present it as a metaphor for approaching modernity. For Wilde, criticism is the appropriate approach to thinking in the modern world. In the Socratic dialogue of "The Critic as Artist," Gilbert exclaims, "you asked me the use of Criticism. You might just as well have asked me the use of thought … It is Criticism … that makes the mind a fine instrument. We, in our educational system, have burdened the memory with … laboriously-acquired knowledge. We teach people how to remember, we never teach them how to grow."[76] Wilde's opinion here of affording such lofty status to the "critical spirit" is a result of the rapidly

[74] Ibid., 139.
[75] In defending the critic against the charge of the lack of tangible effects on the art world, Wilde claims that "[t]he influence of the critic will be the mere fact of his own existence … You must not ask of him to have any aim other than the perfecting of himself." Ibid., 202.
[76] Ibid., 209.

industrializing and modernizing forces of the late nineteenth century, for which this mindset has stabilizing benefits. "The duty of imposing form upon chaos," writes Wilde, "does not grow less as the world advances. There was never a time when Criticism was more needed than it is now. It is only by its means that Humanity can become conscious of the point at which it has arrived."[77] This idea of the critical mindset imposing form over chaos, actually presages, as explored in the previous chapter, Georg Simmel's most seminal text ("The Metropolis and Mental Life") which would not appear until more than a decade later. Although Wilde's perspective is aesthetical in its orientation, he was rather prescient in anticipating upcoming sociological concerns.

That Wilde anticipated modernist concerns, though specifically in the sphere of art, rather than the social sciences, is not an entirely new consideration. In fact, a study by R.J. Green offers one such useful example, the title of his work synoptically revealing as much. In "Oscar Wilde's *Intentions*: An Early Modernist Manifesto," Green argues that from his scores of earlier literary reviews as a journalist, to his later work on this collection of essays, a radical transformation had occurred in his approach to criticism. According to Green, the journalistic reviews were characterized by conventionality and linearity, thus, mostly in alignment with Victorian values and Arnoldian consistency, which focussed on the object of study itself.[78] However, by the time of *Intentions*, Green asserts that this style had been inverted as Wilde emphasized subjectivity and its impact on shaping "personal responses," with the object under investigation only providing stimulation.[79] In this way, Green avers that Wilde's approach to "modern consciousness" prefigures the works of modernist authors such as Joyce, Woolf and Pound.[80] For

[77] Ibid., 208.
[78] R.J. Green, "Oscar Wilde's *Intentions*: An Early Modernist Manifesto," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 13, no. 4 (1973): 399, 401.
[79] Green, "Early Modernist Manifesto," 399.
[80] Ibid., 401.

these reasons, Green reaches the conclusion that "Wilde forsook the linear style of Ruskin and Arnold and instead attempted to communicate in a manner similar to the great modernists."[81] While Green is perceptive in noting these linkages to high modernist literature, it is also apparent that these features anticipate the reader-response theories of the much later twentieth century. Ultimately, this all gestures back to the same basic premise of Wilde's aesthetics: the highest value of art resides in the imaginativeness it inspires in the viewer and consumer, an ideal in concert with the promotion of experiential consumption.

Pater's Advocacy of Experiential Consumption

A central premise of this chapter is that key aesthetic figures of the later nineteenth century, in succession, advanced values and sensibilities which contributed to the eventual mainstreaming of experiential consumption. From Ruskin's exploration in the tools of perceptual subjectivism, to Morris' promotion of the modern subject as artist, and progressing to Wilde's extension in imagining the critical consumer subject, the stage had been set for the newest descendant from this aesthetic lineage, the newest cultural figure in the modern cityscape: the experiential consumer. However, this cultural newcomer was further encouraged along by yet another aesthetic ambassador. While these three Victorian aesthetes, in terms of influence, are part of a chronological narrative, running parallel to Morris and Wilde is Walter Pater and his intense championing of experience. The fundamental difference between Pater and the others is that his commitment to the valorisation of experience was more radical because his aesthetics were totally unmoored from any attachment to a materialist orientation of the commodity. Though some of the waning vestiges of a materialist orientation still clung to the trio during their

[81] Ibid., 403.

movement towards a more culturalist orientation, Pater's approach to the object or commodity was thoroughly culturalist, particularly in the way this functions to stimulate the experiential dimensions of subjectivity. And for this reason, Pater offered the fullest articulation of the ideals of the experiential consumer. In fact, various portions of his work can be read as a manifesto of experiential consumption.

One of the strongest indications of Pater's heavily culturalist approach to the modern world's flood of objects and commodities is his "dematerialist" aesthetics. In the "Preface" to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry,* Pater explains what has been identified roundly among scholars as a core tenet of his philosophy on aesthetic criticism. In a classic Paterian move which is cleverly suggestive of the process of dematerialization itself, Pater first installs the monumental apparatus of Arnoldian criticism, only to quickly dismantle it. Beginning with a quote from Matthew Arnold, he writes, "'[t]o see the object as in itself it really is,' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly."[82] Instead of focussing the investigation on the object itself as prescribed by Arnold, the process is reversed by Pater so that the object is superseded by the "impression" it constructs within the viewer. In a sense, the object is materially emptied of significance and treated as fluid, with the subjective impression replacing it as the more important object that matters. The point is not to suggest that Pater views the materiality of the art object as irrelevant, because its physical manifestation certainly does occasion the aesthetic opportunity, but that it quickly becomes secondary to the personal impressions it serves to

[82] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1893 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), xix.

initiate. This dematerialist aesthetic is expressed even more forcefully at a later point in the text. While musing on the cascade of external objects that impose themselves on experience, Pater writes that "each object is loosed into a group of impressions – colour, odour, texture – in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent … it contracts still further."[83] In a contemporary review of *The Renaissance*, Sidney Colvin claimed that Pater's aesthetic criticism was centred on a "temperament acutely sensitive to impressions of art … and a philosophy which accepts objects as relative, experience as everything."[84]

This recalls the previous chapter's discussion of the key distinctions separating the material consumer and the experiential consumer: objects act on the material consumer, but the experiential consumer acts on the objects; thus, in the first condition the consumer becomes absorbed by the object and "distraction" becomes a pitfall, but conversely, in the second condition the object becomes absorbed by the consumer, with "contemplation" emerging as a key aspect of the consumer's engagement. While Pater attempts to dematerialize the object, he strives to materialize experience. In discussing the energizing vitality of the experiential, Pater writes that "[t]o burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life."[85] Though elsewhere Pater speaks of "loosing" the object into its constituent impressions, in this description, the blazing impressions of the experiential are crystallized. It is not for nothing that in her essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf had upbraided Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy

[83] Pater, *The Renaissance*, 187.
[84] Ibid., 292.
[85] Ibid., 189.

as "materialist" authors willing to fixate down to the minutest item of a "button," while Pater's influence had been quite prominent in both her fiction and non-fiction works.

Pater's preoccupation with experiential consumption had been initially largely misunderstood. When the first edition of *The Renaissance* appeared in 1873, many critics had assailed it for its alleged promotion of hedonism, charges which he felt troubling enough that in the subsequent 1877 edition the controversial "Conclusion" had been removed. In the 1893 edition of the text, Pater had restored a slightly modified version of this final section, but with the following explanation in the footnote: "This brief 'Conclusion' was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning."[86] Not only was Pater willing to make such concessions to restore credibility to his advocacy of refined experiential consumption, he even suggests in the same footnote that a motivating factor behind the composition of a completely different work, had been fuelled by this same agenda: "I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts suggested by it [the 'Conclusion']."[87] Pater was no crass hedonist; all these corrective efforts speak to an aestheticist passionate about forwarding a programme focussed on the refinement of experiences and its contribution to a conception of the good life. The titular character in *Marius the Epicurean* thought to himself that "[n]ot pleasure, but a general completeness of life, was the practical ideal … [a]nd towards such a full or complete life, a life of various yet select sensation, the most direct and effective auxiliary must be, in a word, Insight."[88] For Marius, this "completeness of life" was inseparable from an

[86] Ibid., 186.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 107.

application of aesthetics to it: "the true aesthetic culture would be realizable as a new form of the contemplative life."[89] Pater's ideals are not of an ephemeral and impulsive pursuit of gratification, but rather of a disciplined enterprise with long term personal development in mind.

Central to Pater's treatment of aesthetics is the strong belief in its connection to democratic values. While Pater's reputation as an introverted aesthete has the potential to smack of pedantry and elitism, his vision for the "contemplative life" is rather broad in its social inclusiveness. Consider for a moment the series of questions he invites the reader to pose in the opening pages of *The Renaissance*: "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence?"[90] The tenor is immediately striking; these do not sound like the kind of queries which are directed to a scholarly audience. The use of personal deictic expressions suggests that Pater is addressing them to anyone who experiences "impressions." Furthermore, if we examine the rapid serializing of interrelated questions – implicit within its structure – is the invitation for the viewer or reader to continue extending this modelled aesthetic interaction, by interrogating their own impressions in a similar manner. Additionally, not only are the examples of possible stimuli diverse, but these are typical of daily encounters. In fact, the final one regarding the "engaging personality in life or in a book," makes this clear because it goes as far to sanction even material outside the boundaries of the formal artwork, as valid sources of aesthetic reception. In essence, in the same way that Pater decommissions the task of critical aesthetic response from the hands of the studied art critic and releases it to the modern subject,

[89] Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 112.
[90] Pater, *The Renaissance*, xix-xx.

he deregulates academy-approved aesthetic content, opening it up to a much wider selection of material. Simply put, for Pater, anyone can engage aesthetically, and many features of the quotidian avail itself to aesthetic engagement.

Closely related to this democratization of aesthetic consumption is the notion of an aesthetic education. Jette Kjeldsen has written about the Aesthetic Movement's role in this development, and she has identified Pater as a key contributor to it. Kjeldsen explains that "Pater both empowers and challenges the viewers: empowers them by giving them the freedom to find their own meaning in the work of art; challenges them by withdrawing precise external criteria by which to find this meaning."[91] For Kjeldsen, it is Pater's position on the inseparability of art and life that most implicated him as a driving force in aesthetic education: "[*The Renaissance*'s] equating art with life and its belief in aesthetic democracy and the individual response to art makes it … [a text] which combines the highest demands for quality in life and art with a democratic belief in the success of aesthetic education."[92]

Another important area of investigation in Pater's aesthetics is its connection to marketplace economics, which had been a burgeoning domain in the late Victorian period. Regenia Gagnier has conducted extensive research on the imbrications between economics and aesthetics. In *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, Gagnier traces the crucial developments in these fields, advancing the general argument that the evolution in economic models was matched qualitatively by the same progression in aesthetic theory. Gagnier writes that "[William Stanley] Jevons, the mathematical economist, and Pater, the donnish aesthete, converge in their promotion

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[91] Jette Kjeldsen, "What Can the Aesthetic Movement Tell us about Aesthetic Education?" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 1 (2001): 85.

[92] Kjeldsen, "Aesthetic Education," 96. Related to these ideas is the work of American philosopher John Dewey, whose advocacy in the early twentieth century had been influential in expanding the role of art in educational reform. Dewey's *Art as Experience* addresses the democratization of aesthetics.

of subjectivism, individualism, consumption, and ultimately formalism."[93] A primary feature of her work involves analysing the transition from a productivist ideology to a consumerist one, and on this matter Pater is presented as a pivotal figure. With the growing idea of "economic man" as a rationale agent – selecting from available options – becoming an important theoretical construct in the nineteenth century, Gagnier identifies Pater's aesthetics in the correlating analogue she dubs "aesthetic man." Accordingly, she writes that "[j]ust as economic man chooses between scarce commodities, so aesthetic man discriminates between pleasures."[94] Gagnier justifies this connection by assessing Pater's evaluation of Gustave Flaubert's work and its suggestions of selective stringency: "Flaubert is Pater's type of … economizing aesthete, whose 'idea of a natural economy' … becomes the formal principle of literary modernism … that distinguished him from the 'negligent' public that 'welcomes' … the 'flood' of commodities of consumer society."[95]

While Gagnier does well to draw our attention to critical linkages between the spheres of economics and aesthetics, her claims have been contested. Josephine Guy has noted the lack of demonstrable causality in Gagnier's study on the supposed influence of economic theory in the discourse of aesthetics. Guy maintains that Gagnier's work "strongly implies, but fails actually to argue, that the relationship between the two kinds of discourse amounts to something more substantial than mere coincidence or contiguity."[96] The other major concern for Guy is in the use of discipline-specific language across the economic and aesthetic discourses; essentially, that though figures likes Jevons and Pater may use the same terms, she insists that they actually mean

[93] Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, 53-54.
[94] Ibid., 55.
[95] Ibid., 56.
[96] Josephine Guy, "Aesthetics, Economics and Commodity Culture: Theorizing Value in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain," *ELT* 42, no. 2 (1999): 144.

very different things: "it is true that Pater and Jevons both emphasize individualism, choice and subjective pleasure, [but] their use of these concepts is very different."[97] For example, when Jevons speaks of the "individual," his conception is based on laws with assumptions already factored into them regarding individual behaviour – it functions on an abstract level – not what the actual individual does or subjectively feels, which is irrelevant to his kind of analysis; while for Pater, it is precisely the inverse of this situation, as his concern does indeed deal with the unique and specific individual subjectivity of an actual person.[98] Guy argues that "[f]or economic man choice is quantitative, calculated and (theoretically) generalizable. By contrast, for aesthetic man, choice is qualitative, unique and incomparable."[99]

Though Gagnier may be overreaching in some of her claims about the discursive connections between economics and aesthetics, and to be certain, Guy's views about the dangers in sharing the treatment of constructs outside the context of each discipline is important, Guy is too swift in her dismissal of any meaningful conceptual affinities across their boundaries. Perhaps this is most pronounced in her handling of Pater and his aesthetic ideals. Guy seems to greatly underappreciate Pater's egalitarian principles and the ways he promoted the modern individual's capacity for aesthetic agency. Consider her evaluation on a key distinction she makes between "aesthetic man" and "economic man." Guy writes that "'aesthetic man' is distinguished from 'economic man' by virtue of his rarity: we are all economic agents, but very few of us (Pater argues) can be aesthetic agents or aesthetic critics (the 'scholar' writing for the 'scholarly conscience' is Pater's formulation in the 'Style' essay)."[100] It is crucial to notice how Guy conflates "aesthetic agents" and "aesthetic critics" into one category, something she does in

[97] Guy, "Commodity Culture," 166.
[98] Ibid., 159-60.
[99] Ibid., 164.
[100] Ibid.

order to present “aesthetic man” as a “rarity.” However, this is precisely the opposite of Paterian aesthetics; Pater actually insists that we are all “aesthetic agents” even if we are not all in fact erudite “aesthetic critics.” As discussed earlier, Pater’s message in *The Renaissance* is focussed on mainstream aesthetic accessibility with its emphasis on individual subjective “impressions” which facilitate it. Since Guy’s position requires the elimination of individual aesthetic agency, she fuses the everyday aesthetic agent with the lofty aesthetic critic, and for support, references an essay from Pater intended for different purposes on the intricacies of literary connoisseurship. Again, this notion of aesthetic agency is crucial to Pater because it derives from his fixation with the experiential and his advocacy of it as a source of enrichment in daily life. Most characteristically, his principles are predicated on individual aesthetic agents functioning within an experiential economy.

Navigating between some of the ideas forwarded by Gagnier and Guy, there are helpful ways to understand the relationship between aesthetics and economics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, it is unnecessary to establish rigid equivalencies in economic models and aesthetic theories. Individuals, at times, do think aesthetically about economic matters, just as at other times they do think economically about aesthetic things, and when this occurs, the modern individual does not trouble themselves with theoretical precision or with whatever incongruities might seep into their handling of one or the other. Since everyday people do not rigidly apply discipline-specific terminology to their encounters, we do well to accept the looser manner in which the modern individual picks up ideas from either discourse and applies them to their lives. Accordingly, perhaps we can consider ideas associated with experiential consumption as a kind of lingua franca between the discourses of economics and aesthetics. The justification for this abides in the view that the experiential consumer straddles the fields of

marketplace economics and aesthetics. This occurs in several ways: experiences are sought after from a consumerist perspective of "demand" and "choice," like material goods are in the marketplace; experiences have the potential to satisfy "wants" in a similar fashion to commodities in the marketplace; both experiences and material goods are often subjected to elements of stylization and aestheticization. Thus, the experiential consumer is an updated embodiment of the "aesthetic man" (or agent) that Gagnier expounds upon and Guy quibbles over, only this figure, because of everyday real interaction in the modern world, is neither as theoretically informed (in either discipline) as the former critic suggests, nor as disengaged and isolated in some "ivory tower" as asserted by the latter. This figure of the experiential consumer is essentially the audience Pater had wanted to address in *The Renaissance* where he attempted to persuade modern individuals to become attentive to aesthetic reception in the opportunities that surrounded them. And certainly, Pater is dismissing any elitist notion of high art's separation from the daily concerns of everyday people, as he clearly explains in his own words that "[w]hat modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to rearrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit."[101]

Although he had not explicitly expressed it, intuitively, Pater apprehended a salient idea associated with fin de siècle economics and how it influenced aesthetic reception. Alfred Marshall was an important figure in the development of economic thought in the late nineteenth century. In *Principles of Economics*, Marshall described the marginal utility principle and its impact on consumption: "The marginal utility of a thing to anyone diminishes with every increase in the amount of it he already has."[102] Basically, with every additional unit of a

[101] Pater, *The Renaissance*, 184.
[102] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, Eighth Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 79.

commodity that a consumer acquires, the relative "utility" or enjoyment derived from it begins to decrease so that subsequent portions become increasingly less satisfying. Some of Marshall's ideas were groundbreaking in altering economic concepts, such as with price and value. Importantly, Marshall identified a caveat to the law of marginal utility. Marshall writes "that we do not suppose time to be allowed for any alteration in the character or tastes of the man himself. It is therefore no exception to the law that the more good music that a man hears, the stronger is his taste for it likely to become."[103] Here, the suggestion is introduced that because certain taste-related matters can evolve over time, there may exist scenarios where additional units of a good actually increases the utility of it, and according to Marshall, the consumption of some artistic or aesthetic commodities are an example of that phenomenon.

Returning to Pater, his advocacy in *The Renaissance* of the value of the individual's subjective impressions, as with Marshall's music afficionado, also insinuates a likely increase in the appreciation and desire for personal impressions. This notion of taste increasing with exposure, explains Pater's insistence on the individual accumulating the maximum amount of aesthetic experiences, whether from a "picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, La Gioconda, the hills of Carrara … [as all] are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure."[104] Pater seemed to implicitly understand that the collection of experiential goods was far different than the collection of material goods, and that it would resist the consumptive fatigue associated with marginalist economics.

[103] Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 79.
[104] Pater, *The Renaissance*, xx.

Though Pater's ideals are indicative of Marshall's claim that tastes can progress over time to strengthen the craving of certain things, there are other factors to consider, and again, an economics perspective proves useful. George Stigler and Gary Becker analysed Marshall's exception to marginalist theory and posited an alternative explanation which accounts for the anomaly of increased marginal utility in select cases. For these economists, it is not a matter of changing tastes, a characteristic they view as fixed and therefore unhelpful for explicating the phenomenon, but rather an accrual of skills and capacities within the consumer which increases the utility gained from a product, activity or interest.[105] Put another way, the acquisition of specific skills (including knowledge) allows for what Stigler and Becker term "consumption capital," which reduces the cost of certain activities, stimulating an increased desire for them.[106] Thus, in their theoretical conception, Marshall's music afficionado progressively acquired an increasing demand for good music based on an enhanced ability to efficiently consume and enjoy that pursuit as a benefit of an accumulation in consumption capital.[107] However, in relation to the consumption of aesthetics, these differing explanations are complementary because increased exposure can both intensify a taste for aesthetic stimuli, and in the process, upgrade one's capacity for enhanced aesthetic reception and response. From this perspective, it appears that Stigler and Becker's theory of enhanced consumption efficiency reveals the mechanism behind Marshall's point about the evolution of taste. Note how Pater seems to implicitly gesture at both exposure and skill development as mutually reinforcing constituents of aesthetic consumption: "Our education [on aesthetic reception] becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to

[105] George Stigler and Gary Becker, "De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum," *The American Economic Review* 67, no. 2 (1977): 78.
[106] Stigler and Becker, "De Gustibus," 78.
[107] Ibid., 81.

these impressions increases in depth and variety."[108] This depiction of the compounding returns of investing in aesthetic activities, demonstrates why the experiential good for Pater was the ultimate commodity worth consuming: "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end."[109] The statement amounts to a declaration of a foundational principle for the experiential consumer.

How do repeated interactions with the artistic help to prime and maximize future encounters? Using Stigler and Becker's perspective, it is straightforward in certain instances: the art lover of a certain kind of genre progressively acquires additional specialized knowledge and skills in interpreting works of that category, which subsequently promotes an improvement in the ability to consume this material. But what does this entail with Pater's more generalized sense of personal impressions of art or other aesthetic stimuli? Pater appears to suggest that the practice of cultivating one's impressions, of introspectively interrogating one's responses, is sufficient in developing a capacity for aesthetic receptivity, and though he mentions "education" in one of the earlier quotes, it is devoid of any reference to formally learned principles, as though this is innately and intuitively formed within the subject. Here, Clive Bell's work comes to mind, and how aesthetic sensibilities may emerge outside the context of educational or cultural sources. In his treatise *Art*, Bell explains that "[t]o appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space."[110] This led Bell to hypothesize about a concept linked to the core of all artistic work: "There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist…. Only one answer seems possible – significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of

[108] Pater, *The Renaissance*, xx.
[109] Ibid., 188.
[110] Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914), 27.

forms, stir our aesthetic emotions."[111] According to Bell, the quality of "significant form" resides within the art object itself, and upon detection of this external feature, the observer experiences an aesthetic emotion, proving its fixed presence.

It is hardly surprising that Bell's premise attracted much critical objection of circularity within its formulation. Carol Gould is a critic who has attempted to resolve this theoretical contradiction by sharpening Bell's usage of key terms. For Gould, the central confusion issues from Bell's employment of imprecise language, specifically on his treatment of perceptual and emotional qualities: "Bell calls the aesthetic experience the 'aesthetic emotion' even though, on his account, it conforms more closely to a perception than to an emotion. His unfortunate choice of the expression 'emotion' naturally inclines his reader to classify his aesthetic experience as a species of emotion; but his discussion makes far more sense if one takes it as a sort of perception."[112] On balance, in evaluating the broad sweep of Bell's arguments, Gould does find a faithful adherence to a perceptual model.[113] An impediment to Bell's theoretical clarity is his prioritizing of pleasure in the observer's aesthetic response. "Bell conflates the aesthetic perception of significant form," writes Gould, "with the pleasure that accompanies the perception. One could appropriately call this pleasure, but not the perception, an emotion; Bell's confusion makes it easy for his work to be misread."[114] Perhaps the most important outcome in clearing up the confusion between aesthetic emotion, and an aesthetic judgment grounded within perception, is that it reconceptualizes the principle of "significant form," recasting it from an

[111] Bell, *Art*, 7-8.
[112] Carol Gould, "Clive Bell on Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Truth," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34, no. 2 (1994): 126.
[113] Gould, "Aesthetic Experience," 126.
[114] Ibid., 131.

objective characteristic solely existing in the artwork, and instead, conceiving it as emerging from the interaction between a piece of art and the subjective engagement of its consumer.

From this perspective, Bell's key concept shares much more affinity with Pater's programme of effectively developing one's own aesthetic impressions, a process which can be seen as also implicating this more theoretically polished version of significant form, which still functions outside of formal education and culture, and thus within the purview of any modern subject motivated for such experiential enrichment. In this vein, we can build on Stigler and Becker's construct, and apply the notion of "aesthetic consumption capital" as a quality both facilitating aesthetic engagement and expanding its demand. As a result, aesthetic consumption capital offers some insight in explaining Bell's linguistic imprecision. While Gould maintains that he conflated aesthetic emotion with aesthetic perception and ascribed it to his overzealous fixation on the pleasure of achieving aesthetic reception, an alternate way to reconcile this paradox is to consider that Bell espoused such an emotion because he instinctively understood how this affective element waxes with repeated artistic encounters, both as an effect – of what we can regard as increasing aesthetic consumption capital – and as a cause impelling the pursuit of future aesthetic opportunities. In other words, Bell's overemphasis on "aesthetic emotion" was deliberate and purposeful, and he likely brooked its potentially muddling consequences, out of an appreciation for its crucial role in activating the consumer's aesthetic judgment, of which the detection of significant form was an indispensable feature. In this way, affective motivation, perceptual receptivity, and artistic judgment, are all part of a circuit which not only powers aesthetic consumption, but from an aesthetic consumer's perspective, makes it progressively more efficient. Whether in relation to Pater's nurturing of personal impressions, or Bell's valorising of apprehending significant form, the acquisition and accumulation of aesthetic

consumption capital helps to explain the feedback loop reinforcing these processes of artistic subjective engagement.

Essential to the origin story of the modern world's experiential consumer is the evolution of late nineteenth-century aesthetics, and though it is a chronicle partly made possible by the key thinkers evaluated in this chapter, the promotion of sensibilities which nurture aesthetic engagement are only part of the narrative arc. Still needed were the emergence of cultural forms and institutions which could permeate the lives of modern individuals by immersing them in daily practice of the aesthetic ideals advanced by figures like Ruskin, Morris, Wilde, and Pater. And just around the corner in the early twentieth century, one of these cultural institutions had been gaining prominence and undergoing innovations to provide the modern subject with such an opportunity.

Chapter Three

Modernist Commercialism and the Department Store

While the emphasis in the first couple of chapters involved the major factors of the internalization of the commodity form and developments in aestheticism, both of which fostered possibilities for a new form of aesthetic agency among individuals in the modern world – still required for the consumer-oriented public – was a cultural institution to serve as a daily outlet for the modelling and training of experiential consumption as an emerging dominant mode of consumption in modernity. The Western world appeared in need of an institution to provide expression for an expanding consumer society. And in the early twentieth century the department store became that space, a crucial locus within the European cityscape advancing the fullest articulation of a new consumerist ethics, one based on an experiential perspective. This may seem to attach too much importance to the department store, given the rapid cultural transformations of the early twentieth century: the acceleration of urbanization; technological advancements in transportation and telecommunications; innovations in media; an exploding market culture; the advent of the cinema. Though this list is hardly exhaustive, the key shift affecting everyday life is far more subtle, and it involves the mainstream movement from a textual culture to a highly visual culture, one that was comprised of an aggregation of constituents – spectacle, advertising, commodity consumerism – each of them forming a separate and distinct subculture of their own. Of all the spaces in modernity, the department store of the early 1900s emerges as a critical nexus for the incorporation of these cultural forces, and for this reason, characterizes it as an exemplary modern urban space. Essentially, we have a useful institution in which to investigate the synthesis of enough elements of modernity to gain significant insight into a critical moment of the modernist period, positioning it as a kind of ideal

cultural weathervane. This is not entirely without precedent, as Walter Benjamin in his analyses of the nineteenth century, had drawn together material from the Parisian arcades to develop his insights.

The appearance of department stores marked major alterations to the retail sector, escalating the growth of consumer culture. Rather than focussing on the core ingredients of products and prices, which had long been the staple emphasis of smaller shops, the department store began a process of integrating together many elements of modern life to produce a remarkably different experience for the customer. This required the development of an entirely new programme in the marketplace, one that involved the application of a radically unique approach to commercialism – modernist commercialism – and the following are some of its most salient characteristics: the application of literary and aesthetic techniques in advertising; the marketing of experiences; the pioneering use of innovative forms to promote business; and overall, the heavy reliance on a non-commercial ethos. Central to the practice of modernist commercialism had been the staging of an influential symbolic order, the semiotics of the department store. And crucially, it included an amalgam of theatricality, performativity, and fantasy. All of this proved rather decisive in assisting the department store to move beyond the negative connotations and limitations imposed by earlier perceptions of commercialism.

Before venturing into a detailed examination of certain features of the department store, it is instructive to begin with a basic, yet crucial development, enabling in the first place the possibility of this urban location to exist as a semiotically interpretable space for the consumer. It was the department store's simplest innovation of introducing fixed pricing which altered the social dynamics of the urban marketplace, specifically initiating the impersonality of relations

between the customer and the shopkeeper.[1] Prior to this, the consumer and retailer engaged in a time-honoured ritual of haggling over price, and from a consumer's perspective this absorbed all mental attention as each party jockeyed for position, something sufficiently ubiquitous that it came to be viewed as one of the most common urban social acts in the theatre of everyday life.[2] However, once price-haggling was eliminated, the modern consumer became focussed on the subjective engagement of the shopping experience so that the activity had been interiorized and far more experiential in nature. Freed from haggling as a standard performative event, the modern consumer could focus their mental energy on their performance as an aesthetic agent, and in this way, the department store as a cultural form had become the ideal urban location to nurture the modern subject as an experiential consumer.

The first wave of the world's great department stores appeared beyond the shores of the United Kingdom, in the major urban centres of France and the United States. Le Bon Marche, a model for the retail megastores that followed, opened its doors in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century.[3] Soon after, Macy's made its debut in New York City, along with Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, and Marshall Field's in Chicago, which is of particular significance, on account of its eventual connection to the London retail scene.[4] Harry Gordon Selfridge, who from his humble origins as a lowly clerk with the company had worked his way up the ranks to an executive position, having transformed Marshall Field's through his innovative strategies, was searching for a new commercial challenge.[5] Selfridge decided that he would set his sights on London, and open his very own department store in the world's largest city. Initially, Selfridge

[1] David Chaney, "The Department Store as a Cultural Form," *Theory, Culture & Society 1*, no. 3 (1983): 24.
[2] Chaney, "The Department Store," 24.
[3] Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 17.
[4] Lancaster, *Social History*, 58-59.
[5] Ibid., 61-62.

had conceived of a far more towering structure than the actual store that was constructed, one which even included a dome at the top, but this idea was quickly tempered by a building regulation in London that limited the height to five stories, forcing the inclusion of three basement floors to compensate for the desired additional space.[6] Once underway, with 1000 workmen employed full time, the construction project moved along swiftly; the building was completed in less than a year at a cost of 400,000 British Pounds.[7] All the other department stores in London, with the exception of Harrods, had evolved over time as conglomerations that originated from smaller businesses, such as draper's shops and haberdasheries.[8] However, Selfridges became the largest purpose-built department store in London, or of any type of building for that matter.[9]

After much anticipation, largely created by intense print marketing in the city's daily newspapers, in the middle of March 1909, Selfridges opened for business at the west end of London's Oxford Street.[10] In its first week, the new department store attracted a staggering million visitors.[11] Selfridges was not the city's first major retail emporium, as Harrods had already become well established in the Knightsbridge area a few decades earlier, but it transformed how other department stores operated afterwards. Though this chapter addresses the department store generally as a cultural institution, in order to draw nomothetical insights from the idiographic, the investigation will focus specifically on Selfridges as a case study.

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[6] Gordon Honeycombe, *Selfridges: Seventy-Five Years: The Story of the Store 1909-1984* (London: Park Lane Press, 1984), 32, 143.
[7] Honeycombe, *Selfridges*, 34.
[8] Ibid., 143.
[9] Ibid., 9.
[10] Erika Rappaport, "A New Era of Shopping," in *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski (New York: Routledge, 2004), 152-53.
[11] Mica Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19 (2002): 82.

Harry Selfridge: A Commercial Modernist

Much of Marshall Field's success was credited to Harry Selfridge, and he quickly applied his unique approaches to this new enterprise, some of which bear a resemblance and affinity to the preoccupations and work of literary modernists. Nowhere does this idea become more apparent than in the store's marketing and advertising campaign. In the weeks leading up to Selfridges' grand opening, a steady stream of print advertisements was featured in many of London's major dailies, and these were unlike any that had been seen before. First, the scale of exposure was unprecedented, as it incurred the expense of 36,000 pounds to secure full-page ads in various London newspapers for 32 different cartoons, some of which were sketched by renowned contributors of the iconic *Punch* magazine.[12] In fact, many of the artists commissioned for the project were known for a previous unwillingness to engage in freelance work for advertisers.[13] Prior to Selfridges, advertisements from their competitors were mainly characterized by the filling in of as many product items and prices that the graphic space would allow, and the result was visual cluttering. Evaluate the following advertisement by Whiteleys (figure 1) which ran in the *Daily Mail* in late October of 1909, just a few months before Selfridges' debut. The ad is entirely textual, devoid of a single illustrative element; it focusses solely on the guarantee of bargains, and it contains the inclusion of heavily layered columns of described goods and their prices, revealing a fixation on products, purchases, and savings, which was fairly typical of industry standards. However, the advertisements placed by Selfridges had such a radically different appearance that it prompted an American-based trade journal, *The Printing Art*, to dedicate an extensive article documenting in detail the groundbreaking

[12] Honeycombe, *Selfridges*, 12.
[13] Charles Dawson, "Notable Department Store Cartoons," *The Printing Art* 13 (1909): 351.


NOW THE WEATHER IS COLD
YOU ARE PROBABLY LOOKING FOR
BLANKETS & DOWN QUILTS.
WHITELEYS
Have a SPECIAL SALE this week,
and very low prices are prevailing.
THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY.
DURING THE WEEK WE ARE ALSO HOLDING AN IMPORTANT SALE OF CARPETS.
CATALOGUES POST FREE.
WM. WHITELEY, Ltd.
WESTBOURNE GROVE, LONDON, W.

Figure 1

nature of this marketing campaign, going even as far to describe it "as an historic event" in the London advertising scene.[14] Charles Dawson, an established contributor himself in the British advertising community, writes that "[e]ven the average man can't help feeling … the tone, as it were – of a dignified decorative design, as distinct from the bargain-counter clamor of the ordinary advertisement."[15] Just as literary modernists were experimenting with new forms to reflect the realities of the modern world, we can observe Selfridge doing much the same in the commercial field. Although their advertisements involved a great degree of variety, the unifying factor was their highly rhetorical nature, and the first one for examination, "The Coming of a New Business" (figure 2), is a useful starting point. The ad appeared in the *Daily Mail* during the department store's marketing launch in March 1909, and it reveals a key source of unrest in modernity: the tension between established traditions and the many aspects of newness entering society. The struggle between the "old" and the "new" was not only pronounced among artists, but had spread across every domain of modern life, including market culture, where an upstart venture such as Selfridges could have attracted cultural frictions from an assortment of sources. Note the advertisement's response to this matter, of arranging these elements into a useful antinomy, synthesizing the "old" and the "new," and the ways in which their establishment embodies the

[14] Dawson, "Notable Department Store Cartoons," 351.
[15] Ibid.

strengths offered by each. The logic behind the image involves a caricature of "father time" holding the infant who is in possession of a miniaturized version of the store in his hands. The



Figure 2

word “new” appears in the copy a total of seven times, always capitalized with only one exception, in addition to three times for its synonyms (“inventive,” “novelty,” “newness”). Examining the copy further shows modernity’s obsession with the “new”: “It is the Spirit of the Age, and the Popular Voice hails the New … Here the charm of Newness is to be experienced to the full,” something the copy promises the store will deliver. The message is even sophisticated enough to address any fear or mistrust of the new by assuring its readers “that the unproved NEW of To-day is the ACCEPTED of To-morrow.” Rhetoric is cleverly used to assuage anxieties of the untested “new” by depicting how novel elements eventually become the established norm. Not to be ignored, the traditional values of the past are unrolled by “father time” as he instructs the young child on the importance in nurturing the life of this new institution, with emphasis on virtues such as “Originality’ and “Liberality,” which in turn, the child must take responsibility for. The additional scrolls at the old man’s feet, peeking out from the right lower corner of the advertisement, assures us that the usefulness of conservative mores will continue to play a role in this expanding education.

Another significant point needs to be made on this fusion of the “old” and the “new,” and how this advertisement provides thematic treatment of it. This approach is reminiscent of various literary modernists (such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce) in their attempts to experiment with new forms while also situating their works within literary traditions, making Harry Selfridge, as this chapter will show, in the business world, a commercial modernist. Even the exact date that Selfridge chose for the official opening (March 15, 1909) on the Ides of March, a date synonymous with the altering of historical trajectory, clearly reflects not only a strong desire to connect his new enterprise within the context of established traditions, but to also create a new history. A final key aspect of the advertisement, to be addressed more fully in a later section of

its own, is the attempt to reconceptualise the activity of shopping and convert it into an experiential product itself. Consider the following quote from the advertisement's copy: "Selfridge's is the very apotheosis of interesting novelty in the ways and means of endowing 'Shopping' with a new significance and a wider meaning." It is worth noting that this advertisement, similar to many other ones placed in the London dailies, does not feature any specific product, nor does it make any mention of any commodities for sale.

In other advertisements, the use of rhetoric was more subtle and more sophisticated. As an example, evaluate the advertisement "Selfridge's By Night" (figure 3), which also appeared in the *Daily Mail* in March 1909. Beyond the brilliantly lit windows, framed by the building's classical architectural design, and contrasted by the darkness of the night, we can see throngs of people gathered around to witness this theatricalized commercial exhibition. Even the spatial orientation of the building speaks to its rhetorical technique: the corner of the building is clearly in view to show an intersection of two streetways, and herein lies an important message of how the store will function as a beacon of modernity. On the left, the latest technological achievement of the motorcar is featured with various vehicles driving up to see the action, and on the "right" (historically associated with conservatism), there is the traditional mode of transportation with the horse and carriage. Just as the building itself fuses the old and new with classical architecture and the cutting-edge technology of the world's "largest sheets of plate glass" (as declared in the advertisement), the thoroughfares out front depict the complementary forces of the traditional and the modern. Another important graphic element requires examination, and it involves the luminous seal with the store's name on the top left corner of the image, which appears as moonlight, suggesting that in this uncertain time of transition between the old and new worlds, and the various challenges of modernity, that this institution can serve as a beacon to light the

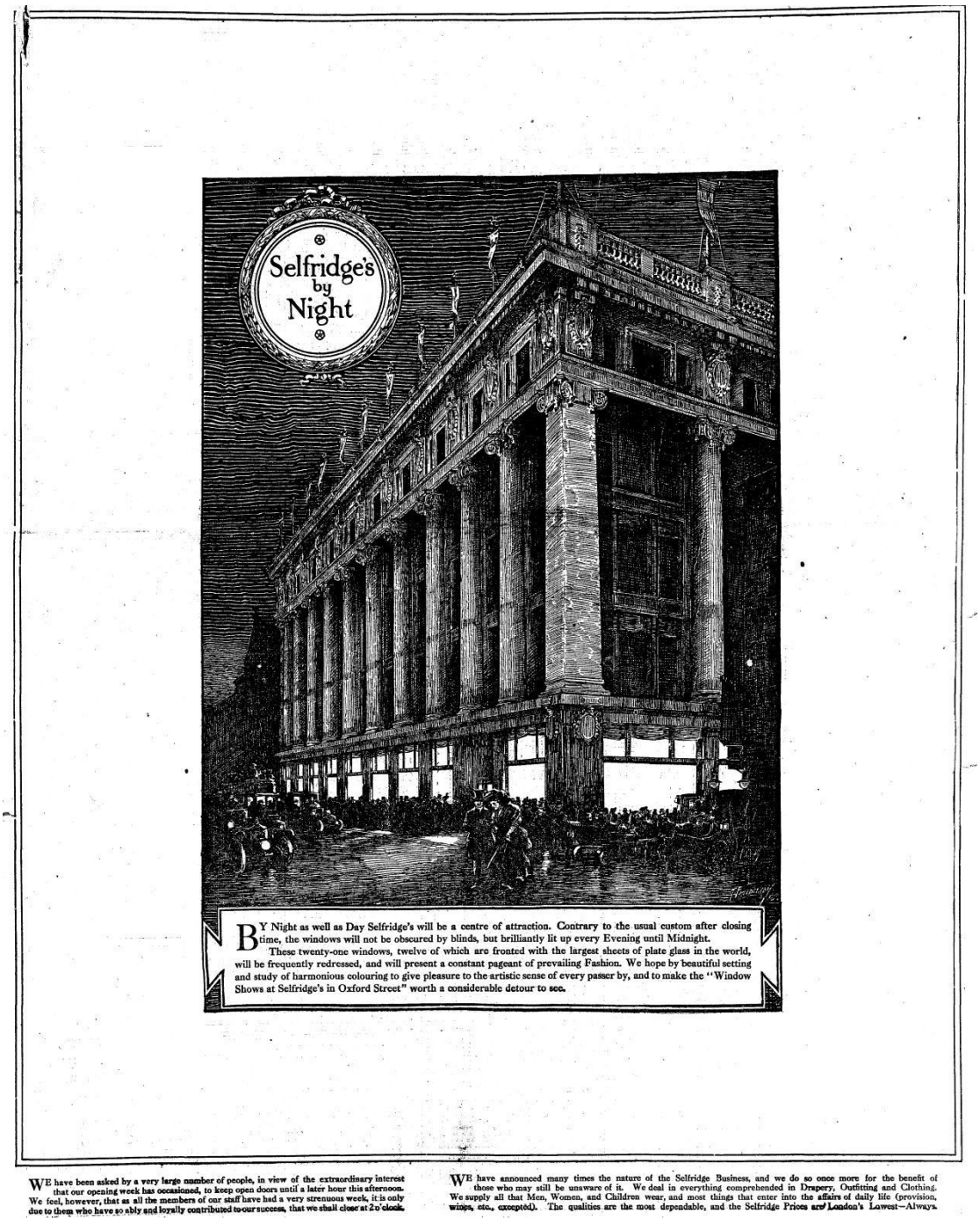


Figure 3

way forward. Still another crucial aspect of this advertisement's rhetorical content relates to the tactic in which it attempts to promote an aesthetic agenda, its caption stating, "[w]e hope by beautiful setting and study of harmonious colouring to give pleasure to the artistic sense of every

passer by." Essentially, the advertisement reveals the store's mission in cultivating a set of atmospherics based on aesthetic engagement for the modern individual in their everyday life, and here, it reflects some of the aesthetic ideals expressed by the major figures of the previous chapter. We do well to notice how this situates the modern subject as an aesthetic agent, very much in alignment with an ethics grounded in the democratization of art, as specifically prescribed in the philosophies of Morris and Pater.

The Theatricalized Environment of the Department Store

Before assessing the specific ways in which the department store cultivated a distinctly theatricalized environment, it is critical to consider how it benefitted from some useful cultural linkages to another urban space, the museum, in making its own location semiotically interpretable in these terms. In the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly with the gradual extension of opening hours at the British Museum and other art institutions to promote greater public access, which eventually included both weekend days by 1896, museums and art galleries had increased their cultural influence.[16] It was no accident that department stores, specifically in connection to the art of display, recalled impressions of the museum. Selfridges was the first London retailer to employ a special "Display Department," whose responsibility was expansive enough to include "the appearance of the store itself, inside and out."[17] All display ideas followed a comprehensive process, which often entailed the work of conducting research at museums.[18] At one point in their early days, Selfridges even put on display the "rejected" artworks for the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, presenting all of them as great

[16] Jamie Johnson, "The Changing Representation of the Art Public in 'Punch', 1841-1896," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35, no. 3 (2002): 273.
[17] Honeycombe, *Selfridges*, 166.
[18] Ibid.

pieces that only became available to the store due to space limitations at the showcase.[19] Art scholars Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska have examined some revealing linkages between the department store and the museum. A key insight of their work involves how these institutions shaped social behaviours, specifically in reference to the modern consumer of the museum or the modern consumer of the retail environment. According to Cummings and Lewandowska "retail stores mimicked the museums with their promise to supply [to consumers] everything that could be produced."[20] In terms of modern consumerism, they identify the key dynamic as the fusion of two "separate social performances," both informed by these institutions: "between the aesthetic appreciation of things – the museum visit; and the possibility of buying something – shopping."[21] In their judgment, it was the combination of these elements which led to the formation of "a new leisure activity: browsing."[22] And with this extension of aesthetic engagement for consumers, one rooted in evoking associations between these spaces, it helped to make the department store more interpretable as an artistic setting, triggering connotations of artistic locations, such as art galleries and theatres.

Clearly, the museum is a highly aestheticized environment, the combination of features carefully orchestrated to maximize its appeal. It is reasonable to conclude that the museum's work in the crafting of displays constitutes a veritable art form in itself. It is further logical to conclude that this mode of representation affected how the museum visitor perceived the department store once they entered it as a consumer. On this point, John Urry's claim about tourists is helpful: that they are conditioned on how to visually consume sights while on vacation, involving a preconfigured perspective based on learned representations of tourism and

[19] Ibid., 38.
[20] Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, *The Value of Things* (London: Birkhauser, 2000), 37.
[21] Cummings and Lewandowska, *Value of Things*, 69.
[22] Ibid.

which are contextually bound as specific ways of seeing and interpreting the environment while in the role of tourist.[23] In a similar sense, the museum heavily shaped how the modern consumer "read" the department store as a social space, and certainly these retailers capitalized on the affiliation, but there were missing ingredients from the desired atmospherics, namely the lack of interactive agency. While the museum and art gallery engaged the modern individual aesthetically, they taught a largely passive form of consumption, and for this reason, though instrumental as a bridging platform, it was not the ideal cultural institution for the development of the experiential consumer as a modern kind of subject. Wilde playfully gestured towards these limiting social dynamics in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* through Lord Henry's witty declaration: "The [Royal] Academy [of Arts] is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either too many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse."[24] In the semiotics of the department store, evocations of high art, of cultural refinement, of an aestheticized shopping gallery, while all constructive towards priming the modern consumer for interpretation of this space, were only some of the constituents within a larger symbolic system, one meant to transcend the significance of the pure commercialism of physical goods alone, to make the location legible to consumers as a staging area for active aesthetic agency; and for aesthetic agents this "stage" enabled the explorations of identity formation, performative engagement, and fantasy – simply put, for the pursuit of experiential consumption.

With this infusion of aesthetics into daily life, a primary appeal of the department store dwelled in its theatricalized environment. Harry Selfridge understood this well enough that it

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[23] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 3.
[24] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 6.

prompted him to conclude that "[b]usiness, rightly considered, is a play."[25] This may sound familiar because it reflects the same notion presented in chapter one of this study from Pine and Gilmore, of business as a form of dramaturgy, with the staged retail event functioning like a theatrical production, but with Selfridge presaging this idea several decades in advance. And as also noted earlier in this study, a major difference of the department store from its antecedent, the arcades, was the emergence of a theatrically inspired consumer fantasy which featured an updated flâneur who interacted more dialogically with the commercial environment. At the core of this theatrical consumer fantasy was the desire not only to "gaze," but to be "gazed" upon also, a phenomenon this study had earlier referred to as the reciprocal performative gaze, and the department store promoted an expansion of this social activity. While the first chapter had traced how the modern cityscape had invoked a sociality of theatrics, here, we will probe how the specific characteristics of the department store as a cultural form had fostered a deepening of this theatricality for the modern consumer.[26]

From a structural perspective, the department store offers an upgrade in facilitating the social interaction of "people watching." While the arcade is structured as a long corridor funnelling the movement of people in bilateral directions, the department store is physically constructed and designed to produce a continuous circulation of consumers, and in effect, significantly enlarging this "social stage." In fact, department store architectural design, according to Jan Whitaker, "encouraged a perception of the building as a public space, where consumption was almost incidental to the delights of a sheltered promenade in a densely

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[25] Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 183.

[26] Walter Benjamin noted the connection between the increased theatricality in the city and the department store: "For the first time in history," he writes, "with the establishment of department stores, consumers begin to consider themselves a mass … Hence, the circus-like and theatrical element of commerce is quite extraordinarily heightened." *The Arcades Project*, 43.

crowded, middle-class urban space."[27] While this is a useful assessment, it overlooks the point that its description actually entails the development of a new kind of consumption: experiential consumption. The architectural logic behind the department store was to make them "walk-around" stores, permitting as much free movement in all directions as possible.[28] Accordingly, department stores of the early 1900s were modelled on the design principle of maximum interior openness.[29] To help further amplify this perception of openness, the use of atriums became a staple feature of these buildings all around the world, many of which imitated the iconic original atrium made famous by the Bon Marche in Paris.[30] These design elements were not just beneficial for pedestrian mobility, in terms of visuality, they also maximized sightlines within the building, even extending them along the vertical plane to include visibility of other floors, an important consideration that relates to the theatrics of a "social stage" and the reciprocal performative gaze, with each individual consumer (and performer) enjoying a heightened sense of both "seeing" others and being "seen" in this retail environment. All this accords with a simple historical fact: long after the introduction of electric lighting which eliminated any practical value of atriums, making the wasted floor space completely unnecessary, the construction of them still persisted in new department stores.[31] The most reasonable explanation is simply that the atrium's effects on enhancing the store's social dynamics, justified the loss of merchandising space.

The expansion of this theatricalized environment also includes the store's different departments and the various social roles and identities suggested within them. Thus, it extends

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[27] Jan Whitaker, *The World of Department Stores* (New York: The Vendome Press, 2011), 64.
[28] Whitaker, *World of Department Stores*, 64.
[29] Ibid., 104.
[30] Ibid., 108.
[31] Ibid.

beyond the physical layout of the building to include some store management techniques in fostering this theatrical orientation, something evidenced by personnel decisions. A study by Susan Benson analyses the "typecasting" of salesclerks. For example, attractive young women would be situated on the street floors containing cosmetics and perfumes (also the location of the main entrance), motherly-looking employees were given positions in the children's department, and older and mature women took care of departments involving sophisticated purchases.[32] It is as if these department store managers functioned as production directors to draw their customers into a staged show, encouraging a reading of this space as one of theatrical spectatorship, which would have deeper implications of promoting the same impulse of showmanship from the perspective of their clientele.

Even prior to Selfridges' opening, while construction of the building was still underway, efforts were made to foster a theatrical ambience for the new department store. All of the store's windows, and it boasted the largest plate glass sheets in the world, were covered with massive silk curtains, the kind typically found in theatres, carefully positioned to block out the view inside of the building, an arrangement used to insinuate the preparation and imminent commencement of a grand production behind them.[33] For the crowds attracted to the store this was perfectly understood, as evidenced by one reporter, who detecting and commenting on the store's metaphoric connection to the theatre, declared that most remarkable were "the lights and shadows behind the drawn curtains of the great range of windows suggesting that a wonderful play was being arranged."[34]

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[32] Susan Benson, "Palace of Consumption and Machine for Selling: The American Department Store, 1880-1940," *Radical History Review* 21 (1979): 211.
[33] Rappaport, "New Era of Shopping," 152.
[34] Ibid.

Although Selfridges worked diligently to develop a theatricalized environment, their ability to successfully achieve it speaks to some other factors of modernity, uniting both intent and opportunity, making their aims feasible in the first place. One such particularly important factor involves anonymity, and despite the fact it hardly seems like a salutary effect of modernity, it was rather conducive in facilitating this sought after setting. Bill Lancaster, in his study of the social history of department stores, evaluates this development: "The demise of the old 'walking city' with its patterns of sociability based upon face to face relationships was replaced by the anonymity of the modern metropolis."[35] Lancaster points out that the department store, contrary to the traditional patterns of urban life, allowed people to be highly visible, but also highly anonymous.[36] The relevance of visibility does not require much squaring as the idea of having a venue where the modern individual can be put on display before a readymade audience is fairly straightforward, especially in light of the high volume of shoppers that frequented these massive retail centres; however, much less clear is how anonymity can be viewed as advantageous. To unpack the value of anonymity, it is necessary to retrace the evolution of the culture of spectacle, which began a few decades earlier during the middle of the nineteenth century and progressed rapidly afterwards. Thomas Richards has studied the advent of the culture of spectacle in England, including some important trends in advertising during this time period. Richards notes that during the early stages of spectacular commodity culture, the most prevalent and successful advertising images were based on Queen Victoria, symbols of the monarchy, and the British Empire.[37] He then went on to demonstrate that this marketing strategy,

[35] Lancaster, *Social History*, 188.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London: Verso, 1991), 74-75.

as fin de siècle Britain drew closer, was superseded by the most modern spectacle created by the commodity culture of the late-Victorian era: the seaside girl.[38]

For its connection to our discussion, Richards' findings help illuminate a salient point. In tracing this evolution of advertising images, a noteworthy pattern emerges. The images shift from a high degree of specificity, ones that denote remarkably clear points of identification, to images that are far more nebulous in nature. The image of the most famous figure in all of England (Queen Victoria) is replaced by the complete anonymity of just another face in the seaside crowd. This seems to present a provocative conclusion: the late nineteenth century featured an important moment in the history of cultural consciousness, that the modern self, even a completely anonymous self, is now a legitimate enough image to be regarded as bankable in terms of advertising and cultural currency, largely explained by its ability to command the consumer gaze. In other words, not everyone can be the queen, but according to the angle presented by marketers, every modern "self," with the help of advertisers and the commodities they promote, can aspire to become a spectacle. Richards explains that the seaside girl was such a common fixture in the advertising world that decals or prefabricated advertisements of it were made with blank spaces in which companies could simply insert their products.[39] The implication is that all the products were interchangeable, only the presence of this iconic image needed to remain constant. It can be further argued that, due to, the anonymity of the individual contained in these kinds of advertisements, even the subject is interchangeable; it is precisely this anonymity, the lack of any clear identity, that actually helps account for the appeal of these advertisements. The modern individual is highly anonymous, especially in the urban crowd, such

[38] Richards, *Advertising and Spectacle*, 247.
[39] Ibid., 231.

as those in the department store, thus offering a highly inclusive ideal. Put another way, anonymity has a benefit, because if people do not know who you are, they also do not know who you are not, opening a multitude of imaginative possibilities of identity. In this vein, the modern consumer can go into a department store (or many urban settings for that matter), freed from the constraints of familiarity that attend a fixed identity, and like an actor full of brio stepping onto a stage, enjoy playing a new role before an audience of strangers. It is the perfect venue for a new cultural value which involved putting oneself on display, and in beginning to adopt a subjective perspective that led to an early form of today's conception of "personal branding" or "lifestyle" marketing. Related to this subjectivity, beyond the notion of exhibitionism, part of the gratification also lies in the self-conscious nature of the activity. Consider how well Lord Henry's social commentary from *Dorian Gray* comports with the new emerging psyche of the modern consumer: "We watch ourselves and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthralls us."[40] Ultimately, this instrumental pairing of anonymity and visibility – a rather useful commercial partnership – renders the department store the perfect institution for an interaction between commerce, theatrics, and fantasy, a combination of seminal elements in the cultural formation of the early twentieth century, the results of which would accelerate the growing significance of experiential consumption.

Theatrical Consumer Fantasy and Selfridges' Window Shows

A chief element of exhibitionary culture, and closely linked to the power of advertising images, relates to attracting the consumer's gaze. Much like his counterpart in the commercial sphere, James Joyce understood the same dynamics which Selfridge had used to great effect.

[40] Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 98.

Though chapter five will focus on Joyce exclusively, for present purposes, it is pertinent here to include some discussion from his literary work which bears upon the theatrical consumer fantasy. In *Ulysses*, adman Leopold Bloom articulates a valuable, but basic characteristic of a successful advertisement: that it must be "of magnetising efficacy to arrest involuntary attention."[41] In the embryonic stages of advertising, this may have been sufficient for a public still relatively inexperienced with media literacy, however, as society moved deeper into modernity, the process, mirroring what was occurring in many other segments of society, became far more dialogical in nature. Bloom's savvy marketing instincts are extensive enough to evince an appreciation of this more nuanced relationship. Garry Leonard, in *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce*, evaluates the modernist author's treatment of these issues. Leonard explains, contrary to the ideas that would later be espoused by Louis Althusser, such as his concept of "interpellation" and how it subjects the individual to a dominant power of an ideology – specifically the ways structural apparatuses both prefigure and constrain agency for the individual – Joyce envisioned advertising and the consumer engaged in an interaction of the possible effects that can be produced by advertisements.[42] To illustrate this point, Leonard references the scene in *Ulysses* where Bloom has an idea for an ingenious advertisement; it involves women in a horse-drawn glass carriage being paraded through Dublin's streets, as they are writing on paper in a promotion to sell stationery supplies.[43] The brilliant aspect of this ad involves its ability to generate a multiplicity of fantasies for different individuals, since each man viewing it will imagine the woman writing a customized message that reflects his own unique fantasy.[44] For Leonard, "[o]ne of the most potent gaps left open and maintained by the symbolic

[41] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Bodley Head, 1960), 17.582-584.
[42] Garry Leonard, *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 13.
[43] Leonard, *Commodity Culture in Joyce*, 14.
[44] Ibid.

economy of advertising is, of course, fantasy."[45] Although the modern consumer may have at one time engaged in a transactional gaze with the advertisement, eventually it evolves into the modern consumer also imagining themselves as the object of the consumer gaze. Essentially, what emerges is a negotiation of various visions generated between the advertisement and the consumer, which is in alignment with the ideas already outlined on the theatrical consumer fantasy and the reciprocal performative gaze. This dialogical relationship is more generally speaking, part of a movement in all types of texts, visual or otherwise, in the early twentieth century. Literary theorist, Roland Barthes, in analysing different kinds of literature, drew the distinction between "readerly" and "writerly" texts, the former involving minimal participation by a passive reader, far removed from the other one's active engagement.[46] The writerly text not only invites the reader into the work, it is an essential requirement to the process of constructing meaning.[47] Whether in reference to Selfridges' advertisements, the theatrical qualities of the department store, or even a piece of literature – the relationship between the modern consumer and elements of modernity – was under radical redefinition, one increasingly characterized by a high level of interactivity. In effect, what was happening in Selfridges, which we can think of as an inchoate form of participative consumerism, a concept that did not fully develop until much later in the twentieth century, mirrored processes that were concurrently underway in Western European society at large.

We can attain further insight into apprehending the influence of the theatrical consumer fantasy through evaluating an important cultural phenomenon of the early 1900s. Dating back to the later nineteenth century, window displays had already been established as a routine fixture in

[45] Ibid.
[46] Barthes, *S/Z*, 4.
[47] Ibid.

the retailing industry. However, these window displays were of a much different variety than the ones that would adorn the storefront at Selfridges. The earlier window displays had featured a collection of goods piled high atop each other, resulting in the visual cluttering of the entire frame, and containing the presence of highly visible price tags. In this initial phase, aesthetic appeal had yet to acquire any import as the prevailing routine of simply presenting products and prices had been the standard protocol towards merchandising. At one point the haphazard nature of these display techniques became so extreme that *Display World*, a trade magazine in the field, referred to it as "torturing the merchandise."[48] In remarkable contrast to established conventions, Selfridges' window displays were highly theatricalized creations, instead emphasizing artistic elements and atmospherics, with an eye on aesthetic details such as colours, shapes, and symmetrical balance of items. According to Selfridge, the store's management needed to "study a window with the same care that the stage manager or scenic artist studies his stage effects."[49] Since these windows were meant to imitate the images that were observed on the stages of live theatre, they rightfully became viewed as window shows.

To gain a sense of the importance of these window shows to their department store, and the resources that were invested into them, we need to revisit the "Selfridge's at Night" advertisement (figure 3). Selfridges created an environment that was conducive not only to the previously discussed theatrical milieu both inside and outside the store, but to nurturing the theatrical consumer fantasy of imagining oneself as the object of the "consumer gaze." What had made these window shows so successful were their highly stylized scenes of modern life, and the way these invited the modern consumer to vicariously experience them; all of this gestures

[48] Elizabeth Outka, "Consumer Culture," *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture*, ed. Celia Marshik (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 86.
[49] Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 183.

towards the reciprocal performative gaze, akin to a theatregoer watching a performance and fantasizing about being a part of the stage production, but with added advantages: the accessibility of the window shows which were visible to more people, and the fact that these offered aestheticized images of everyday life filtered through a consumer lens. As an instructive linkage, consider the episode in *Mrs Dalloway* when Peter Walsh in his perambulations through London, scanning his surroundings, searches for mental inspiration of what experiential possibilities await him at the gathering at Clarissa's home: "for here he was starting to go to a party … with the belief upon him that he was about to have an experience. But what?"[50] His mind eventually settled on "windows lit up, a piano, a gramophone sounding; a sense of pleasure-making hidden, but now and again emerging when, through the uncurtained window … one saw parties sitting over tables, young people slowly circling."[51] Peter is not only taking in these images as an observer, but he is also processing them within the context of anticipating and imagining his own potential upcoming experiences. Revealingly, the objects in this scene do matter, but are sparsely presented – not unlike the goods in the window shows – their true significance only expressed in relation to developing an aestheticized setting or mood for the people within them.

It was Harry Selfridge's aim to make his store's window displays a special London attraction in their own right. The copy in the ad claims that "[b]y night as well as Day Selfridge's will become a centre of attraction," and going on to declare that they will eschew the commercial custom of the day by lighting up these displays until midnight so that the public can enjoy them. To secure the high standards that Selfridge demanded, he imported from Chicago, Edward

[50] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 179.
[51] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 179.

Goldsman, whom as display manager had been instrumental in the success of Marshall Field's.[52] These efforts paid significant dividends; by around 1910, hundreds of people every night visited the window displays in London.[53] The key takeaway is how primacy had been redirected away from the objective status of commodities, and towards the subjectivity of the consumer. Thus, it appears that in the early twentieth century's evolving commodity culture, an element of which had found strong artistic expression in window displays, helped create the kind of social mood that would lead to individuals imagining their everyday lives on display in a similar way to the aestheticized scenes presented within them.

Having examined how Selfridges' window shows were used as an accelerant to help fuel the theatrical consumer fantasy, much of the same was intended through their print advertising efforts. The next selection of advertisements (figures 4-6) all appeared in *The Times* in May 1909, a few weeks after the store's official opening, and they all reveal a synchronicity with Selfridges' window displays. First, these advertisements are unified by their subtlety in showcasing specific products. The exact commodity is not emphasized, and prices are omitted. The commodities themselves, much like the logic behind the window shows, only form one part of a larger image, which is predicated on expressing a lifestyle, and a mood of an elegant and aestheticized experience. In this way, the commodity is only



Figure 4

[52] Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141.
[53] Outka, *Consuming Traditions*, 142.



Figure 5



Figure 6

featured as an accessory for a more important social scene, activity or moment. In fact, one of the ads (figure 5) actually encourages the viewer to consider the specific social event ("The Races") that the commodity can help enrich. However, the most important unifying characteristic is that these advertisements all seem to mimic the kinds of images that were presented in Selfridges' "window shows," functioning as visual magnets intended to attract the "consumer gaze." Along these lines, part of the appeal, again consistent with the window shows, is the inherent suggestion that consumers are encouraged to imagine themselves as the object of the "gazed" upon. Very craftily, the graphic in each advertisement is placed in an oval, with the design of its frame and trimmings all summoning the associations of looking into an oval mirror, of making viewers imagine they are potentially peering into a mirror at themselves, and its corollary, that others are looking at them as well. Essentially, the advertisements promote a swapping of subject and

object positions. These are only some examples during that time of many other Selfridges ads that were similar in both form and content. As a final consideration here on this toggling between internal and external positions, which the gazing into the window shows metaphorize, is a salient point offered by Walter Benjamin on the forerunner to the department store: the arcades. For Benjamin, the physical space of the "arcades were a cross between a street and an interieur," providing a rich intersection of dialectical analysis.[54] And it is noteworthy that these window displays, in the responses they induced by consumers, presents a kind of physical manifestation of Benjamin's conceptual abstraction.

The Art of Selling Experience

It can be understood from evaluating Selfridges' marketing campaign that the selling of commodities was not going to be a focal point of their advertising goals. Thus, it begs the question that if products were not being highlighted by the department store, what exactly was being sold? This query was sufficiently puzzling that it attracted the ire of a frustrated Wakefield man, who mailing letters directly to the store, demanded an answer. In an interview with the *Evening News*, Harry Selfridge revealed that cut-outs of the store's advertisements were always part of the letter's contents, and each time accompanied with the same note: "What do you sell? What do you sell? Why don't you say what you sell in your advertisement?"[55] We can be fairly certain that the real answer would have done very little to mollify the irritation of their letter-writing critic. Selfridge was attempting to revolutionize the London retail scene, and the central method to achieve this was by making the purchasing of actual goods a secondary matter in the commercial scheme of things. The grand plan was to transform the very nature of shopping: to

[54] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1997), 37.
[55] Outka, *Consuming Traditions*, 124.

make shopping more than just a banal daily routine, and instead to sell it as an "experience" that constituted a bona fide commodity in itself.

Although this programme also emerges within the documents that have already been discussed, other advertisements are even more corroborative in establishing the connection. As an example, evaluate another advertisement (figure 7) that appeared in the *Daily News*, *Telegraph* and *Westminster Gazette* as part of Selfridges' opening marketing campaign. After pithily declaring in the large lettering of the sub-headline that at their store it is "A Pleasure – A Pastime – A Recreation," the copy explains that "[w]e aim to make the shopping at 'Selfridge's' something more than merely shopping." It also states that they hope customers are "better for the experience," and that they have "seen 'things different'" in their establishment. Beyond the words, the image delivers the message of the experiential product available at Selfridges. The couple "on display" (recall our earlier discussion) seems to be enjoying the restaurant, one of the many amenities offered in the department store. Again, it is quizzical, not to mention highly unusual within the advertising norms of its era that no tangible commodity is presented for sale, just the cagey suggestion that what is really for sale is an "experience," a word that actually appears in the copy. However, the most effective element of this experiential sales pitch centres on the two individuals in it, who rather than engaging directly with each other, are intently directing their eyes towards the viewers of the advertisement, or if imagined in the actual store, to the other customers around them. Simply put, this advertisement exhibits the strongest indication of the reciprocal performative gaze because its depiction is not only significant in that it is suggestive of "people-watching," but also evinces a self-conscious understanding that they are, in fact, functioning as the reciprocal object of the "consumer gaze." Here, the marketing of an experiential commodity intersects with the concept of the theatrical consumer fantasy, which



Figure 7

develops into a substantial aspect of the overall shopping experience. Having already considered the notion of the department store as a modern institution providing an ideal urban space for the experiential consumer, in this advertisement, we are given an alluring image of individuals representing the ideals embodied by this new type of modern figure. The department store,

especially as designed by Selfridges, has mass-produced this activity, making it available to a far larger and more diverse crowd.

The marketing of an "experience" also materializes in an advertisement from *The Times* (figure 8), which appeared in March 1909. However, in broadening the message, it is more generalized in having the public envision Selfridges as a hub of social activity, a location where a wide range of experiences are available for customers. The copy explains that "Reception Rooms are open to them in which to meet their friends." Also revealed are the other social-oriented features offered by their establishment, including a "Smoke Lounge" for gentlemen. To forcefully advance their social agenda, the advertisement also declares that "these accommodations belong to Visitors without any fee of any kind whatever and without the remotest obligation in their use to make a purchase." Still, another important point requires consideration. The early progenitors of the department store realized that encouraging customers to wander about just "browsing," was a key element in revolutionizing retailing.[56] However, Selfridges upgraded this practice to a much higher level. The advertisement persuades the public on the prospect of just "visiting" the store and engaging in the abundance of social opportunities awaiting them, which can become a regular part of their daily routine. It seems that

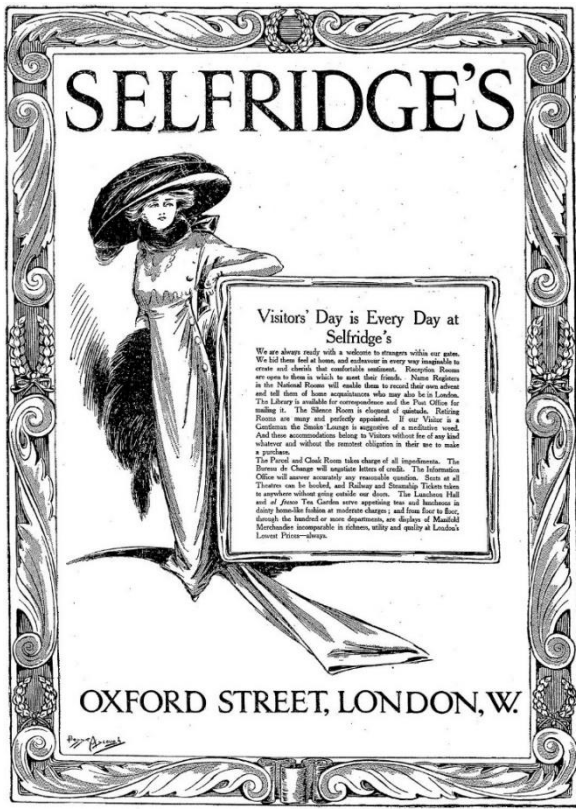


Figure 8

[56] Lancaster, *Social History*, 17.

Selfridges was identifying the risk of monotony – a potential symptom of modernity – and that their experiential products, obviously in addition to the tangible goods, could be presented as a tonic for relieving the public's ennui. In other words, Selfridges was marketing enriched experiences as an "escape" from the mechanical drudgery of daily life. The American writer, E.B. White, presented an important insight into the function of advertising in the early twentieth century: "Advertisers are the interpreters of our dreams … Like the movies, they infect the routine futility of our days with purposeful adventure."[57] Nonetheless, we still must note that shopping, is at heart, a quotidian activity. Selfridges was converting a basic characteristic of the everyday into a commodity, and since it was rooted in dailiness, enabling mainstream influence.

The paradoxical strategy of superseding commercialism through the commodifying of a non-commercial good, such as "experience" or experiential commodities, is perhaps one of Selfridges' shrewdest salesmanship manoeuvres. At this historical point, the notion of an experience, and one that is aestheticized, would have been viewed as far outside the boundaries of a traditional perspective on consumer culture which had long been obsessed with material commodities. Accordingly, their department store was designed to evoke linkages to places of cultural refinement, such as a theatre, museum, or art gallery, and not the commercial taint associated with other typical retail establishments. In a sense, the store's philosophy is that it would operate on a higher plane than the debased practice of merely exchanging goods for money, allowing for a disavowal of all the negative connotations of commercialism, while still benefitting from the advantages offered by commodification and market culture.

[57] Ron Beasley and Marcel Danesi, *Persuasive Signs: The Semiotics of Advertising* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), v.

Democratization of Experience

An emphasis on the commodification and marketing of experiential products is also rather significant in affecting an important sociocultural development of the early twentieth century: the democratization of experience. Part of the rationale in commodifying everyday experiences, such as the ones offered by shopping at Selfridges, was precisely to make it available to more people, and in this way, it was a democratic and egalitarian ideal. A core characteristic of the store's marketing campaign was that Selfridges insisted on welcoming everyone, regardless of social class level, ethnic background, or gender. This principle of inclusiveness led to the business aim of distinguishing themselves from London's other major department stores, such as Harrods, by also catering to the more middle-lower segments of the middle class.[58] The innovative move of setting up a "bargain basement," a sales tactic that Selfridge first pioneered in Chicago at Marshall Field's, was one of the manifestations of reaching out to this target market.[59] An appeal to the working class was even incorporated within their advertisements. Fully aware that the building itself was a cultural draw for its impressive architectural appearance, Selfridges designed an advertisement that explicitly tied this achievement to the nation's labourers. In "A Monument to British Labour" (figure 9), homage is paid to the dignity of hard work, announcing "all honour to the British working man" for undertaking the construction of the store. Wearing expressions of physical exhaustion, but still heroic, unrelenting with tools in hand, a trio of men surround the product of all their diligence, a large Greco-Roman column. The romanticism of toil, indeed, risks giving the advertisement's audience a saccharine aftertaste, but as someone who emerged from working class roots himself,

[58] Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity," 69.
[59] Lancaster, *Social History*, 62.



Figure 9

it would be hard to accuse Selfridge of being disingenuous. The store expended much energy on attracting female consumers, with many of the store's services, amenities and products, geared directly towards them. Far from just exploiting gender for the sake of profits, this emphasis extended to the political sphere as well. Harry Selfridge had been a strong advocate for the

women's suffrage movement in Great Britain, offering everything from the financial support for *The Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who*, to even authoring articles in favour of the cause in the London dailies.[60] Encapsulating much of this, one of their advertisements proclaims that "[t]his House is dedicated to Woman's Service first of all" (figure 10), with an image of a



Figure 10

[60] Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 182, 201.

genuflecting male presenting a miniature model of the store to a comfortably seated lady. However, beyond social class and gender, what may be more revealing, and certainly less predictable about Selfridge's mission of inclusiveness, is his rather prescient championing of cosmopolitanism. Mica Nava, after poring through the department store's archives, and initially

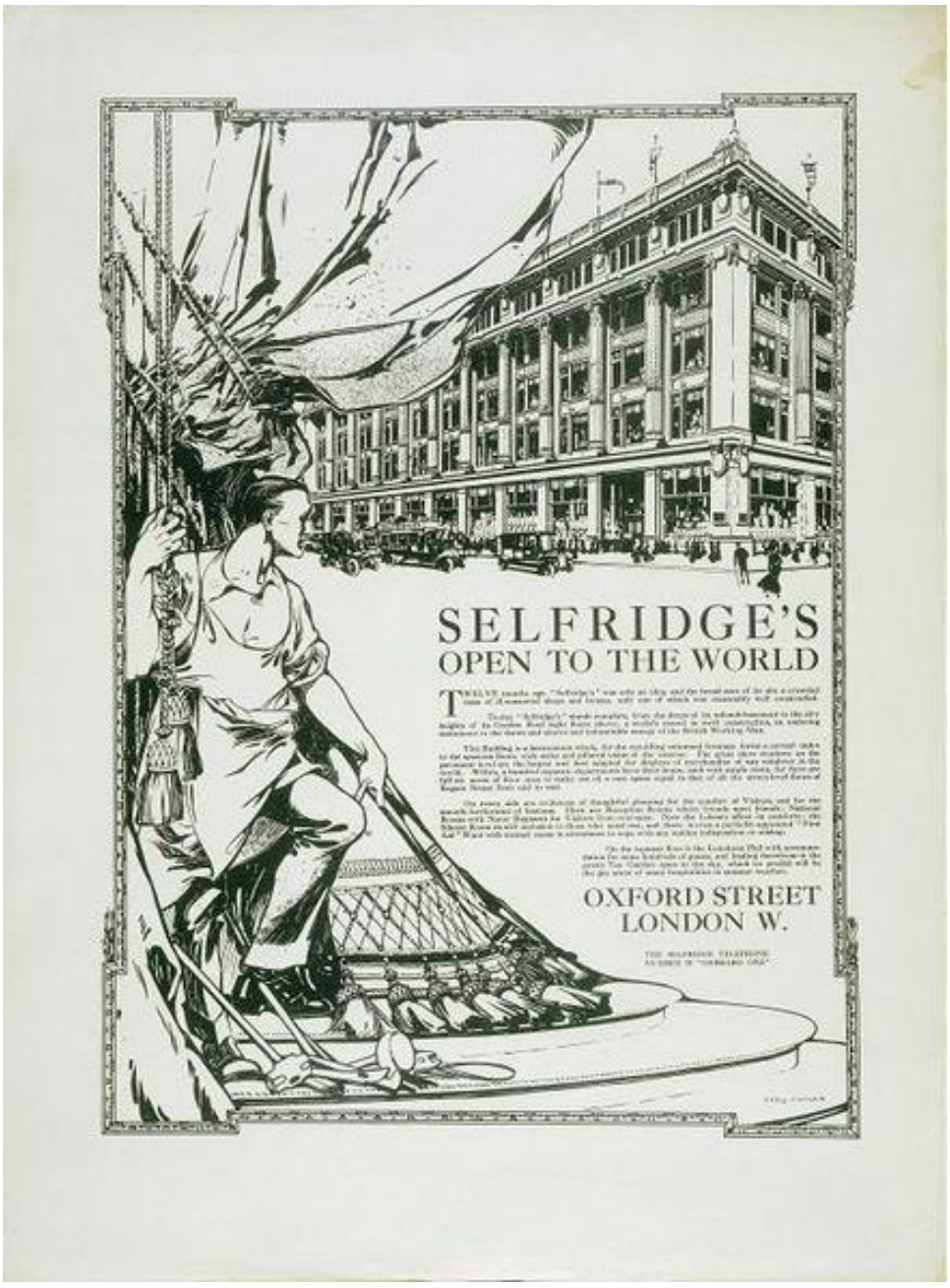


Figure 11

searching "for evidence of the culture of empire" in the early 1900s, stumbled upon an unexpected conclusion.[61] Rather than unearthing proof of patriotism and imperialist pride, she discovered "a modern, inclusive, progressive world view which quite deliberately challenged the traditional outlooks, insularity, and exclusivity."[62] Sifting through the evidence, Nava identifies Harry Selfridge as an "ardent cosmopolitan," a label earned from various business practices: the department store advertised in numerous languages; its advertisements explicitly welcomed all nationalities; he spoke in favour of cosmopolitanism and against "national limitations and prejudices"; their promotion of clothing fashions and interior décor with cultural flavourings from abroad.[63] Nava likely had this kind of advertisement in mind (figure 11), of which a variety of the sort appeared, the opening sentence of its copy declaring that the store is "opened wide to all the world," while an image of the store's building, showcases one of the establishment's signature qualities: a roofline festooned with flags from various nations around the globe.[64]

The evaluation of an important caveat is needed before concluding our discussion on Selfridges' promotional goal of democratizing experience. This objective should not be confused with the "equalization" of experience – only an attempt at its democratization. The clientele of their department store was far too diverse, and individuals entering it did so from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and financial means, thus it would be untenable to make the argument that experiential qualities could ever be fully equalized. Naturally, the experience of a wealthy customer would not be precisely the same as that of a working-class shopper. Nonetheless, the prospect of consuming and enjoying an experience, of savouring the store's

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[61] Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity," 82.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 82-84.
[64] Harry Selfridge's fascination with commerce, and his belief in its cosmopolitan associations, is revealed in his book *Romance of Commerce*, one which traces the business world back to antiquity and the trading empire of the Phoenicians.[64] The text chronologically travels around the globe to all the major historical commercial centres.

ambience, could be democratized in its accessibility, and despite variances, the opportunity still remained for a stimulating and rewarding excursion. In other words, the elements involved in the development of the modern experiential consumer, as analysed in the opening chapter, offer the prospect of some meaningful subjective engagement, even in the condition of unequal circumstances. This further helps to explain Selfridges' fixation on the generating of emotions and fantasies for their customers as a socially levelling mechanism.

Callisthenes and the Editorializing of Commerce

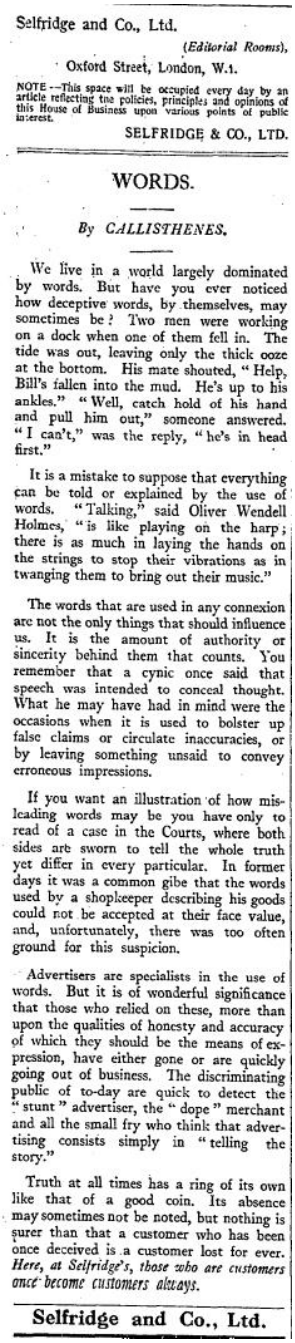
What mainly distinguished Harry Selfridge from his counterparts was the extent to which he distanced his department store from established business practices of the day. It was Selfridge's obsession with the "new" that prompted the claim that he could be thought of as a commercial modernist. As already explored, he applied numerous innovations to retailing. Still, the next marketing technique under consideration is perhaps the most radical in its departure from industry standards. Here, it is necessary to evaluate some primary documents that pertain to a relatively little-known part of Selfridges' history. Beyond the creative strategies in their print advertisements, they also pioneered a highly inventive marketing technique that previously did not appear to have ever been employed in the United Kingdom. It involves the use of the "advertorial," a portmanteau of advertisement and editorial. This technique, commonplace in our contemporary world, involves persuading readers of the benefits of a product, while masquerading as a newspaper article. While the first official use of this word seems to come from around 1916 in a book written by Charles Higham, an influential advertising figure in the UK, concrete details of its precise origins and initial applications remains unclear.[65] Between 1912 to the late 1930s, Selfridges actually published thousands of these columns under the

[65] Charles Higham, *Scientific Distribution* (London: Nesbit & Company Limited, 1916), 28.

pseudonym "Callisthenes" in several different London dailies, with *The Times* prominent among them. Harry Selfridge, who appears to have written the lion's share of these advertorials, with occasional contributions from staff members, selected the name Callisthenes because of its historical significance. Callisthenes, the Greek historian, had famously chronicled the legendary exploits of Alexander the Great, and for this reason, Selfridge dubbed him history's first "press agent."[66] Thus, Selfridge had aspired for his version of Callisthenes to document and publicize his great achievements in conquering the commercial world. As already shown from their print advertisements, Selfridge was fixated on fusing traditional qualities with novelty, and these advertorials with their combination of a classical Greek allusion and a new advertising form, exemplifies this approach.

These columns addressed a broad array of topics, often involving business matters, but even at times venturing into current affairs and general issues of public concern and popular culture. However, the primary emphasis of these columns was to educate a new kind of consumer subject – the experiential consumer – and consistent with that, to specifically cultivate a discriminating one who would recognize and appreciate the value of extracting the aesthetic potentialities in that role within the marketplace and in daily life. The first article, "Words" (figure 12), serves as a prime example of how these advertorials were used for consumer education. As its title suggests, the actual topic is on the use of words in crafting advertising strategies, and Callisthenes, like a magician revealing some of his tricks, goes far enough to classify some different types: "The discriminating public of to-day are quick to detect the

[66] Rappaport, "New Era of Shopping,"154.



Selfridge and Co., Ltd.

(*Editorial Rooms*),
Oxford Street, London, W.1.

NOTE.—This space will be occupied every day by an article reflecting the policies, principles and opinions of this House of Business upon various points of public interest.

SELFRIDGE & CO., LTD.

WORDS.

By CALLISTHENES.

We live in a world largely dominated by words. But have you ever noticed how deceptive words, by themselves, may sometimes be? Two men were working on a dock when one of them fell in. The tide was out, leaving only the thick ooze at the bottom. His mate shouted, "Help, Bill's fallen into the mud. He's up to his ankles." "Well, catch hold of his hand and pull him out," someone answered. "I can't," was the reply, "he's in head first."

It is a mistake to suppose that everything can be told or explained by the use of words. "Talking," said Oliver Wendell Holmes, "is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hands on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music."

The words that are used in any connexion are not the only things that should influence us. It is the amount of authority or sincerity behind them that counts. You remember that a cynic once said that speech was intended to conceal thought. What he may have had in mind were the occasions when it is used to bolster up false claims or circulate inaccuracies, or by leaving something unsaid to convey erroneous impressions.

If you want an illustration of how misleading words may be you have only to read of a case in the Courts, where both sides are sworn to tell the whole truth yet differ in every particular. In former days it was a common gibe that the words used by a shopkeeper describing his goods could not be accepted at their face value, and, unfortunately, there was too often ground for this suspicion.

Advertisers are specialists in the use of words. But it is of wonderful significance that those who relied on these, more than upon the qualities of honesty and accuracy of which they should be the means of expression, have either gone or are quickly going out of business. The discriminating public of to-day are quick to detect the "stunt" advertiser, the "dope" merchant and all the small fry who think that advertising consists simply in "telling the story."

Truth at all times has a ring of its own like that of a good coin. Its absence may sometimes not be noted, but nothing is surer than that a customer who has been once deceived is a customer lost for ever. *Here, at Selfridge's, those who are customers once become customers always.*

Selfridge and Co., Ltd.

Figure 12

'stunt' advertiser, the 'dope' merchant and the small fry who think that advertising consists simply in 'telling the story.'"[67] The appearance of the word "discriminating" is hardly coincidental as Selfridge is making clear his objective of consumer education. The article declares that "[a]dvertisers are specialists in the use of words," before going on to explain that, unlike Selfridges' approach, some of them are unscrupulous in their employment of this tool. An important function of this advertorial, which generally transfers to many of these texts is to grant commerce a distinctly literary overtone, both in terms of language usage and hermeneutics. In the advertorial "The Windows of London," the consumer education bent continues, but here it moves away from the more abstract to some technical considerations of maintaining a commercial operation, explaining to the public the various elements that are behind their famed window displays. The column notifies readers that their department store is in the midst of upgrading this part of their business, informing them that "[t]hey will have in their service all the mechanical, artistic, and scientific devices which we have developed in our window-dressing studios during the past fifteen years."[68]

In "The Stores and the Theatres," we encounter a document that directly speaks to an important thematic strand of this chapter, the merging of commerce and dramaturgy, and the

[67] Callisthenes, "Words," *The Times*, November 17, 1923.
[68] Callisthenes, "The Windows of London," *The Times*, March 20, 1924.

argument that Selfridges deliberately created a theatrical environment in their department store. The advertorial quotes a well-known writer of the theatre at that time, Gordon Craig, who laments that shop windows were drawing some attention away from stage performances.[69] He notes the attraction "of the big shops lighted up at night. They seem to coquette with the theatrical art." Craig claims that "[a]lready the shop windows show signs of stealing the theatrical thunder." For their part, Callisthenes acknowledges "[w]e have done our best to learn from the theatre anything it could teach us about lighting, costuming and arrangements." Although the fostering of a theatrical environment begins outside the store in its window shows, it is emblematic, and a prelude of precisely the mood and social tenor it orchestrated in the building itself.

The next series of advertorials demonstrate Selfridges' commitment to downplaying the actual marketing of tangible commodities, to embrace the promotion of selling non-material goods, including "experiences," and even conceptions of selfhood. Consider the article "The Gift of Self-Expression," and how it relates to an important concern of modernity: the loss of individuality, reflected and internalized by a world of mass-produced goods, and the forces of urbanization which can lead to a loss of identity, all issues notably addressed by not only Simmel, Benjamin, and Kracauer, but also in the high modernist fiction of Joyce and Woolf.[70] The advertorial states that "true genius must to a certain extent be the forth-pouring or giving-out from within of that priceless gift – individuality." Callisthenes also insists upon their department store as a bastion for protecting this characteristic: "The whole atmosphere of the Store and the spirit that pervades the entire Organization are calculated to foster the sturdy development of

[69] Callisthenes, "The Stores and the Theatres," *The Times*, August 30, 1929.
[70] Callisthenes, "The Gift of Self-Expression," *The Times*, April 26, 1924.

individuality and originality." Although in these advertorials, Selfridges never completely loses sight of "selling," it extends far beyond simply peddling material products, something also evident in "Energetic Curiosity." The editorializing slant to this one is fairly sharp, attacking old Victorian values and its influence on prompting parents to discourage curiosity in their children.[71] Here, curiosity is presented as a lofty virtue, and it is placed on the same pedestal that many of the store's commodities were perched upon: "a well-controlled curiosity is the source of discovery." Again, as with the other advertorials, irrespective of the topic at hand, all roads lead through the entrance doors of their department store. "It [curiosity] is a healthy sign of interest in daily life" and "[y]ou may exercise your proper curiosity to your heart's content at Selfridge's." A salient element of these articles involves their emphasis on foregrounding and promoting self-consciousness, of making its readers aware of how the modern self can be constructed; thus, the aim is to make an appeal to certain qualities that reflect and champion personal autonomy, such as self-expression, individuality, curiosity, and exclusivity of experience, characteristics that would separate one from the teeming masses. In sum, these qualities are crucial to the composition of the experiential consumer as analysed in the opening chapter. Selfridges from a commercial vantage point, reflected the alterations that had taken place in modern subjectivity and aesthetics, while similar manifestations, as will be shown, were detectable in central works of literary modernism.

The final advertorials under evaluation are relevant for how they tie into Selfridges' overarching commercial project: selling experiential commodities. The column "Selling Happiness" makes this point straightforward enough in its title, but is rather cunning, as it would have been blatantly pretentious in its refusal to completely disavow the function that goods can

[71] Callisthenes, "Energetic Curiosity," *The Times*, February 11, 1924.

perform in affecting joyfulness.[72] "People do not, of course, buy things only in order to have them." Yet, the main idea involves the marketing of an intangible commodity. Callisthenes explains that "[t]he world is governed very considerably by its pleasant memories. Where people have found satisfaction before they are likely to go find it again." The column concludes by declaring that "the doctrine of selling happiness" has always been a valued priority in their establishment. This search for "satisfaction" is also germane to the final column we will consider. In "The Escape from Monotony," the message is squarely directed to women, and homemakers in particular.[73] It promotes visiting Selfridges as "a stimulus which will banish monotony for a fortnight." Despite the fact that boredom was a fairly common feature of the routinization of modern life in the early twentieth century, on account of their responsibilities in the domestic sphere, it was perhaps most amplified for females. As a result, the advertorial makes a direct pitch to this audience: "To those women who feel that they are prisoners to the home and the suburban High street we would extend a cordial invitation to break the monotony of their week by a long day at Selfridge's." Once again, the formula persists in moving far beyond just selling tangible goods, to also marketing experiential products.

What has been evaluated is only a smattering of these articles, relative to the volume in which they appeared in the London dailies. Scores of other advertorials also continue to express the same patterns. These advertorials were widely read given the circulation numbers of the newspapers that published them, and they were sufficiently influential to reach across the Atlantic, as some were even featured in the *Harvard Business Magazine*.[74] In fact, these articles

[72] Callisthenes, "Selling Happiness," *The Times*, April 28, 1924.
[73] Callisthenes, "The Escape from Monotony," *The Times*, May 16, 1925.
[74] Reginald Pound, *Selfridge: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 219.

attracted the attention of a famous modernist journal of that time, *The New Age*, a matter which will be explored next. However, the core takeaway from these documents is that it provides the strongest evidence that Harry Selfridge possessed a key quality that critics have long ascribed to literary modernists: experimenting with new forms to address the changing realities of a modern world.

The New Age's Reception to Callisthenes and Modernist Commercialism

Harry Selfridge's relentless pursuit of utilizing new tools for his business, and the obsessiveness of their implementation, did not go unnoticed. In reality, a fairly accurate indicator of the traction gained in affecting mainstream societal influence, relates to the quality of critics one eventually attracts. *The New Age*, an important modernist journal of the early twentieth century, emerged as one of Selfridges' strongest detractors, repeatedly attacking the department store and its owner. The fact that a publication with a socialist bent and an anti-commercialist ethos, would level criticism towards a retail giant should hardly be surprising, but a couple of issues are unusual: the decision to specifically target one business, and the highly vituperative nature of the attacks. At the time, other major department stores had been fixtures of the London retail scene. In fact, Debenhams was a very successful commercial enterprise with multiple locations, and Harrods was also a major retail player, one that had as a notable development, contemporaneous with *The New Age*'s lambasting of Selfridges, managed to acquire Dickins & Jones, another department store giant. Yet, it was only Selfridges with a single outlet that became the journal's retail scapegoat. Why did *The New Age* focus their scathing critiques on Selfridges, while ignoring all their competitors?

One of *The New Age*'s strongest rebukes of Selfridges appeared in May 1914. In a column entitled "An Open Letter to Mr. Selfridge," its author, T.K.L., one of the pseudonyms

used by Beatrice Hastings, launches into a particularly nasty diatribe of the department store's publicist. Responding to an advertorial penned by Callisthenes, in which the association of art and commerce is discussed, T.K.L. quickly establishes a harsh personal tone: "I select you because your bear-leader is more offensive to good taste than is tolerable … I will not outline more than is inevitable this caricature of you, who must be as far from knowing how ridiculous you are being made as from desiring to make an immortal fool of yourself."[75] Shortly afterwards, the writer for *The New Age* explains the source of the complaint, declaring "[h]e affects to know the sentiments of artists – he who cannot write a paragraph which does not prove him outside consideration. He speaks of art who is illiterate – and insensitive. He signs and seals an alliance in the absence of one of the parties, an alliance de bouffe!"[76] For T.K.L., what is most offensive about Callisthenes' assertions, surrounds the notion that art and business are natural partners, that they share some qualities in common. According to T.K.L., it is the artist's sacred creative responsibility that precludes any possibility of a compact with commerce. "He has, indeed, something to guard which, if once impaired," T.K.L. explains, "is as good as lost. This something is his creative power. If the artist allowed any consideration but art to influence him, he would forfeit his freedom to create. He must live so as to preserve this freedom."[77] After noting the value of artistic autonomy, the column goes on to quote specific passages from the advertorial that prescribes a very different function for the artist: "Where would be the harmonious blends in colour, the rich designs, the exquisite details that make the different fabrics desirable, and, therefore, marketable? Shall we decry the craftsman, or deny him the title of Artist, who gives his skill and puts his heart into his work, and achieves a beautiful result."[78]

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[75] T.K.L., "An Open Letter to Mr. Selfridge," *The New Age* 15, no. 2 (1914): 38.
[76] T.K.L., "Open Letter," 38.
[77] Ibid., 39.
[78] Quoted in T.K.L., 39.

Following this logic, Callisthenes points out "how much a mere advertisement nowadays depends for its effectiveness on Art – the Art of letters, of typography, of illustration. We of this House have always attached the utmost importance to the preparation of our written and pictorial appeals … breaking down the barrier that, illogical as it was, certainly existed between Art and Trade."[79]

We need only to review some of Selfridges' advertisements to see the validity behind the claim that artistic elements had aided their store's promotional material, and in this sense, because art had been successfully used as a highly effective marketing tool, we can understand why it may have deeply angered art purists, such as writers of modernist journals, who insisted on the "barrier" that Callisthenes aspired to remove. However, it is the role given to artistic craftsmanship as a catalysing agent between art and commerce, which Callisthenes articulates in these quotes, that T.K.L. works most forcefully to discredit. *The New Age* argues that "[n]o artist ever set out to benefit a drapery house … you must not misunderstand this usage as anything more than what is called 'applied art.' Not one of your craftsmen would mistake such work for creative art; nor would any art-dealer!"[80] At this point, we arrive at a critical juncture of our discussion, in which much hinges on the distinction being drawn between "fine art" and "applied art." Without any debate, the artistic components of either the department store's products or its advertisements, cannot be viewed as anything loftier than just applied art, but it is worth noting that within modernist circles of the art community, Selfridge was making a claim that would have gained sympathetic ears. Revealingly, what Callisthenes seems to be discussing is actually linked to an experimental art movement that was occurring contemporaneously, in effect, making

[79] Quoted in T.K.L., 39.
[80] Ibid.

this dispute only a smaller fragment of a wider intellectual debate in the arts. In 1913, members of the Bloomsbury Group founded the Omega Workshop. Through this enterprise, spearheaded by Roger Fry, both a painter and influential art critic, its leader aimed to challenge the distinction that had been made separating the fine arts and applied arts.[81] The Omega Workshop undertook the project of merging fine art with the production of textiles, furniture, household accessories, and other aspects of interior design.[82]

All of this is linked with a fundamental principle of the Bloomsbury Group – the notion of the "imaginative life" – which involves infusing artistry into daily life, an ideal explored in the next chapter. This calls to mind William Morris and his advocacy in the late nineteenth century for aesthetics in the everyday, but here with these modernist artists, much in the same vein of Selfridges' programme, devoid of any agenda involving political or social reform. It is hardly a stretch to extrapolate that both Callisthenes and Fry's Omega Workshop, freed from any need to politicize the imbrications between commerce and art, are speaking the same language in enunciating the value of artistic craftsmanship when it comes to the decorative arts, which both sides clearly agree, though it may be an application of art, is still a true and legitimate form of artistic work. While T.L.K. views "applied art" as a pejorative term that reduces its value, both Callisthenes and Fry envision skilful artistic application as a demonstration of it. Obviously, it would be misleading to overplay the alliance of ideas shared between the Omega Workshop and Selfridges vis-a-vis art and commerce, but even a modest association would by far outstrip T.L.K.'s final assertion, and parting insult, that any such union is "the proposition of a floating

[81] Jessica Berman, "The Bloomsbury Group," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature,* Vol. 1, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210.
[82] Berman, "The Bloomsbury Group," 209.

barnacle to a torpedo."[83] In considering Woolf's position as a prominent member of Bloomsbury, and her support of the Omega Workshop, we can note a commonality between this literary modernist and some thoughts presented by Callisthenes, the same ones that are assailed by *The New Age* journal.

Just a few months later, in the middle of October 1915, *The New Age*, in an editorial by Ivor Brown, renewed its invectives against Selfridges. In "Gilders of the Chains: Callisthenes," Brown provides us with much more insight into understanding why this journal fixed its criticism on Selfridges, and not any of its competitors. The central complaint advanced by the article is that the optics of commercialism have changed, that business has taken on a new and deceptive form, of which Selfridges is the chief exemplar.[84] Brown explains that "[t]he old shop-keeper kept a shop: the new shop-keeper would be appalled at the idea. He keeps a lounge, a restaurant, a reading-room, a rock-garden, an observation tower – but a shop? Well, incidentally perhaps, but don't mention the vulgar fact."[85] The pretentious disavowal of commerce in the service of business, according to Brown, is precisely what warrants the blistering critique of Selfridges. With this in mind, the column argues that the "old tradesman talked about trade, if he wished to puff himself: the new tradesman does not even talk: he hires an essay-writer."[86] It does not require much sleuthing to identify Callisthenes as both the referent of the quote, and the key source of Brown's irritation. The act of using literary rhetoric to repackage commercial greed as something elevated and sophisticated, for Brown, is intolerable, which precisely explains his targeting of Callisthenes. "The old merchant," Brown explains, "had a shop and methods: the

[83] T.K.L., "Open Letter," 39.
[84] Ivor Brown, "Gilders of the Chains: Callisthenes," *The New Age* 17, no. 24 (1915): 565.
[85] Brown, "Gilders of the Chains," 565.
[86] Ibid.

new merchant has 'a house' and 'a policy.'"[87] In addition, his frustration is driven by the opinion that modern day commercialists are proud of these approaches, in their lack of shame in promoting deceptive practices, and thus we arrive at the origin of the column's title: "We are no longer a nation of shopkeepers; we are a nation of shop-assistants and shop-concealers. We are not ashamed enough to stop the ugly thing. But we want to cover its nakedness. The day has passed in which we proudly jangled our terrific chains of commerce. Callisthenes has come to gild them."[88] According to Brown, the primary culprit for this new business ethos, which has left us "charmed and fascinated by the new commerce which is no commerce" is Harry Selfridge.[89] Here, we can identify a common thread that runs through all of the editorial's main points, and it is an important theme that has recurred throughout this chapter. The avant-garde strategy of employing a non-commercial frame in various facets of their business operations, of all their techniques, is the one that Brown finds most bothersome. In Brown's view, what is most objectionable is that Selfridge refuses to behave like a traditional commercialist, or like the "shopkeepers" he earlier referenced who are typical of businessmen.

Unlike other commercialists, Selfridge does not follow the old rules of commerce. Instead, he invents new forms, strategies, and techniques; in other words, it is Selfridge's trailblazing attitude, his use of creativity, novelty, inventiveness, essentially the characteristics that are most exemplary of modernity, that signals something different and troubling. To put it simply, Selfridge represents the embodiment of a very different kind of businessperson, a version of which had scarcely been seen before, but of which many others would appear: the commercial modernist. Perhaps even before the store officially opened there had been a glance of this new

[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

figure, as described by a London reporter. A few days before the store's grand opening, in a promotional move, Selfridge invited representatives of the London press to a special dinner in his new establishment. After the meal, Selfridge gave a speech presenting "the principles upon which his new house of business was founded."[90] The *Daily Chronicle* offered the following assessment of it: "His speech was curiously interesting, for he was a new type in the commercial world. With his refined face and quiet voice he suggested the lawyer or the literary man rather than the merchant."[91] The reference to "literary" is rather instructive – and prescient given the fact that Callisthenes had yet to appear in the daily papers – because in many ways it is Selfridge's pioneering of the advertorial that emblematizes the arrival of this new business figure. All this adequately accounts for the intense criticism that the advertorials generated in *The New Age*. It only stands to reason that had the Callisthenes articles been considered inconsequential, these would not have attracted such interest and negative responses from this journal.

The New Age did not limit their barbs against Selfridges to editorial commentary; they also used creative writing, as evidenced by the appearance of a poem dedicated to ridiculing the retail magnate. "A Ballade of Blatant Advertisements," composed by regular contributor Paul Selver, made its way into the journal at around the same time of the previous attacks.[92] The department store's use of the advertorial is referenced once again as the title is followed up with the notation that the poem is "[d]edicated, without permission, to Callisthenes."[93] The gist of the mock ballad is fairly simple: in a world of false advertising and dishonest claims, Selfridge emerges as nonpareil, hence the refrain that concludes every stanza, "But Selfridge with his

[90] Honeycombe, *Selfridges*, 36.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Paul Selver, "A Ballade of Blatant Advertisements," *The New Age* 16, no. 6 (1914): 146.
[93] Selver, "Ballade of Blatant Advertisements," 146.

blarney takes the cake."[94] In fact, each stanza features some well-known products that gained notoriety for their outlandish promises; for example, "Zam-buk, Bile Beans and divers plaguey squills / Allege their conquest over aches and ills."[95] In another stanza, the poem speaks of "cunning juices" that "can exterminate unwanted hairs" or the remedies that "decks the bald with tresses."[96] The theme of the poem is focussed on a disturbing phenomenon of the early twentieth century, which was far removed from anything that Selfridges had been involved with: the patent medicine industry. The notion of linking these pernicious marketing campaigns with the department store is rather instructive in examining the legitimacy of *The New Age*'s critique. It is remarkable that this mock poem compares the advertising conducted by Selfridges, and the articles of Callisthenes, with the fraudulent advertisements churned out by the patent medicine industry. To declare that the marketing practices used by Selfridge "takes the cake" in relation to the chicanery, and potential real harm, committed by the purveyors of snake oil-type products, suggests that the offence lies much deeper than just the perceived distastefulness of mere advertising shenanigans. It appears that the true source of outrage is provoked by the nature of the advertisements, and the reach of their other promotional strategies. Most likely, the core issue probably relates to the cornerstone of Selfridges' marketing programme: the foregrounding of an experiential dimension.

While the nostrums of the patent medicine industry can be debunked and discredited, what Selfridges is ultimately selling, is far more impervious. It is harder to discredit the intangibilities of selling a feeling or emotion, or an experiential commodity, as these contain very different properties than products that can be weighed and measured. In other words, because so

[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

much of Selfridges' advertising and marketing is based on non-commercial aesthetics, it is not as vulnerable to criticism based on commercial principles, thus, we can observe how it frustrates *The New Age*'s socialist leanings and their sympathies for social critiques based on capitalism and consumer materialism. Simply put, Selfridges' main attraction is not based purely on materials, rendering it far less susceptible to anti-materialistic arguments. A key strand of this academic project is in charting the movement in the modern world from materialist orientations to culturalist ones – a development crucially associated with the emergence of the experiential consumer – and perhaps it is Selfridges' alignment with that trend, which the editors of the journal may have on an instinctive level found rather threatening.

A survey of the advertisements published in *The New Age* provides further evidence of how Selfridges' techniques exposed a raw nerve. Though a diverse range of ads for different goods and services appeared in their publication, ironically, some of them featured a rather similar non-commercial ethos to that of Selfridges'. From the journal's perspective, it could justify running advertisements that were not overtly commercialist in appearance, and thus, better dovetail with the publication's political orientation and its reading audience. As an example, evaluate the content from the following advertisement for Cadbury's Cocoa (figure 13), which appeared in *The New Age* the year before Selfridges opened for business. After assuring readers about the "genuine" quality and "purity" of the product, an unrelated description – one offering more of an economic philosophy rather than any necessary consumer information – is presented to the journal's readership. The advertisement states that its cocoa is "[m]ade under ideal conditions of labour in an English Factory amidst pure and healthful surroundings where the well-being of the workers receives the constant care of the firm." Cadbury's is expressing a message intended to attenuate any negative connotations of corporate power, instead painting an

idyllic vision of a communal manufacturing environment. In effect, the advertiser is crafting out a highly non-commercial sales pitch for a mass-produced commodity, and it does so without a



Figure 13

measure of subtlety. It is hard to imagine why *The New Age* would find this marketing tactic so disturbing and offensive when practiced by Selfridges, and yet sanction it for other advertisers. Should we not expect the same outrage echoing Brown's earlier criticism that a modern-day manufacturing giant no longer has a factory, but instead a pleasant worker's commune? *The New Age* was happy to feature this exact advertisement as they published it on numerous occasions over the years. Certainly, it would be wholly unreasonable to suggest that Cadbury's was being manipulative in their advertisement; indeed, it has been well-documented that this corporation effectuated an ideal working and living environment for its employees. Also, the very nature of advertising is to shade matters in the most favourable marketing terms so as to shape consumer behaviour. But the issue at hand involves the journal's hypocrisy in denouncing the same marketing approach that it facilitated for other businesses. It is worth noting that the department store industry had indeed experienced an unfortunate history on its harsh treatment of employees in the late nineteenth century.[97] However, in contrast to this blighted past, Harry Selfridge's fair treatment of his employees and his well-tempered disposition around them, left him in high

[97] Lancaster, *Social History*, 130.

regard among his working staff.[98] And though the average store salary was not exceptional by industry standards, he had eliminated a still practiced punitive tradition within department stores, which involved routine fines for employees; moreover, a good shopping discount was offered to employees.[99] All of this nullifies any possibility that the journal had been motivated by employee relations.

Perhaps a critical source of *The New Age*'s antipathy towards Selfridges originates within the detection of parallels to their own project, within the impression that what they were ultimately witnessing was largely a reflection of their sensibilities applied to the commercial environment. John Xiros Cooper, in his investigations of the underlying logic of market society, argues that capitalism and modernism are more than just convenient allies in our modern world. Essentially, for Cooper, their kinship runs much deeper: "Capitalism, as it is embedded in market society, emerges from the same gene pool as modernism; they are … one and the same."[100] In Cooper's assessment, the core characteristics of modernism – as expressed through the principles of the avant-garde movement of the early twentieth century – issue from the same provenance responsible for the "culture of capitalism."[101] Crucial to this genetic heritage is the radicalizing efforts to both challenge and reform everything in its path; thus, nothing "can survive capitalism's bracing assault on societies of custom and precedence. It puts all previous political and economic forms … to flight."[102] Selfridges had been engaged in practices which closely reflect Cooper's conclusions, and in watching the department store's attack on commercial customs, it may be that *The New Age*, with their own iconoclastic tendencies, had recognized, yet

[98] Honeycombe, *Selfridges*, 37.
[99] Ibid., 180-81.
[100] John Xiros Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23.
[101] Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture*, 23.
[102] Ibid.

bitterly refused to acknowledge, what they perceived as an unbearable affiliation to themselves. Furthermore, a modernist-inspired marketing programme that relies on a combination of logic, historical allusions, and rhetoric to educate and persuade, rises to a level of sophistication that is threatening to an anti-capitalist stance. The shopkeeper's barking sales pitch to passers-by on the street is replaced with eloquent essays, the crude handbills with imaginative and captivating advertisements, the bull-headed sales tactics with artful salesmanship. These modernist tendencies are viewed as subversive because they function far beyond the purview of the old shopkeeper and his tricks. A fundamental idea coalesces from this examination of *The New Age*'s engagement with Selfridges: this modernist journal keenly understood how this business (and its founder) was very much doing things in the spirit of society's new emerging realities, in the spirit of modernity, and as the name of their publication implies, in some ways it matched their own dispositions.

Chasing Callisthenes

It is difficult to overstate the influence that Selfridges' marketing techniques had on the London commercial scene, and after many years of watching the cultivation of a literary voice through the writings of Callisthenes, their largest competitor, Harrods, had decided to attempt a similar scheme. In a clear attempt at one-upmanship, Harrods contacted three of the most famous British authors of the day, inviting them to pen a newspaper article on any particular aspect of their commercial enterprise that was found worthy of interest, even if it should prove to elicit a less than favourable review. Thus, in March 1929, offers were tendered to George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and Arnold Bennett, each of whom politely declined the overture; and yet, this is only just a prelude to the story. Rather than ignoring the request, or quickly dismissing it out of hand, all these writers submitted very thoughtful and lengthy rejection letters, sufficient enough

in both of these measures as to inspire one of the most brilliant advertising campaigns of the time period. Seizing on these unexpected gifts, Harrods cleverly converted the rejection letters into full-page advertisements that appeared in the London press and across the Atlantic in *The New York Times* (figures 14-16).[103] The advertisements featured a brief preamble outlining how "Harrods of London ventured to invite three of our greatest Masters of the Written Word to lend the influence of their pens to the cause of Business." Each letter was artistically rendered with plenty of graphic garnishment, accompanied with a quaint pencil-style portrait of its author, and rimmed above it with a memorable quote from the response in large typeset. Not only was Harrods relieved of any financial obligation to remunerate these literary figures, but in the act of turning down the offer, each author fulfilled the very task that the department store had tried to commission from them in the first place.

Harrods' objective of pursuing a literary voice to outmatch the persona of Selfridges' advertorials was fairly evident, at least to Shaw, as he references Callisthenes directly by name in just the second sentence of the letter, acknowledging the popularity of these columns. In general, the letters discuss to varying degrees the potential linkages between the literary and commercial spheres. Both Shaw and Wells envision this relationship as problematic, mainly on account of the responsibility owed to their reading audience. For Shaw, it is a conflict of interest "to accept payment from a commercial enterprise for using his influence to induce the public to buy its wares," and further that a "writer who has been consecrated by Fame to the service of the public … must take wages in no other service." Following the same line of thought, Wells explains that the writer, "classes himself not with the artists but with the teachers and the priests and

[103] These advertisements from Harrods were featured in the UK in *The Observer* on March 3, 1929.

prophets," going on to definitively claim "that our only paymaster ought to be the reader." Interestingly, Bennett diverges greatly from their viewpoint, finding no personal beliefs on the



THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 1918.

ARNOLD BENNETT *and* HARRODS

"I will not flout public opinion"

Recently HARRODS of LONDON ventured to invite three of our greatest Masters of the Written Word to lend the influence of their pens to the cause of Business. By permission, and without comment, Harrods publish their replies. The first—that of Mr. Arnold Bennett—appears below:

I HAVE now fully considered your proposal that I should write, for the purposes of publicity, a signed article or series of articles dealing with such aspects of your business as might, on examination, especially appeal to me. I note that you would wish to give me a free hand as to both selection and treatment of topics, and that in particular you are quite ready to accept and to print adverse criticism as well as favourable criticism.

You remind me that, as is well known, your business is among the largest, most comprehensive, and most famous of its kind in the world. You say that it counts notably in the industrial and mercantile life of the community, that your regular staff comprises an immense and constantly increasing number of citizens of both sexes, and that you use every honest endeavour to be of commercial service to the community.

You say further that you buy the best available materials and commodities that research can procure, and that you employ the best organisers, technicians, artists, designers, architects, and craftsmen of every sort that you can discover.

Lastly, you suggest that you ought to be able to enlist the help of descriptive writers in the same category of excellence and prestige as your finest workers in the applied arts.

On my side I will now tell you that as a writer I have always been keenly interested in the very impressive phenomenon of the big departmental store, regarded either as a picturesque spectacle, or as a living organism, or as a sociological portent. I am all in favour of the departmental store. I cannot keep my eyes off its window-displays, its crowds of customers, its army of employees. In Britain, America, France, and Germany I have studied its functioning as far as is possible to an outsider. As a theme for description it strongly appeals to me. I have written articles about it, and I have written a novel entirely about it. That novel, published many years ago, was inspired by the mere sight of your own premises when they were first erected.

I agree with you that you ought to be able to enlist the help of whatever writers seem to you to be adequately equipped for the task you would set. I should like, of course under proper conditions, to accept your proposal; and I see no possible reason against my acceptance, except one.

The reason is that public opinion in Britain is not yet ripe to approve the employment of responsible imaginative writers to whom it has granted a reputation, in any scheme of publicity for a commercial concern. Personally I differ from public opinion in this matter; but the opinion exists and I will not flout it. In flouting it I should certainly lose caste, and I do not intend to lose caste by attempting to create a precedent which could result, for me, in nothing save a disadvantageous notoriety. The time must inevitably come, sooner or later, when the precedent will be created, and after it is established people will wonder why it should ever have met with opposition. But the creator of the precedent will not be myself.

I must therefore, with lively regret, decline your proposal.

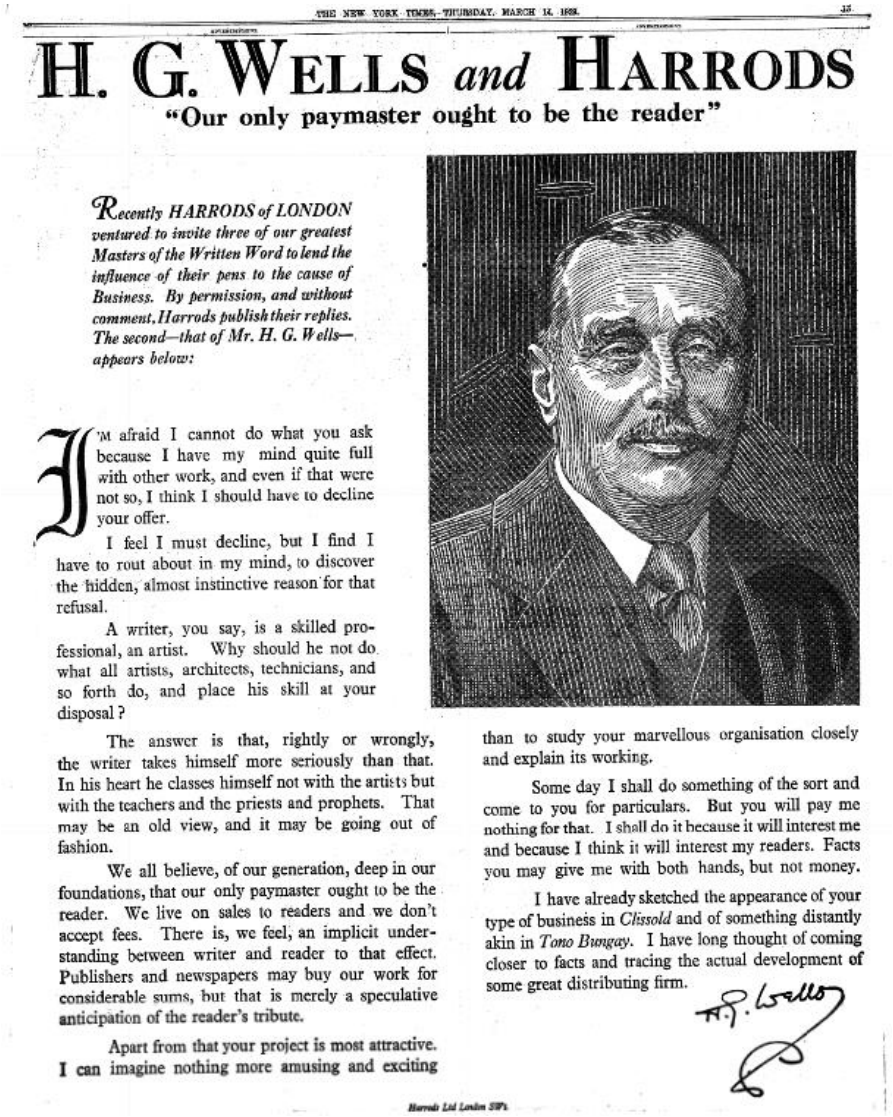
Arnold Bennett

Harrods Ltd London SW1

Figure 14

matter that would prohibit the sale of his literary talents in the service of commerce, and in fact, he confesses to having "always been keenly interested in the very impressive phenomenon of the big departmental store, regarded either as a picturesque spectacle, or as a living organism, or as a

sociological portent." Nonetheless, Bennett also rejects the request on grounds associated with the reading public, but for a very different rationale than the one given by his fellow authors; he will not contravene societal norms of the day, which as he understands it, frowns upon the mingling of literary art and commerce. According to Bennett, "public opinion in Britain is not



THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1929.

H. G. WELLS *and* HARRODS

"Our only paymaster ought to be the reader"

Recently HARRODS of LONDON ventured to invite three of our greatest Masters of the Written Word to lend the influence of their pens to the cause of Business. By permission, and without comment, Harrods publish their replies. The second—that of Mr. H. G. Wells—appears below:

I'M afraid I cannot do what you ask because I have my mind quite full with other work, and even if that were not so, I think I should have to decline your offer.

I feel I must decline, but I find I have to rout about in my mind, to discover the hidden, almost instinctive reason for that refusal.

A writer, you say, is a skilled professional, an artist. Why should he not do what all artists, architects, technicians, and so forth do, and place his skill at your disposal?

The answer is that, rightly or wrongly, the writer takes himself more seriously than that. In his heart he classes himself not with the artists but with the teachers and the priests and prophets. That may be an old view, and it may be going out of fashion.

We all believe, of our generation, deep in our foundations, that our only paymaster ought to be the reader. We live on sales to readers and we don't accept fees. There is, we feel, an implicit understanding between writer and reader to that effect. Publishers and newspapers may buy our work for considerable sums, but that is merely a speculative anticipation of the reader's tribute.

Apart from that your project is most attractive. I can imagine nothing more amusing and exciting than to study your marvellous organisation closely and explain its working.

Some day I shall do something of the sort and come to you for particulars. But you will pay me nothing for that. I shall do it because it will interest me and because I think it will interest my readers. Facts you may give me with both hands, but not money.

I have already sketched the appearance of your type of business in *Clissold* and of something distantly akin in *Tono Bungay*. I have long thought of coming closer to facts and tracing the actual development of some great distributing firm.

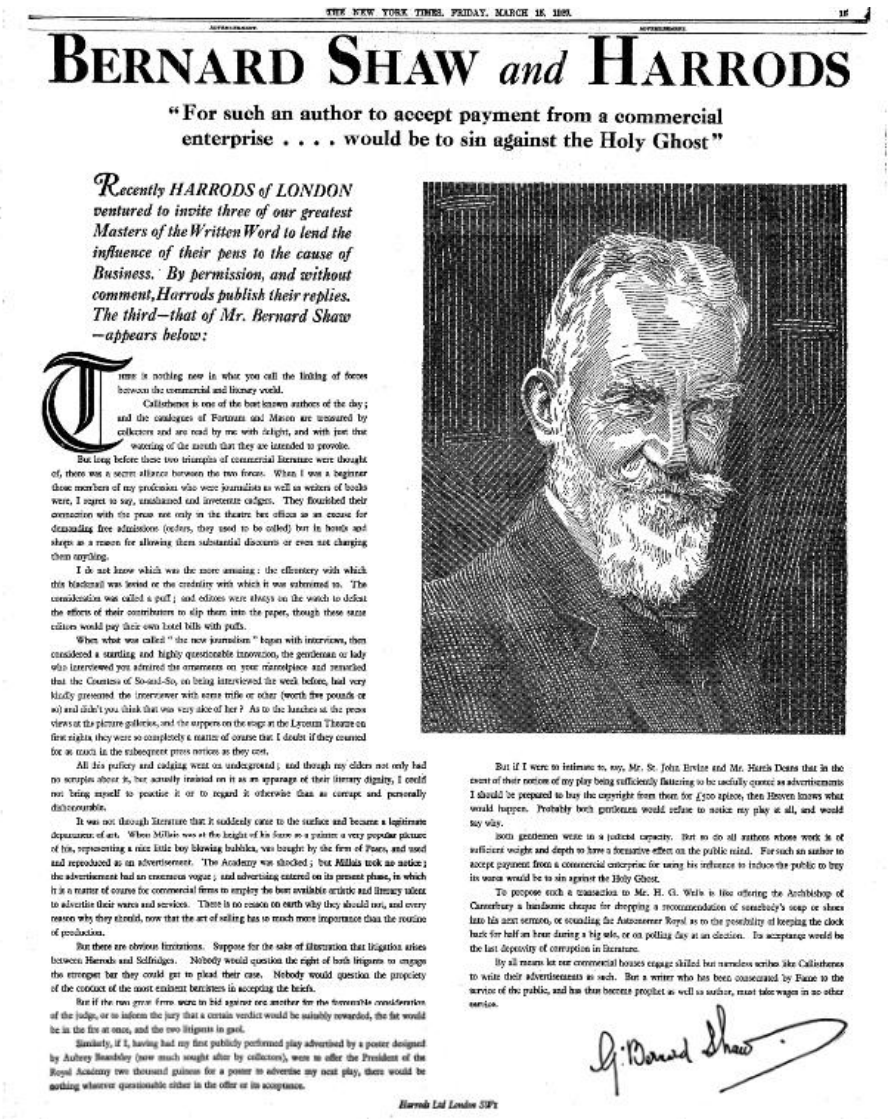
H. G. Wells

Harrods Ltd London SW1.

Figure 15

yet ripe to approve the employment of responsible imaginative writers to whom it has granted a reputation, in any scheme of publicity for a commercial concern." And while adamant in

asserting opposition to this opinion, Bennett bluntly declares that he "will not flout it." If it is fair to conclude that the eloquence and depth of content each writer invested in responding to Harrods – speaks to some level of ambivalence in uniting art and commerce – then their complicity in granting approval (the ad's preamble states "By permission") for the publication of the letters, also suggests a willingness to benefit from the same strategy analysed earlier in



THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1910. 15

BERNARD SHAW *and* HARRODS

"For such an author to accept payment from a commercial enterprise . . . . would be to sin against the Holy Ghost"

Recently HARRODS of LONDON ventured to invite three of our greatest Masters of the Written Word to lend the influence of their pens to the cause of Business. By permission, and without comment, Harrods publish their replies. The third—that of Mr. Bernard Shaw—appears below:

There is nothing new in what you call the linking of forces between the commercial and literary world.

Callisthenes is one of the best known authors of the day; and the catalogues of Fortnum and Mason are treasured by collectors and are read by me with delight, and with just that watering of the mouth that they are intended to provoke.

But long before these two triumphs of commercial literature were thought of, there was a secret alliance between the two forces. When I was a beginner those members of my profession who were journalists as well as writers of books were, I regret to say, unashamed and inveterate cadgers. They flourished their connection with the press not only in the theatre but offices as an excuse for demanding free admissions (orders, they used to be called) but in hotels and shops as a reason for allowing them substantial discounts or even not charging them anything.

I do not know which was the more amusing: the effrontery with which this blackmail was levied or the credulity with which it was submitted to. The consideration was called a puff; and editors were always on the watch to defeat the efforts of their contributors to slip them into the paper, though these same editors would pay their own hotel bills with puffs.

When what was called "the new journalism" began with interviews, then considered a startling and highly questionable innovation, the gentleman or lady who interviewed you admired the ornaments on your mantelpiece and remarked that the Countess of So-and-So, on being interviewed the week before, had very kindly presented the interviewer with some trifle or other (worth five pounds or so) and didn't you think that was very nice of her? As to the lunches at the press views at the picture galleries, and the suppers on the stage at the Lyceum Theatre on first nights they were so completely a matter of course that I doubt if they counted for as much in the subsequent press notices as they cost.

All this puffery and cadging went on underground; and though my elders not only had no scruples about it, but actually insisted on it as an appanage of their literary dignity, I could not bring myself to practise it or to regard it otherwise than as corrupt and personally disheartening.

It was not through literature that it suddenly came to the surface and became a legitimate department of art. When Millais was at the height of his fame as a painter a very popular picture of his, representing a nice little boy blowing bubbles, was bought by the firm of Pears, and used and reproduced as an advertisement. The Academy was shocked; but Millais took no notice; the advertisement had an enormous vogue; and advertising entered on its present phase, in which it is a matter of course for commercial firms to employ the best available artistic and literary talent to advertise their wares and services. There is no reason on earth why they should not, and every reason why they should, now that the art of selling has so much more importance than the routine of production.

But there are obvious limitations. Suppose for the sake of illustration that litigation arises between Harrods and Selfridges. Nobody would question the right of both litigants to engage the strongest bar they could get to plead their case. Nobody would question the propriety of the conduct of the most eminent barristers in accepting the briefs.

But if the two great firms were in bid against one another for the favourable consideration of the judge, or to inform the jury that a certain verdict would be suitably rewarded, the fat would be in the fire at once, and the two litigants in gaol.

Similarly, if I, having had my first publicly performed play advertised by a poster designed by Aubrey Beardsley (now much sought after by collectors), were to offer the President of the Royal Academy two thousand guineas for a poster to advertise my next play, there would be nothing whatever questionable either in the offer or its acceptance.

But if I were to intimate to, say, Mr. St. John Ervine and Mr. Harris Deans that in the event of their notices of my play being sufficiently flattering to be usefully quoted as advertisements I should be prepared to buy the copyright from them for £500 apiece, then Heaven knows what would happen. Probably both gentlemen would refuse to notice my play at all, and would say why.

Both gentlemen were in a judicial capacity. But so do all authors whose work is of sufficient weight and depth to have a formative effect on the public mind. For such an author to accept payment from a commercial enterprise for using his influence to induce the public to buy its wares would be to sin against the Holy Ghost.

To propose such a transaction to Mr. H. G. Wells is like offering the Archbishop of Canterbury a handsome cheque for dropping a recommendation of somebody's soap or shoes into his next sermon, or sounding the Astronomer Royal as to the possibility of keeping the clock back for half an hour during a big sale, or on polling day at an election. To acceptance would be the last depravity of corruption in literature.

By all means let our commercial houses engage skilled but nameless scribes like Callisthenes to write their advertisements as such. But a writer who has been consecrated by Fame to the service of the public, and has thus become prophet as well as author, must take wages in no other service.

G. Bernard Shaw

Harrods Ltd London SW1

Figure 16

connection with Selfridges. Consider for a moment how each writer blames their refusal on the belief that literature and commerce should not mix, the only distinction is that while Shaw and Wells ascribe it to their own personal philosophy, Bennett pins that very same opinion on the public. In other words, all three authors are basing their decision on a non-commercialist ethos, on the principle that these worlds are ethically incompatible, or at least perceived this way by society in Bennett's case. And yet each of these authors is completely aware of Harrods' advertising plans for their rejection letters, knowing fully that the presentation of this material, especially since department stores are known experts in display culture, is going to heavily involve a commodification of their literary personas. Simply put, Shaw, Wells, and Bennett appear to play along, allowing the articulation of non-commercial principles to actually help commercialize themselves as literary commodities. Paradoxically, it is precisely the rejection of the business proposition, the refusal to accept financial reward, and even the specific reasons provided, that works together to increase their value as literary figures in a world increasingly converting everything and everyone into commodities. It is worth considering a final thought in this brief, but fascinating episode between these writers and the department store industry. Though it is a matter of pure conjecture, it is notable that Harrods had tendered their offer to some different authors than the ones who would have been more ideologically associated with Selfridges. Woolf herself had specifically attacked two of these authors, Bennett and Wells for being materialists. It appears that given Selfridges' prioritizing of subjectivity and experiential enrichment, including its founder's appreciation for a culturalist perspective over a materialist one, had Selfridge been inclined to engage in a similar overture, he would have likely reached out to writers he had more in common with, like Woolf and Joyce. The fact that Harrods

extended the offer to realist writers of the modernist era is suggestive in highlighting the different philosophies held by these department stores.

The conditions of the early twentieth century were instrumental in the department store reaching its zenith as a major cultural institution of modernity. A central argument of this chapter is that it was a key urban space that traces important cultural moments, and further, offers insight into the evolving cultural consciousness of the early 1900s. During a period in which Western Europe was witnessing a merging of aesthetics, art, and commerce in everyday life, all of which helped to bring about the new modern figure of the experiential consumer, the department store became an important cultural form in the curation of these elements. With it in many ways epitomizing the modern world, Selfridges emerged as not only the most modern representation of this institution, but also as the one at the vanguard of a modernist commercialism changing the marketplace.

Chapter Four

Virginia Woolf and the Commodification of the Quotidian

Although Virginia Woolf's reputation as one of the most innovative modernist writers has been well entrenched for many decades, in recent years, new insights have been achieved in contextualizing her work in relation to various aspects of consumer culture. However, there remains some persistence about Woolf's ambivalence on consumer culture. Still, this tension within Woolf was just part of a larger scale systemic tension playing out between art and commerce in the modern world. The preceding chapter dealt with this tension from a commercial perspective, with commercialists finding some solutions based on literary ideals and techniques. Here, an inversion appears, a handling of the matter from the perspective of literary production, using commercialist ideals and tools. For Woolf, the impulses to reconcile this tension manifested in her fixation on special kinds of commodities and consumption: experiential goods and experiential consumption. Closely associated with this programme is Woolf's distaste for the materialist approach to literature, something expressed in her famed upbraiding of Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy, authors whom she viewed as obsessing over the minutest physical detail while glossing over the more substantive features of a character's interior life, of which experiences are elemental.[1] Thus, Woolf continues the trend towards a dematerialist aesthetic, as initially expressed by some of the key figures of late nineteenth-century aestheticism, like Wilde and Pater, and further, in conjunction with similar developments in an economic paradigm moving progressively away from a production orientation to one increasingly based on consumption and its accommodation of a more culturalist perspective. In exploring Woolf's treatment of quotidian life, everyday routines, and daily minutiae, and how these could be

[1] Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4: 1925 to 1928, ed. Andrew McNeille (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), 159.

enhanced through associative links to market culture, this chapter aims to show how Woolf established an idiosyncratic set of economic beliefs in justifying both a fascination for consumer culture, and a belief that it could be meaningfully engaged with art.

Gateway to the Everyday: The Function of Material Commodities in Woolf

Woolf's treatment of consumer culture evinces a distinct pattern, for while she expresses ambivalence towards some of its elements – vacillating between a discomfort with crass commercialism and an attraction in the aesthetic elements of spectacularising it – a distinctive consumerist ethos begins to take shape. In "Oxford Street Tide," Woolf explains that "[t]he buying and selling is too blatant and raucous. But as one saunters towards the sunset … the garishness and gaudiness of the great rolling ribbon of Oxford Street has its fascination. It is like the pebbly bed of a river whose stones are for ever washed by a bright stream."[2] Though material commodities do matter, their function is to evoke a consumerist desire, to model a consumerist orientation for a much more important good, one offering the consumer a far greater subjective satisfaction: the experiential commodity. Simply put, for Woolf, the experiential commodity trumps the material commodity; the primary significance of the latter is to serve as a gateway for enriched engagement with a personal experiential economy. Though tangible goods circulate throughout much of her oeuvre, these are frequently pressed into a special kind of service, largely used to register the importance of quotidian experiential commodities. For example, consider Woolf's "Street Haunting," a work which dramatically showcases a consumer desire for the consumption of experience. In its opening, the narrator seizes on the excuse of needing to purchase a "pencil," as the pretext to engage in the experience of walking through the streets of

[2] Virginia Woolf, "Oxford Street Tide," *The London Scene: Five Essays by Virginia Woolf* (New York: Frank Hallman, 1975), 22-23.

London, an activity far more rewarding for her than the material commodity that ostensibly initiates her walking trip. Rather than directly participating in the marketplace, the narrator relishes, and takes much greater pleasure in viewing its images during her stroll through the city. The narrator rationalizes this satisfaction of material-free consumption: "With no thought of buying, the eye is sportive and generous; it creates; it adorns; it enhances. Standing out in the street, one may build up all the chambers of an imaginary house and furnish them at one's will with sofa, table, carpet."[3] And yet the fungibility of these items are revealed as Woolf explains that despite "having built and furnished the house, one is happily under no obligation to possess it; one can dismantle it … and furnish another house with other chairs and other glasses. Or let us indulge ourselves at the antique jewellers … Let us choose those pearls, for example, and then imagine how, if we put them on, life would be changed."[4] Here, the salient point is inescapable: commodities are just a conduit for the pursuit of far more rewarding experiences. Thus, the goods function as placeholders, which can be swapped freely as mediating agents for one experience or another. Returning to the pencil, it is noteworthy that the tangible product being purchased is a tool often used in the creation of experiential goods (diaries, creative writing, etc.) and for this reason it hardly comes as a surprise that the narrator's deepest moments of pleasure occur while intently ruminating on the bookstore and the many adventurous excursions depicted within the covers of its books.

This fixation on consumer desire, not for commodities themselves, but for the consumption of experience as a more treasurable commodity itself, prominently figures elsewhere in Woolf's short fiction. In "Solid Objects," the protagonist, while immersed in

[3] Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting," *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 27.
[4] Woolf, "Street Haunting," 27.

everyday activities such as casual strolls, searches for unique and unusual objects that functions as sort of non-commodity commodities. Although John becomes obsessed with discovering items that are devoid of any commercial value, these things – "the lump of glass," "the star-shaped china," and the "piece of iron" – emblematize the significance of his journey in securing them.[5] John is drawn into the lure of an experience as the truly irresistible object of consumption, as evidenced during his first foray along the beach: "He remembered that, after digging for a little, the water oozes round your finger-tips; the hole then becomes a moat; a well; a spring; a secret channel to the sea … [and as he is] choosing which of these things to make it," succeeds in grasping his first spoil.[6] Just like the pencil in the previous text, the quest for objects becomes a gateway towards the pursuit of extracting adventurous experiences from the quotidian. But here, its relevance to a personal experiential economy is indeed amplified by the fact that these objects function strictly outside the conventional marketplace, their only value fixed by the subjectivity of the individual consumer. For John, his special commodities, which register no insignificant irony in that they are fragments of discarded everyday items, actually manage to pull him into a deeper engagement with common daily experiences and away from the larger forces of the modern world, such as his profession as a politician. This accords with a consistent pattern in Woolf's writing in which the experiential commodity, often of quotidian origin, is valued at a much higher rate than the material commodity. This calls to mind one of the most iconic opening sentences in all of modernist literature with *Mrs Dalloway*, which will be analysed at length later, when Clarissa declared that "she would buy the flowers herself," facilitating the

[5] Virginia Woolf, "Solid Objects," *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 100.
[6] Woolf, 97.

eponymous character's enjoyment of perambulating through London, soaking up its sights and sounds.[7]

At other times, the tangible commodity is exchanged for an experiential commodity which is valued at a much higher rate. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway*, there is the case of Clarissa's close childhood friend Sally Seton, and the material sacrifice she makes to participate in meaningful everyday experiences. Sally had pawned her great-grandfather's ruby ring, its provenance linked to historic French royalty, actually given to him by Marie Antoinette, so that she could secure the funds to go to Bourton because "[s]he never had a penny to her name in those days … [b]ut going to Bourton had meant so much to her."[8] Her willingness to place at risk a special family heirloom gifted to her, its monetary value only part of its significance as a special personal commodity invested with sentimentality, demonstrates the fact that physical goods are instruments used in the service of acquiring opportunities to consume experiential products. Exchanging material commodities for an experience is not always voluntary, as evidenced in *To the Lighthouse* when Minta Doyle loses her brooch during her daytrip to the beach at the exact time she gets engaged to Paul Rayley.[9] Though she does not deliberately trade the material commodity for an experiential one, as Sally does in the earlier novel, it still involves a material commodity being sacrificed in the hunt for an experiential one.

Another crucial characteristic in the presentation of material commodities playing a secondary role involves Woolf's use of them in accessorizing everyday life. Near the beginning of *To the Lighthouse*, the youngest child of the Ramsay family, James, is cutting out pictures of various commodities from an Army and Navy Stores catalogue. It is not a task the boy takes

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[7] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 3.
[8] Ibid., 206.
[9] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Harcourt Inc., 1927), 98.

lightly, tackling it with unbridled joy after hearing his mother affirm that the expedition to visit the lighthouse will happen "if it's fine tomorrow."[10] For him, the experience of this "wonder to which he had looked forward for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch."[11] The prospect of closing in on this experiential commodity stirs something powerful inside of him, with the result that he "endowed the picture of a refrigerator with heavenly bliss."[12] Much the same also happens with the "wheelbarrow" and "lawnmower."[13] Revealingly, all of these items are highly representative of daily life. Although the pictures of the tangible commodities are in the boy's hands, the real article consuming his imagination is the lighthouse voyage, which is seemingly "within touch." In fact, the wares offered in the catalogue are only animated with life at the precise moment when James begins to feel his fingertips wrapping around the experiential good his mind is fixated on. We would do well to recall a core characteristic in distinguishing the material consumer from the experiential consumer. As noted in chapter one, while the material consumer becomes absorbed into the object, conversely, the object is absorbed into the experiential consumer, and clearly the latter condition applies to James. Moreover, the act itself, the cutting out of images of commodities, involves symbolic significance as well. It is the physical gesture of excising values based on materials, and craftily replacing it with an experiential product, which in this case involves the enjoyment derived from this physical activity of converting a sales device, a catalogue, used for the peddling of tangible commodities, into something used to enhance the enjoyment of a material-free experience. Simply put, the commodity is plucked from its commercial milieu and repurposed for a different operation, one that emphasizes the value of experiencing the feeling of

[10] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 3.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

shopping, without surrendering to actual material consumption. Finally, it is remarkable that James is reversing the standard process of commodification, where the commodity is torn from the environment of its productive origin, and the hands of its producers, and presented as autonomously existing on its own. In this scene, James removes the commodities from its commercialized environment, and animates it with the human contact of his own hands, perhaps mirroring what his mother symbolically accomplishes in physically knitting the socks.

On this notion of resisting submission to actual material consumption, it is instructive to consider an argument forwarded by Reginald Abbott. In his study of shopping and consumer spectacle in Woolf, he refers to the "accomodity aesthetic" in *Mrs Dalloway* to help explain the fact that, despite its fixation on consumer culture, little shopping and purchasing actually occurs in the novel. Abbott maintains "that Woolf is interested in 'acommodity aesthetic' with [an] emphasis placed on balanced patterns of shopping without spending and consumption without commodities … [and that] Woolf presents a novel with few interiors but plenty of stores, shopping streets, vendors, commodity spectacle, and, if one will allow it, shopping consciousnesses."[14] Ruth Hoberman counters Abbott's position with the claim that, for Woolf, commodities are still significant, not so much in terms of material ownership, but in receptivity to "a spectacle of exchange and interaction yet not possession."[15] Essentially, Hoberman is making the case that possession is not the end game as there exists no obligation for permanent material possession; the consumer is always free to endlessly replace one commodity with another.[16] In contrast to these viewpoints, it can be argued that Woolf is primarily dialled into

[14] Reginald Abbott, "What Miss Kilman's Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping, and Spectacle," *Modern Fiction Studies* 38 (1992): 209.
[15] Ruth Hoberman, "Collecting, Shopping, and Reading: Virginia Woolf's Stories About Objects," *Trespassing Boundaries: Virginia Woolf's Short Fiction*, eds. Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 84.
[16] Hoberman, "Collecting, Shopping, and Reading," 84.

the processes of exchange and interaction as it relates to the experiential economy, in which commodities only play a secondary role in facilitating. Turning back to Hoberman, associated with an important feature of her earlier claim, she distinguishes the figures of the "collector" in Woolf's writing, whose agenda involves protectively hoarding all material acquisitions, with a more favourable impression of the modern "consumer" as the embodiment of consumptive circulation and playfulness.

Bloomsbury's Literary Economist

With these assessments of a consumerist ethos, a different conception of commodity valuation, and an alternate view of market relations, it necessarily argues that Woolf was not some casual observer of economics, merely scanning the marketplace for textual grist, but rather an engaged and sophisticated thinker of economic ideas. Many studies have chronicled Woolf's role as a pivotal member of the Bloomsbury Group. Much less explored, however, is her direct association with fellow member, and one of the most prominent economists of the modern era, John Maynard Keynes. In fact, it is noteworthy that the relationship between Woolf and Keynes, and their reciprocal influences on each other, has been perhaps more appreciated from an economic perspective than a literary one, something evidenced by the work of Craufurd Goodwin, an economics scholar who penned a study analysing the impact of their interactions. Goodwin reveals the relatively significant effect that Woolf had on Keynes' economic ideas in a friendship that endured for more than three decades.[17] Goodwin goes as far to claim that based on examining Woolf's diaries and letters, "one gets the sense that she came to see him almost as a brother."[18] For our purposes, the most significant aspect of Goodwin's investigation involves

[17] Craufurd Goodwin, "Maynard and Virginia: A Personal and Professional Friendship," *History of Political Economy* 39 (2007): 271.
[18] Goodwin, "Maynard and Virginia," 272.

his assertion that Woolf was interested in, and fairly conversant with "a broad range of economic topics."[19] Though Woolf's attentiveness to consumer culture has received critical acknowledgement, what Goodwin is mainly drawing attention to is that her economic acumen was underappreciated. He claims that there is strong evidence that Woolf read Keynes' work as it was being developed over the years, beginning with *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.[20] Furthermore, Woolf had friendships with other influential economists as well, such as Gerald Shove, Ralph Hawtrey and Hubert Henderson.[21] Simply put, Goodwin saw her as someone who had much more than just casual contact with Keynesian ideas through her membership in Bloomsbury. To defend this position, he analyses some of her essays and their incisive treatment of specific economic concepts. For example, in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf expresses her opinions about how economic determinism has affected women's circumscribed role within society; in addition, her application of Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption in the latter of these pieces clearly demonstrates her propensity for thinking in terms of market economics.[22] In Goodwin's estimation, this all supports the central thesis of his study: Keynes had sufficient respect for Woolf's ideas as useful in the realm of economics that it factored into the formation of his microeconomic views.

Beyond all this, Goodwin develops another salient point about the Bloomsbury Group, which is rather germane in cueing up our discussion on the commodification of the quotidian. Goodwin references an important idea generated by Bloomsbury that actually functions as an economic construct within their philosophical outlook – "the imaginative life" – mainly

[19] Ibid., 275.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 275-76.
[22] Ibid., 277.

formulated by Roger Fry, and most forcefully articulated through Clive Bell.[23] In a nutshell, it included "the life of the mind … one in which the imaginative life of citizens was as rich as it could possibly be."[24] This notion of "the imaginative life" as an economic construct in the field of microeconomics is crucial because of its associations with experiential consumption, particularly in its function as a new dominant mode of consumption in modernity. Accordingly, it fits well in positioning Woolf as an ideal group member who could concretize this economic idea of an aestheticized lifestyle, an aim she could accomplish through the strategy of presenting everyday experiences as commodities in her fiction.

Although Woolf was comfortable with principles of market economics and exposed to an environment that could nourish her interest in this subject, we still need to consider the issue of motivation for making it a key element in her texts. According to Adam Trexler, whose work explores the interconnections between economic principles and British literature, it was all part of an overall programme for the Bloomsbury Group. In Trexler's view, the group's members perceived the literary and economic domains as already fused together in the modern world because each was grounded in the overlapping area of "character," since both the author and the economist needed to understand the behaviours of different individuals. He argues that Bloomsbury members "saw this project as simultaneously economic and literary, and that they would create new modes of literary and economic writing to describe the ethical dimensions of the interaction between the individual's judgment and the economic world."[25] Essentially, Keynes had been influenced in this area of microeconomics by Alfred Marshall, a pioneer in the

[23] Ibid., 280.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Adam Trexler, "Economic Ideas and British Literature, 1900–1930: The Fabian Society, Bloomsbury, and The New Age," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 3 (2007): 872.

formation of economics as a discipline in the United Kingdom, and that following his lead, Keynes had advanced these ideas even further, with the resultant effect of bringing economics and literature closer together.[26] Trexler explains that Keynes drew parallels between the economist and novelist which concentrated on the "introspection and imagination" of characters, or agents, in the economic system.[27] However, as explored in chapter two, the economic and the aesthetic, starting from the late nineteenth century, were becoming increasingly intertwined, leading to aesthetically-inclined consumption, so that while the study of microeconomics may not have yet explicitly detected and accounted for this new figure, we are essentially referring to the experiential consumer. This emerging mode of consumption, with its strong linkages to human subjectivity, drew the economic field closer to the literary one because of the former's need to better understand human behaviour. Thus, it makes sense that "Keynes's ambition for economics followed novel-writing as a discipline that would encapsulate all aspects of human experience and be transmitted through language."[28] With this in mind, it becomes clearer why Woolf and Keynes shared strong mutual professional interests; each of them was united in the objective of better developing their craft in order to devise creative ways of revealing the interaction of individual subjectivity and economics. For Woolf, the appeal of economics is rather elemental; a better understanding of economics is a better understanding of "character," which is a central preoccupation in all her texts. Viewing this inversely, we again detect the rationale behind their vocational kinship, because as Keynes would certainly regard it, a better understanding of character is a better understanding of economics.

[26] Trexler, "Economic Ideas," 874.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 875.

Probing deeper, there is direct evidence of Woolf bringing an acquisitive mind on microeconomics and the understanding of character. Consider her trenchant analysis of this in "The Docks of London": if "we gave up drinking claret, or took to using rubber instead of wool for our blankets, the whole machinery of production and distribution would rock and reel and seek to adapt itself afresh. It is we – our tastes, our fashions, our needs – that make the cranes dip and swing, that call the ships from the sea. Our body is their master."[29] Woolf goes on to explain that "[t]rade watches us anxiously to see what new desires are beginning to grow in us, what new dislikes."[30] It is this nuanced understanding of microeconomics that enables Woolf to effectively explore the modern individual's interaction with consumerism in her fiction. A similar sentiment, but in the language of an economist is expressed by Keynes himself, when he writes that "I also want to emphasise strongly the point about economics being a moral science. I mentioned before that it deals with introspection and with values. I might have added that it deals with motives, expectations, psychological uncertainties. One has to be constantly on guard against treating the material as constant and homogeneous."[31] Here, Keynes is challenging the notion of a fully rational economic agent, an established feature of classical economics, with the crucial insight that a thorough understanding of subjectivized character is necessarily relevant. This viewpoint is similarly articulated by Keynes in his conception of "animal spirits," a decidedly literary metaphor: "Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as the result of animal spirits—a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted

[29] Virginia Woolf, "The Docks of London," *The London Scene: Five Essays by Virginia Woolf* (New York: Frank Hallman, 1975), 14.
[30] Woolf, "The Docks of London," 14.
[31] John Maynard Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol. 14 (London: Macmillan, 1973), 300.

average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities."[32] And with this particular analogy, a return to Woolf's earlier essay is instructive in illustrating the unified thinking between Woolf and Keynes on these matters. Just after Woolf had commented on the influence of the individual consumer in directing the "cranes" of London's docks, she writes that "[o]ne feels an important, a complex, a necessary animal as one stands on the quayside watching the cranes hoist this barrel, that crate … [b]ecause one chooses to light a cigarette … [that] Virginian tobacco are swung ashore."[33] Given their shared background, that they would both coincidentally – within a related discursive context – make the same figurative reference to "animal," seems highly unlikely. Woolf's reference predates by several years, the one made by Keynes in his 1936 text, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. It is entirely possible that Keynes' analogy had been inspired by his Bloomsbury colleague; alternately, perhaps Woolf had been prompted by something expressed by him in one of their private conversations. While all this remains conjecture, the evidence does indicate that Keynes and Woolf had indeed shared meaningful interactions on the discourse of economics, which influenced each of their views.

In terms of broader market relations, the affiliation between Woolf and Keynes warrants evaluation of a study by Jennifer Wicke, another critic to explore the sympatico nature of their collaborative interests. Wicke has used the slightly different focus of identifying the connections between modernism and marketing, examining these key players to expand our understanding of such linkages. The main objective for Wicke is to reveal how modernism shaped our ideas about

[32] John Maynard Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol. 7 (London: Macmillan, 1973), 161-62.
[33] Woolf, "Docks of London," 15.

"markets" and different marketing practices.[34] She invites readers to consider the belief that modernism profoundly altered our market consciousness. Wicke explains that "aspects of modernist practice made possible the transformation in the understanding of that secret sharer, 'the market,' and as a result changed the nature of modern markets for once and all."[35] Another significant claim is her description of Bloomsbury as an "invented community," one predicated on a utopian vision intended for consumption.[36] Essentially, Wicke presents a straightforward, yet provocative argument that "lifestyle is what Bloomsbury was selling."[37] This assertion of marketing "lifestyle," not only evokes the "imaginative life" noted earlier in Goodwin's discussion of Bloomsbury, and its significance in consuming enriched experiences, but also adds the important market function of its active promotion. Naturally, the corollary is that it necessitates a lifestyle of aiming to aestheticize daily experiences for effective marketing, a point relevant to our examination of Woolf, and her pursuit of treating quotidian life as commodity-like in her fiction. Eventually, Wicke introduces Keynes into the discussion as a "modernist economist," a label she justifies because he challenged classical economic theories with his re-theorizing of a "fuzzy" and chaotic market that operated outside of an ordered and rationalist conception of the market.[38] Elaborating on this, Wicke posits the metaphoric connection that she detects between a Keynesian view of the market, and the depictions of consciousness that circulate in Woolf's fiction: "Consider, though, how well this trope of consciousness (as blooming, buzzing, dispersed, and displaced) and the modernist strategies of writing Woolf invents and deploys to display it conjoin with the new view of 'the market' – that is, of human

[34] Jennifer Wicke, "Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes and Modernism as Marketing," *Marketing Modernisms: Self-promotion, Canonization, Rereading*, ed. Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 109.
[35] Wicke, "Coterie Consumption," 110.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 116.

beings caught up in their buzzing, blooming socioeconomic system."[39] Perhaps the most striking aspect of this assessment, analogizing human consciousness with Keynes' schematic of the modern market, involves the sweeping belief – considering its overall implications – that human subjectivity and market economics are inseparable structures and unified in nature, an outcome that the first chapter of this study located within the internalization of the commodity form. The last critical takeaway from Wicke's investigation for the purposes of this project, is the conceptualizing of an intangible entity such as a mode of living, as a tangible product or experiential commodity, an idea made clear through her insistence that Bloomsbury's main sales pitch involved the marketing of "lifestyle."

Creating Quotidian Experiential Commodities

Detectable within much of Woolf's work is an impulse to shift the emphasis away from conventional approaches to market economics. Kathryn Simpson proposes the idea that Woolf offers an alternative economic model to the traditional model, which is based on gift-giving. Simpson argues that "[p]articipation in market economies … seems to be in tension in Woolf's work with a resistance to the male-dominated capitalist system."[40] Simpson explains that "there is another economy at play in Woolf's writing – what can be called a gift economy [which] can be read as running counter to, but also contiguous with, capitalist systems and … [that it] offer[s] another angle from which to consider the ambivalent relationship to and representation of market economies and consumer culture."[41] This economy, in its refusal to recover expenses and losses,

[39] Ibid., 117. It is also noteworthy that this description of a "buzzing, dispersed, and displaced" trope of market consciousness is rather reminiscent to Ruskin's "vibrating and fragmentary" nature of visuality as evaluated in chapter two.
[40] Kathryn Simpson, "Economies and Desire: Gifts and the Market in Moments of Being: Slater's Pins Have No Points," *Journal of Modern Literature* 28 (2005): 19.
[41] Simpson, "Gifts and the Market," 20.

combined with its focus on "giving, excess and overflow … as sources of pleasure," promotes "a destabilization of hierarchies."[42] A key strand of this project argues for another interpretation of this movement towards alternative economic models in Woolf; her focus on dematerializing commodities appears to be motivated by the pursuit of an alternate commodity-related economy, such as the emphasis on an experiential economy of goods, and its relation to the treatment of everyday experiences as commodities.

Literary critics have long noted that among Woolf's novels, *Mrs Dalloway* seems intensely preoccupied with ordinary daily activities, its everydayness constantly interfering with the development of any clearly distinguishable plot. Although the novel displays a fixation on depicting quotidian elements, Woolf appears to be doing something purposeful with them: presenting the moments of dailiness as veritable experiential products. Nowadays, the idea has been normalized that non-material things, such as experiences, can be understood as commodities, and in fact some contemporary experts in consumer theory, as explored in chapter one, have advanced studies about an experience economy. However, in the early twentieth century, with modern consumerism and its theoretical underpinnings in its embryonic stages, such sensibilities regarding intangible goods would have been uncommon and anachronistic within the study of market economics. From this perspective, Woolf is rather prescient in applying the characteristics of the commodity to the ingredients of daily existence.

Throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, the conversion of everyday moments into experiential goods occurs frequently. The process of commodifying the quotidian, often shown with the active participation of the individual, is a pattern that takes shape very early in the novel, as if to establish an important approach to the everyday. At the story's outset, in its famous opening

[42] Ibid.

phrase, Clarissa Dalloway offers a declaration that evinces the emphasis on the modern consumer, above all else, playing a vital part in an economy of personal experiences: "Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself."[43] However, before dealing with this in any depth, useful insights can be drawn from evaluating the first iteration of this phrase from its original appearance in Woolf's short story "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street," which served as the inspiration for the longer text. In the short fiction version, the opening begins with "Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the gloves herself."[44] Though the stories differ in a variety of ways, for our purposes, this alteration from gloves to flowers is rather illuminating in showing Woolf's evolving agenda for Clarissa Dalloway. The gloves are not only a physical commodity, but one potentially rooted in classism as a personal marker of status based on quality and fit, making it clear that this task requires her personal attention as something needing to be done for "herself." In contrast, the purchasing of flowers could have easily been assigned to Clarissa's hired help, an indication that her shopping excursion is intrinsically motivated. In this sense, the switch away from gloves signals a movement to a more immersive experience, to get closer to it, symbolically eliminating the insularity of gloves so that experiential prospects are more tactilely apprehended. The change to flowers also registers a stronger shift towards aesthetic engagement with the everyday, one more oriented to generating mood and ambience, rather than an item which only involves personal physical utility. Commensurately, these flowers enrich experiences on an intersubjective level for other consumers as well; they are for the enjoyment of the many guests attending Clarissa's party. It also seems pertinent to note that the selection of flowers contributes to a sense of urgency with experiential consumption, as indicated by the transient

[43] Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 3.
[44] Woolf, "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street," *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 146.

nature of their brief shelf life. In all these ways, the purchase of the flowers can be viewed as an experiential purchase, and unlike the gloves, not a material one. For Clarissa, the flowers relate to memories, the nostalgic consumption of past memories associated with them, such as from her childhood home in Bourton where her passion for flowers originated, and just as importantly, the prospective consumption of the future experience with the upcoming party.

While the shopping trip for flowers does indeed speak to Woolf's objective in positioning Clarissa as an experiential consumer, it becomes apparent that the most significant commodity is something other than floral goods. Before gathering and arranging the different items in the flower shop, Clarissa gathers the fragments of London life, carefully preparing an arrangement uniquely tailored to her own senses. In referencing the urban scene, she explains "why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up … creating it every moment afresh" from the look in "people's eyes, … the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging … and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead."[45] The focal point here is on the specific act of manufacturing a typical daily occurrence into an experiential product, as shown through the word selections of "making" and "creating," and the itemizing of raw urban materials to support its construction. Consider how closely this reflects the curation of urban stimuli as depicted in chapter one, first in the practices of the flâneur, and then with this figure's descendant, the experiential consumer. Throughout the novel, the idea of imaginatively assembling the raw materials of the quotidian into a worthwhile consumable good, resurfaces, whether in the cityscape or the domestic space.

[45] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 4.

Another illuminative example concerning the production of experiences is demonstrated through Clarissa's friend, Peter Walsh, and the episode where he follows the young anonymous woman. With his attention attracted, and walking swiftly to keep pace, Peter wonders about her: "Was she … respectable … [w]itty, with a lizard's flickering tongue, he thought … for one must invent."[46] Peter is clearly in the act of producing an experience, and it is noteworthy that as he follows her, he disregards the actual tangible commodities on display in the shop window that he passes by. For him, the only real commodifiable good worthy of his energy is the experiential product he is crafting: "he was an adventurer … a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned properties, yellow dressing-gowns, pipes, fishing-rods, in the shop windows."[47] It is also significant in this scene that Peter, on multiple occasions, refers to himself as a "buccaneer," but not one interested in the usual objective of piracy, of securing material commodities, such as those he has already disavowed in the shop windows. Peter is far more interested in the treasure of non-material commodities, namely those of the experiential kind. Amplifying this point, it is hardly a coincidence that at the exact moment that Peter has finished creating this experiential good, he instantly thinks of the possibilities for the next important one: the young woman "had fitted her key, opened the door, and gone! Clarissa's voice saying, Remember my party, Remember my party, sang in his ears."[48] Though there are unmistakable romantic impulses in play, after all Peter certainly finds the woman attractive, it seems secondary to the pursuit of a higher romantic engagement, one involving adventurousness as expressed in the references to buccaneering, which is not limited to this scene. In fact, the buccaneering motif, and its relevance to the experiential economy, materializes again in a non-amorous situation to be taken

[46] Ibid., 58.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 59.

up later involving Clarissa's daughter. Here, its purposefulness relates to associations with Benjamin's flâneur, a figure who juggled the various personas of detective, spy, and hunter within the cityscape; revealingly, Peter appears to be merging all these roles.

Woolf advocates for an aesthetic engagement with elements of the everyday, and an important clue into this outlook can be garnered from a rather telling quote contained in one of her diary entries. Woolf explains that "[t]o read a book well, one should read it as if one were writing it."[49] Even in the act of consuming a book, Woolf is promoting participative consumerism. Perhaps this can be expressed philosophically, that the best way to consume an experience, or experiential good, is to first participate in producing that commodity as part of an "imaginative life" in one's experiential economy. For Woolf, this viewpoint extends beyond mere didacticism, and informs her artistic creations as her modernist novels are clear exemplars of Barthes' conception of the writerly text which include opportunities for the reader to share in the process of meaning construction.

The creation of the experiential good, so vital to the "imaginative life," extends to presenting it in some distinctly commercialist terms. At another key moment later in the novel, Peter once again foregrounds the imbrications between everyday experiences and market culture. While in a deeply contemplative mood, exiting from Regent's Park, Peter arrives at an important conclusion about life. Reflecting on the advantage of aging, "Peter Walsh thought … holding his hat in hand … one has gained … the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence – the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, in the light."[50] Both in this passage's specific diction and overall impression, it is highly characteristic of an object presented

[49] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 390.
[50] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 86.

in a luminous display case, such as those in any department store, intended to attract consumer interest. Yet, notwithstanding this depiction, ultimately, what is being marketed here is an experiential good encoded in commercial language. This articulates the offering of quotidian experience as a very real and tangible commodity, and through its description, expressed in marketing terms. Specifically, Peter is imagining "experience" as a commodity or good, and the "turning it round, slowly, in the light," inflects rather suggestively marketing and consumerist connotations, something as material and possessable as the pocketknife he constantly fidgets with throughout the text. Thus, it appears that the "power" he is referring to involves the ability to convert experiences into quasi-possessions, or to put it another way, the commodifying "power of taking hold of experience," and giving it value within a personal experiential economy.

To better understand the treatment of everyday experiences as commodities, we must consider the related idea of packaging them. In Modern Fiction," Woolf presents an insight that is suggestive: "Life escapes … life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, … refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide."[51] Throughout Woolf's writing, there arises a fixation on various receptacles and spaces of containment, with the recurring use of "rooms" in a panoply of different contexts, serving as a relevant example. With the danger of everyday life escaping, it appears that Woolf's preoccupation with receptacles or packages is connected to a strategy of containment. In other words, the act of commodifying and packaging the everyday, essentially, the concretization of daily experiences, operates as a means to prevent its escape. Additionally, this brings into sharper focus the earlier point on the

[51] Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 159-60.

significance of treating experiences as "possessable," safeguarded from the risk of slipping away. It is precisely this thought of an experience drifting away from individual consciousness, which recalls one of the most important philosophical ideas forwarded by Woolf in any of her texts, the famous phrase "moments of being." Based on the situations she recounts in "A Sketch of the Past," it seems that in Woolf's formulation, the consciously lived moments in which an individual's senses are heightened and the experience is fully savoured and appreciated, qualify as true "moments of being."[52] And a deliberate effort to consciously absorb experiences is a primary trait of the experiential consumer. Conversely, it is the unconsciously lived moments, the ones that fall outside of our perceptual awareness, and as a result, deprive us of any active imaginative engagement, that she labels "moments of non-being." If experience is form, not content, as Simmel argues, then Woolf's solution to the risk of experiential evaporation, is to find ways to give discernible structure to experiences, and her concept of "moments of being" is an expression of this effort.[53] Revealingly, Woolf associates "being" with simple quotidian activities, such as going on walks, reading and writing, not anything exotic or momentous, the kind of ingredients that constitutes most of the action in *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf believed that most days contain a larger amount of unconsciously lived moments, and that "[w]hen it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger," a clear indication of not only the degree to which she valorised consciously experienced moments, but also her desire to maximize the frequency of them.[54] All of this accords with the novel's inclination to depict the everyday as commodity-like and to create experiential products, packaging these moments into discrete units available for

[52] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," *Moments of Being*, 2nd ed. (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1985), 70.
[53] Simmel, "The Adventure," 229.
[54] Woolf, "Sketch of the Past," 70.

full sensory absorption, thus preventing their escape, and increasing the rate in which they occur for consumers on a daily basis.

Woolf as Marketer of the Everyday

To convert the pieces of daily existence into experiential goods only satisfies part of the Bloomsbury project of promoting the "imaginative life," or in selling their "lifestyle" brand. There still remains perhaps the even greater matter of strengthening its appeal and marketing it to modern society. An important element of this promotion involves Woolf partly taking on the role of a tastemaker who attempts to influence the importance of specific characteristics that one should associate with the appreciation of an ennobled everyday. This productively summons Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural intermediaries."[55] At various points in *Mrs Dalloway*, she executes these tasks, and functions as a marketer of an aestheticized everyday; indeed, Woolf utilizes some of the same strategies and techniques employed by marketing professionals in the early twentieth century, in what at that time was only a burgeoning vocation. Stuart Ewen has written a comprehensive study of the nascent stages of the advertising industry. Although different forms of advertisements had been used for centuries, in *Captains of Consciousness*, Ewen explains that a fundamental shift had occurred within their formulation. Advertisements required people to not only make purchases, but to take on a "self-conscious perspective," an element that prior to the 1900s, had not been part of the advertising equation.[56] This increased self-consciousness is inextricably tied into the theatrical consumer fantasy and the reciprocal performative gaze as new aspects affiliated with social performances for the modern subject.

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[55] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 16.
[56] Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 36.

Ewen's book argues that marketers attempted to craft the perception of reality in alignment with the goals of consumerism, and accordingly, the aim of advertising was to develop the "creation of desires and habits."[57] Throughout the novel, Woolf can be seen cultivating a high degree of self-consciousness, but it is in the service of a different consumerism than the type featured in Ewen's work: a consumerism of aestheticized experiential commodities. Woolf's handling of self-consciousness, which overlaps with her "moments of being," involves an amplified perception of life's daily realities, in addition to shaping the desire within readers for an idealized quotidian consumption.

In the early 1900s, with the increase of innovative products, including new product categories, and the overall availability of mass-produced goods, some of which were virtually indistinguishable from each other, a concomitant need had developed to educate the customer on a range of issues to foster sales. This involved everything from educating the consumer about the product's benefits, to how to effectively use the product, funnelling right down to explaining the slightest differences that separated these goods from the inferior offerings produced by one's competitors. In general, the strategy was to arm the customer with product knowledge and some market awareness, so as to cultivate a discriminating consumer who would not only be capable of appreciating the product's value but would also encourage their participation in the growth of a consumerist society. In *Mrs Dalloway*, similarly, we observe Woolf providing an education to the reader of how to consume the quotidian as a commodity. To the untrained consumer's eye, the routine elements of the everyday, replete with banalities and constant repetition, may appear analogous to the undifferentiated glut of mass-produced commodities that envelop them in the modern world. For Woolf, a lack of artistic visual acuity was a fairly standard condition of the

[57] Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 37.

modern world, something she explains in an essay evaluating the cinema: "For the ordinary eye, the English unaesthetic eye, is a simple mechanism which takes care that the body does not fall down coal-holes, provides the brain with toys and sweetmeats to keep it quiet, and can be trusted to go on behaving like a competent nursemaid until the brain comes to the conclusion that it is time to wake up."[58] However, following the marketing aims noted above, Woolf's educated and discriminating quotidian consumer enjoys an "aesthetic eye," and sees far beyond these apparent mundanities. After Clarissa returns home from her shopping excursion, instead of passively absorbing the simple background noise of her household, she experiences something remarkably different: "The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter," the domestic sounds causing her to conclude that "one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments."[59] Notice the use of economic language here in the last part of the preceding passage to further inflect upon the consumerist perspective at work. In this passage Woolf is educating the quotidian consumer on attending to the valuables contained in the everyday, specifically here, its basic sounds, appraising and apprehending these acoustic fragments as a melodious symphony of dailiness. In another example, this consumer education is more direct when Clarissa evaluates her efforts to teach Peter about the unseen daily treasures that are never far from one's view. She concludes that "Peter – however beautiful the day might be … Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look."[60] This quote demonstrates that the story's protagonist is not only a well-practiced discriminating consumer of the everyday, but she is also an active marketing agent for it.

[58] Virginia Woolf, "The Cinema," *The Nation and Anthenaeum* 39, no. 13 (1926): 381-82.
[59] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 31, 32.
[60] Ibid., 7.

Moreover, this educational approach to salesmanship also includes a rhetorical dimension in that it acknowledges its strongest marketing obstacle. Naturally, the marketing of the minutiae of the everyday as valuable and potentially transcendent commodities is not a facile task. The objection from a consumer's perspective is obvious: how can the basic routines of life, ones rehearsed over again in dizzying repetition, be considered sources of delight as experiential products? Woolf, the clever marketer, in a shrewd anticipatory manoeuvre, both addresses and resolves this complaint directly. This occurs when Peter, in the performance of among the most routine of daily tasks – purchasing a newspaper – notes that "he had held out that copper [coin] millions of times," and then digests an important realization about this simple act: "Having done things millions of times enriched them, though it might be said to take the surface off."[61] It is the perceived emptiness of the mechanical replications of modernity, of its perfunctory activities, that here is being "rebranded" as one of its most attractive selling features.

Another way in which repetition may be understood as offering enhancement relates back to the discussion in chapter two on the concept of "cultural capital," and how Marshall had explained that certain types of aesthetic consumption, such as listening to good music, actually alters taste and works to obviate the effects of marginal utility, instead increasing its demand. With Woolf's agenda of promoting engagement with one's surroundings as an aesthetic agent, repetition is recast as advantageous because of the continuous accrual of cultural capital, which then strengthens the appeal of participating in similar experiences. On this matter, with the linkages between experiencing and reading, it is beneficial to consider the related activity of "re-reading." David Galef, in an introduction to a collection of essays he edited on this topic, forwards some insightful commentary. Galef explains that while suspense is eliminated in any

[61] Ibid., 178.

re-reading, it is replaced with "romantic images of expectation."[62] In this vein, Galef goes on to discuss one of the key implications of this anticipation, presenting a quote by Barthes which effectively summarizes it: "I take pleasure in hearing myself tell a story whose end I know. I know and I don't know, I act toward myself as though I did not know."[63] Referencing Barthes again on this imaginative processing of the same texts, Galef notes how the act of re-reading becomes a form of "play."[64] Much of this can also apply to the process of "re-experiencing," or more specifically, re-experiencing the same experiences. Though the individual may be acutely familiar with certain everyday activities and events, foreknowledge becomes an asset for the quotidian consumer in zeroing in on the best available aesthetic stimuli. And if these virtues of re-reading are tenable, consider how much more so for acts of re-experiencing, which unlike the completed written text, the kind of texts encountered by the experiential consumer are always potentially subject to mutability. It is precisely for this reason that in Woolf's fiction, even the most rehearsed moments of the quotidian are infused with a deep sense of immediacy.

With Woolf acting much like a marketer, she was focussed on training the quotidian consumer about what to see and notice in daily life, in other words, how to "read" the everyday as an enlightened consumer who can reap its full experiential rewards. Accordingly, we can investigate yet another effective marketing tactic from the retail industry that Woolf employed. In an effort to deal with the uniformity of mass-produced goods flooding the marketplace, advertisers and marketers needed to devise strategies to distinguish their products to consumers as unique. Perhaps the most successful of these involved the technique of marketing the product as highly original, thus ensuring an "exclusivity of experience" for the consumer. The sales pitch

[62] David Galef, *Second Thoughts: A Focus on Rereading*, ed. David Galef (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 18.
[63] Galef, *Second Thoughts*, 26.
[64] Ibid.

centred on persuading the customer that, due to the originality of the advertised item, no other product could provide the same experience, and its purchase would elevate the consumer above the teeming masses who settled for inferior stock commodities. We can witness Woolf using this technique in the earlier referenced scene where Clarissa celebrates the seemingly trifling elements of her home, thinking to herself, and largely summing up the whole encounter, that it was "as if some lovely rose blossomed for her eyes only."[65] This emphasizes the intense satisfaction of consuming quotidian moments, not just as any other typical modern individual wading through standard wares, but as someone enjoying a truly singular and personally tailored experiential commodity. Exploring the marketing logic behind all of this, we return to Ewen's study, and his explanation that advertisers and marketers manipulated the "fears and frustrations evoked by mass society – offering mass produced visions of individualism by which people could extricate themselves from the mass."[66] Similarly, Woolf is engaged in a programme of extracting individualization from the "massification" of daily life and its repetitive routines, extricating the modern self of the early twentieth century from this troubling feature of modernity. Thus, quotidian realities can be presented as unique, authentic, and individualized.

Aside from specific marketing techniques to promote the appealing nature of the everyday, at times, Woolf also engages in the language of commercialism. Consider the following description of the early hours of the London day: "there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats … and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air."[67] We can note how there is a marketplace tone to the language, as if the scene is being presented in a retail setting, the packaging of "wrapped mesh" applying a

[65] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 31.
[66] Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 45.
[67] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 5.

dimension of visual merchandising to it. This kind of commercialized language recurs in the novel in a variety of different contexts. For example, in discussing Clarissa's age, the narrative commentary contains figurative language that is steeped in consumerist terms. "She had just broken into her fifty-second year," we are informed by the narrator, and that "[m]onths and [m]onths of it were still untouched."[68] This pattern of enunciating the content of everyday life in the language of consumerism, although prevalent in *Mrs Dalloway*, is not an isolated stylistic choice, as it also figures elsewhere in her oeuvre, all of which reveals Woolf's propensity for adopting a marketer's perspective in her work. The previous quote is also echoed in Woolf's novel *The Waves*: "a new day to break open. I have fifty years, I have sixty years to spend. I have not yet broken into my hoard."[69] The language of consumer culture even materializes in Woolf's non-fiction texts. In her essay "Reading," in a moment of deep reflection about the type of books that one desires, she philosophizes that "[w]e want something that has been shaped and clarified, cut to catch the light, hard as gem or rock."[70] Again, the language is sufficiently commercialist, that it almost sounds like an advertisement created by a jewellery store, but in connection to books, certainly experiential products, and everyday life experiences.

Any discussion of marketing the everyday would be incomplete without some inclusion of arguably the most vital marketing tool of the early twentieth century: shop window displays. In *Mrs Dalloway*, a fair amount of the novel's focus on consumer culture involves scenes where characters are walking past shop windows. When Clarissa looks into the window of Hatchard's book shop, we encounter a prime example of marketing the quotidian. Some of the featured books are revealing. Most of the titles on display are unified by the theme of the quotidian: R.S.

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[68] Ibid., 40.
[69] Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Collector's Library, 2005), 46-47.
[70] Woolf, "Reading," *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), 26.

Surtees' *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities*, *Soapy Sponge*, in addition to a book of memoirs.[71] It is noteworthy that Surtees was an author whose work heavily depicted common elements of the everyday, and that his writing was known for its obsessive treatment of the minutiae of daily life. Though Woolf seems to be subtly promoting the quotidian in this scene, significantly, it is linked to a Shakespearean allusion from *Cymbeline*, which actually initiates the shop window episode with Clarissa reading a famous line from the open playbook on display: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun."[72] The notion of connecting the mundanities of everyday life with the artistry of great literature, does not appear here by accident, as there exists proof it was an important ideal for Woolf. In her diary, prior to the publication of *Mrs Dalloway*, commenting on the redemptive power of aspects of ordinary life, Woolf writes that "[i]ndeed, it was so lovely in the Waterloo Road that it struck me that we were writing Shakespeare … that when live people, seeming happy, produce an effect of beauty, & you dont have it offered as a work of art, but it seems a natural gift of theirs, then … it affected me as I am affected by reading Shakespeare."[73]

The Ideals and Aesthetics of Consuming the Everyday

Having examined the commodity-like treatment of the everyday and the marketing of quotidian experiential goods in *Mrs Dalloway*, it now becomes pertinent to evaluate the consumption of these commodities. The unique ways that Woolf explores quotidian life in her fiction has been a source of much analysis among literary critics. What most of their interpretations share in common is the view that Woolf is countering the standard uncomplicated perceptions of the everyday. According to Lorraine Sim, "Woolf challenges the view that

[71] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 10.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 273.

everyday things are equivalent to their customary meanings, labels or practical functions."[74] Sim believes that Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his work *Phenomenology of Perception*, provides a definition of philosophy that can serve as an organizing principle in reading Woolf's early short fiction with its philosophical preoccupations: "True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world," and furthering this claim, that "to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical we must break with our familiar acceptance of it."[75] Here, it is relevant to return to a key point from the first chapter on Ruskin's notion of the "innocent eye," the value of seeing things in their true unfiltered condition prior to the application of a learned visual grammar. It does seem that the programme of perceptual dishabituation, a reawakening of sensory perceptions, appears frequently in Woolf's texts, especially in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, remedying her aversion to moments of "non-being." However, for other scholars, this project of experiencing the quotidian with a reawakened perspective, carries the risk of quashing its fundamental nature and true appeal: its ordinariness.[76] Liesl Olson argues that an emphasis on transformative events or transcendent moments in modernist literature, of which she analyses Woolf's work as a chief exemplar, obscures her "commitment to the ordinary, to experiences that are not heightened."[77] Olson insists that the ordinary in modernism is not always converted into something sublime. Simply put, the ordinary can actually sustain itself as a "final good."[78] Still, crucially, while the reception of an event may be given by Woolf sensory and perceptual amplification, the physical event itself remains untransformed, it remains an everyday occurrence, and it remains ordinary

[74] Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 31.
[75] Sim, *Ordinary Experience*, 32, 33.
[76] The everyday as a field of scholarly inquiry has been extensively explored by some influential theorists. Henri Lefebvre, in his work, *Critique of Everyday Life:* Vol. 1, offered an early treatment on the subject. Also of note is Michel de Certeau, particularly with *The Practice of Everyday Life*. More recently, Ben Highmore has written on this area. Highmore's *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* features some key ideas expressed by these other theorists.
[77] Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
[78] Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary*, 4.

and potentially mundane; thus, these activities still fall within the same category without their ordinariness diminished. As for Olson's reference to the ordinary as a "final good," this is particularly germane, since we have discussed how the quotidian exists as a thing, an experiential product, one that is as much of a commodity as a tangible manufactured item issuing from the production line. Ultimately, by treating the quotidian as commodity-like, Woolf accomplishes the goal of cancelling out the mode of perceptual habituation but does so in a way that prevents the everyday from being made strange, completely defamiliarized or radically new, all of which would nullify its status as ordinary.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, strong ideals are presented about consuming the everyday, with most of these framed around the specific behaviours of its characters, specifically the dangers associated with not partaking in its consumption. We should begin by noting that it is not always a matter of choice, poignantly evidenced by the unfortunate plight of Septimus Smith, who afflicted with shell shock from the war, is incapable of properly functioning as an experiential consumer. Notwithstanding his devastating psychological condition, Woolf still portrays the deleterious effects of Smith's absence from participation in the experiential economy of quotidian commodities; in fact, this may well accord with the anti-war rhetoric that has been detected in Woolf's writing. Septimus is shown in the novel as being completely deprived of any ability to consume "everyday" experiences. During a visit to a city park, his wife Rezia, attempts in vain to reawaken his senses to their quotidian surroundings: "'Look,' she implored him, for Dr. Holmes had told her to make him notice real things, go to a music hall, play cricket."[79] A moment earlier, Rezia had similarly failed in trying to get Septimus to engage with "real everyday things," such as watching children in a game of cricket. Through the case of Septimus

[79] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 27.

Smith, and the continued decline of his mental health, Woolf illustrates the consequences of impairment in meaningfully consuming daily experiences. Today, with advancements in the field of psychology, we no longer speak of shell shock; it has been replaced with a much better understanding of this disorder, now labelled as PTSD, a condition characterized by a constant revisiting of previous episodes of mental trauma, and an inhibiting of their consolidation into long-term memory. Still, in the spirit of popular psychology, nowadays, many people would informally diagnose Septimus' problem, perhaps as Dr Holmes may have arguably done, and offer a remedy that echoes a hackneyed expression in our own society: he just needs to learn "to live in the moment." Yet what is fairly remarkable to consider here is that if a novelist in the early 1900s was attempting to portray the perils of being unable to consume the immediacy of their ongoing everyday experiences, and aiming for a linkage to a specific malady, it would have been impossible to select a more appropriate psychological illness, a choice which is even more apropos given the new insights – not available to Woolf back then – gained in that discipline.

This concept of experiential commodities is not to be confused with packaged and already processed experiences; in other words, as in having been premediated and already perceptually encoded in advance. This would largely contravene the very principles of literary impressionism as writers like Woolf, who similar to Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, aim to represent experiences more authentically prior to their adulteration with rationalized reflection. The idea about experiences as commodities is not to connote a prescribed content, nor to characterize the perceptual overprocessing of it. Instead, it involves conceiving of the commodity in an abstract economic sense of something that possesses actual value, that is legitimately consumable, that is marketable, and thus worthy of inclusion in a personal experiential economy. And here, the discussion from the first chapter about evolving views on

experience requires a brief revisitation. Moving into the later stages of the nineteenth century, with changes in human subjectivity – on account of an internalized commodity form – the established retrospective orientation towards experience had begun to give way as a shift occurred towards an increasingly prospective orientation, and it is this latter one that renders experiences as something which the modern consumer can anticipate and consume as a valid good. It is precisely for this reason that Woolf is modelling for the reader a "prospecting" aesthetic of what to be on the lookout for, an impossible approach for a character like Septimus whose condition has trapped him into a retrospective experiential engagement with the world around him.

For Woolf, the harm of one's imperviousness to extracting the rewards of everyday experiences is not limited to suffering damage to mental wellness, in some circumstances, it may even result from supreme cognitive abilities. Consider the example provided by Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, a philosopher with a professorship, who embodies the essence of high intellectual thinking. Yet, he is impaired, much like Septimus, in being utterly incapable of absorbing the value in the quotidian. Mrs Ramsay, the influential matriarch of the text, and a champion of the everyday, notices her husband's inability to observe and appreciate "ordinary things." "Did he notice the view", she laments, "No … or whether there was pudding on his plate or roast beef?"[80] In fact, mirroring Rezia's efforts, Mrs Ramsay is seen constantly striving to alert her spouse and the other characters to fully recognize the jewels of daily experiences that engulf them. Just as horrific war memories thwart Septimus from acquiring the gifts of dailiness, it is the obsessive and myopic pursuit of getting from "A to Z" in his philosophical postulations,

[80] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 70.

believing he has stalled at "Q," that presents the ultimate obstacle in preventing Professor Ramsay from participating as an active consumer in the experiential economy as well.[81]

If Septimus Smith and Mr Ramsay represent in these novels the impediments of the mind for experiential consumption of the everyday, it appears that Miss Kilman from *Mrs Dalloway*, symbolizes the refusal of the spirit. Whereas Smith and Ramsay, for different reasons, are incapable, alternately, Doris Kilman is an illustration of a modern individual who is completely unwilling to engage in meaningful quotidian interactions. Not only does Doris reject any aestheticizing of daily life, but she exudes an attitude of contempt and disgust from even the mere suggestion in drawing pleasure from it. Miss Kilman only embraces austerity and the practicality of strictly essential material commodities, as shown in the following bitter complaint of Clarissa's lifestyle: "With all this luxury going on, what hope was there for a better state of things?"[82] In tracing the genealogy of the experiential consumer, an important strand of this project has been to draw distinctions between the material consumer and the experiential consumer; with Miss Kilman's obsessive pragmatism, she can be thought of as an archetypal figure of the material consumer. Further revealing her orientation towards a purely ascetic perspective, Miss Kilman goes on to conclude that "[Clarissa] should have been in a factory; behind a counter."[83] We can note that Miss Kilman subscribes to a crude and undeveloped sense of economics, one solely predicated on the significance of material production and the sale of its manufactured products, emphasizing her complete lack of appreciation for experiential commodities of any type. While it remains unclear whether Woolf herself would have applied

[81] Ibid., 34.
[82] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 136.
[83] Ibid.

the same label of "material consumer" to Miss Kilman, undoubtedly, she would have referred to her as a "materialist," an aspersion she favoured for various Edwardian authors.

In an analysis of the different economic implications, Michael Tratner argues that *Mrs Dalloway* contrasts the productivist economic model with the consumerist economic model, the former based on principles of conservation and thrift, while the latter emphasizes a desire for consumption.[84] Tratner views the novel celebrating consumption through Clarissa and criticizing conservation through Doris Kilman .[85] The assertion regarding Clarissa is certainly defensible, however, the argument can be made that it more specifically lionizes the consumption of everyday experiences, while at the same time, Miss Kilman's linkage to productivist ideals is associated with her rejection of consuming quotidian experiential products. In other words, it is not so much a matter of consumption over conservation, because as some critics have noted, a rather limited number of things are actually bought in the course of the novel, but more a matter of celebrating experiential consumption as the preferred mode of consumption. Thus, if Doris embodies the essence of productivism as an economic model, it is certainly true that Clarissa emerges as an economic model based on consumption, and more specifically, a very modern form of it: experiential consumption.

In a compelling scene, while shopping with Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth, Doris enters the department store with a heavy load of gravitas, even by her own personal standards, the diametric opposite of the atmosphere created and fostered in this retail space. Woolf herself, in a diary entry admitted that "[t]hese great shops are like fairies' palaces"[86] Buried under her

[84] Michael Tratner, *Deficits and Desires: Economics and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 118.
[85] Tratner, *Deficits and Desires*, 102-05.
[86] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 1, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 35.

portentous behaviour, Doris is hopelessly lost in the department store and needs to be guided around by Elizabeth, her own student, "as if she had been a great child, an unwieldy battleship."[87] As a result of Doris' bizarre conduct, even the sales clerk "thought her mad."[88] It is instructive that in this specific environment, perhaps modernity's first bastion of "joie de vie," clearly detecting Miss Kilman's lack of willingness to appreciate, much less consume "everyday life," that Elizabeth ultimately rejects her, stranding Doris in the department store, choosing to continue her urban adventure by herself. Deprived of Elizabeth as a guide, Doris is quickly "hemmed in" by the commodities and "saw herself thus lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass," before quickly exiting the building.[89] Doris refuses to consume experiential commodities and in the very place that is emblematic of it, she is symbolically, if not literally ejected. Thus, what proceeds for her recently emancipated student should hardly come as a surprise. After unshackling herself from Miss Kilman and her experiential-quashing presence, Elizabeth "boarded the omnibus, in front of everybody," and felt deep satisfaction with her current situation: "And did Elizabeth give one thought to poor Miss Kilman … She was delighted to be free."[90] On the surface, her overexcitement about something as seemingly commonplace as riding on public transportation appears childish; however, as one of the author's diary entries makes clear, it encompasses so much more. "The immense success of our life," writes Woolf, "is I think that our treasure is hid away … in common things that nothing can touch it … a bus ride to Richmond … sitting down after dinner."[91] These are simple activities mapped out by Elizabeth during her trip in the city. In this case, through Elizabeth,

[87] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 142.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 146.
[90] Ibid., 148-49.
[91] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 3, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 30.

Woolf reveals that a good measure of that personal freedom involves the opportunity to savour everyday experiential products.

Before concluding our analysis with Elizabeth on the omnibus, we must recall our earlier evaluation of Peter's adventure and refer back to the "buccaneer" motif which had been significant to that scene. As Elizabeth climbs aboard, the omnibus becomes an "impetuous creature – a pirate – [that] started forward, sprang away … for a pirate it was … all sails spread up Whitehall."[92] Quickly, the adventurousness of the vehicle captures Elizabeth's imagination: "it was like riding, to be rushing up Whitehall; and to each movement of the omnibus … [she] responded freely like a rider, like the figure-head of a ship."[93] Her imaginative treatment of the bus as a ship scouring the surroundings for experiential treasures is in alignment with Peter's flâneuristic pursuit, and this ethos of the experiential consumer unifies the approaches and behaviours of these characters. With this enriched subjective engagement, it is unsurprising that just a short while later on this trip that Elizabeth ponders her future possibilities, "to become either a farmer or a doctor."[94] As a final parting note to this omnibus episode, we must juxtapose two highly inversive images which link this scene with the previous one in the department store. It is remarkable that Doris Kilman back in the department store is described as someone who begins "rocking slightly" and then soon enough "lurching," completely unbalanced and incapable of finding her "sea legs" in the very cultural institution which presented experiential consumption en masse to the modern world; while Elizabeth on an omnibus with its direct comparison to a rollicking seafaring vessel, remains steady and stable. In fact, as secure as a "figure-head" in her exploration of adventure.

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[92] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 148.
[93] Ibid., 149.
[94] Ibid., 150.

In stark contrast to Doris Kilman, we can assess Ellie Henderson, Clarissa's cousin. The juxtaposition of these characters is accentuated by a few of their parallel conditions: both women suffer from some degree of financial hardship, neither of them appear to be well-connected socially, and it is evident that Doris and Ellie do not occupy a position of fondness in Clarissa's heart. Potentially, all of this could lead to the same predispositions between them, which foregrounds the significance of attitudes and choices when it comes to approaching dailiness. Yet, despite their similarities, we could scarcely imagine two more different individuals, particularly in their outlook towards consumption of the everyday. Ellie, despite a last moment invitation (Richard had to persuade Clarissa, who was reluctant to include her), still agreed to attend her cousin's party, bringing with her a spirit of adventurousness. Although Ellie hardly has anyone to talk to at the soiree, and certainly would be excused for feeling alienated, she is content "for she felt that they were all such interesting people to watch."[95] Unlike Doris, who scorns the prospect of any experiential engagement, Ellie chooses to joyfully consume the quotidian commodities of the party. In fact, Ellie is not just a consumer, but she is also an agent of this experiential economy, focussing on every detail because "[s]he must remember everything to tell Edith [her friend]," who will in turn, enjoy consuming it as well.[96] In this way, we can also describe Ellie as an advertiser for Clarissa's dinner party, especially in her zealous desire to retell its events to Edith. Ellie's willingness to consume the quotidian, even as a minor character, provides another instance of Woolf's determination to depict this as a core feature of the work.

[95] Ibid., 186.
[96] Ibid., 185.

A significant principle emerges about the consumption of the everyday, namely its therapeutic effects for modern individuals. At the party, this is shown beyond the experience of Ellie. While immersed in the activity of hosting, having heard the troubling news about the suicide of Dr Bradshaw's patient (Septimus), and initially quite upset, feeling it had cast a melancholic mood over her event, Clarissa decides to take a break from her work. Searching for some comfort, and peering through the window of the room, she watches her neighbour, the anonymous old lady in her daily routine of preparing for bed. Clarissa's curiosity is piqued, wondering if the elderly woman is aware of being watched. Here, emerges some suggestiveness of the reciprocal performative gaze and its intersubjective impact on asserting a sense of community between its participants: "It was fascinating to watch her, moving about, that old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window. Could she see her?"[97] Crucial to this intersubjectivity is Woolf's use of free indirect discourse. Evaluate how in the preceding quotation the perspective begins with Clarissa in the subject position, and then the instant toggling with the viewpoint from the other side, with the question of whether Clarissa is being seen from an external vantage point. While we will return to this important issue of Woolf's use of free indirect discourse more extensively in the next section, its present relevance involves its comforting potential in asserting connectivity between individuals. Thus, it is precisely in this act of observing the old woman in her quotidian activity, in essentially experiencing this ordinary moment, and its life-affirming value, that Clarissa is comforted, overcoming her distress about the discussion brought into her party by Dr Bradshaw. It is also noteworthy that just as soon as Clarissa experiences the satisfaction of consuming this quotidian moment, it immediately validates her own experiential offering (the party), and she excitedly feels a desire to return to

[97] Ibid., 204.

her guests: "But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter."[98] Whether characters in *Mrs Dalloway* choose to embrace or reject the potentialities contained in the everyday, Woolf nonetheless, attempts to make a compelling case for the redemptive power and salutary benefits of consuming quotidian goods. The suggestion is that the everyday offers some of the same imaginative possibilities for consumption that are provided by the alluring aspects of the marketplace, if only the modern subject is inclined to grasp them from the basic inventory of daily life and establish personal connections. In some measure, this experiential economy recalls the idea of Keynesian "market modernism" posited earlier by Wicke, one that is filled with "fluid magic, anarchic, yet interconnected, [and] playful at its best."[99]

Spectacles of the Commodified Quotidian

Mrs Dalloway constantly exhibits quotidian life. It would not be a stretch to argue that the novel consists of a series of quotidian vignettes strung together. However, the use of the word "exhibit" may seem too mild given the manner in which these scenes are presented; instead, it is not so much exhibiting that we witness as readers, but the development of "spectacles" of everyday moments. We have already explored the idea of quotidian commodities and, continuing to apply the paradigm of market culture to this study, will prove useful in analysing how these intersect with "the spectacle," which emerged as a crucial aspect of consumerism in the early 1900s. It is impossible to discuss the modern understanding of the commodity without some reference to the spectacularising of it, a relationship that has been incisively studied by Thomas Richards. He has charted the evolution of perceptions of the commodity, from its previous

[98] Ibid.
[99] Wicke, "Coterie Consumption," 20-21. This conception of market modernism more accurately accords with how Woolf treats quotidian life as a modern experiential market, than it does with how she specifically addresses aspects of consumer culture or shopping.

lowbrow status in the eyes of society, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, to its meteoric rise into the centre of public consciousness only a few decades later. For Richards, the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in London's Hyde Park is the time and place that the commodity begins its journey towards becoming a focal element in our modern world. With manufactured goods from all over the globe on display in a gigantic greenhouse-like structure, the commodity takes on an "aura." According to Richards, it is "[i]n the Crystal Palace [that] the commodity was something more than the sum of its parts … Freed from the exigencies of the mid-Victorian marketplace, the commodity had become a cynosure, a monument … remaking the world in its own spectacular image."[100] For our purposes, we will zero in on his ideas that illuminate how the spectacle migrated from its significance to manufactured goods, and penetrated into the sphere of quotidian life, which directly impacts our discussion on spectacles of experiential goods. After the Great Exhibition, advertisers searched for fungible images that could be used to market all types of commodities, and with great effect, capitalized on the image of Queen Victoria. However, this eventually led to a negative consequence. Richards insists that the strategies of creating representations of "Victoria as a consumer queen" inevitably removed commodities from everyday life, largely because the elevation of commodities to such grand-scale status pulled them away from quotidian impact.[101] To ameliorate this, the remedy was to devise marketing campaigns that would colonize everyday life, leading to the corollary of colonizing the modern subject's body. The macroscopic form of commodity culture, such as images of the monarchy, could not penetrate the everyday; thus, a new advertising technique was introduced "and it ultimately required the development of a new, microscopic form of commodity culture:

[100] Richards, *Advertising and Spectacle*, 53.
[101] Ibid., 169.

the spectacle of the consumer's body."[102] The patent medicine industry was the key element that advertisers relied upon to accomplish this goal. Essentially, Richards argues that advertisers adjusted their tactics from bringing extraordinary events (Exhibitions and Jubilees) to everyday life, to infusing "the quotidian with the panache of the extraordinary."[103] The same medium – the spectacle – that had converted so many aspects of culture into commodities, now turned the modern self into a commodity as well.[104] Richards concludes that through all of this work, advertisers had succeeded in consolidating "the spectacle" as the dominant mode of capitalist representation.[105] Advertisers were engaged in a process that was inevitably leading to the spectacularising of the modern self, but for this project, what is most relevant, is that it also led to the spectacularization of daily life, and by extension, the spectacle of the modern self, experiencing the quotidian.

In considering the spectacle's ascent as a highly influential method of representation in Woolf's time, we can evaluate what she is accomplishing in her handling of many scenes in *Mrs Dalloway* where seemingly everyday routines are elevated to much greater spectatorial value. Here, the motorcar episode is crucial. In this scene, the London crowd is mesmerized by the vehicle, a new style of transportation, most specifically with the prospect of it containing a royal occupant. Although we have the perfect melding of commodity and spectacle, Woolf appears to be gesturing towards something quite different than just the glamour of the specific commodity on display (the motorcar), or an advertisement of the famous person riding in it, who remains anonymous. What is ultimately on display and being made into a spectacle, is the experience of imaginative possibilities in everyday life as each individual in the midst of their quotidian

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 203.
[104] Ibid., 195.
[105] Ibid., 251.

activities, personally imagines "who" is inside the motorcar.[106] Very cleverly, Woolf is revealing how each person is individualizing their own perception of the event. For support, reflect on this quizzical and curious fact: despite the anonymity of the motorcar's occupant, which is never revealed, we are given the specific names of the bystanders in the crowd, who are all in the commission of their everyday affairs. Among those witnesses, we have "Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, [who] said audibly, humorously of course: 'The Proime Minister's kyar,'" in addition to John Buckhurst, Moll Pratt, Sarah Bletchley, Emily Coates, and Mr Bowley.[107] Yet beyond this scene, and the following one related to it, none of these characters are relevant to any other part of the novel. In other words, for the reader, the "real spectacle" in this scene involves spotlighting the reactions of the characters to the motorcar. This is consonant with how the modern self became bankable enough in advertising to replace the early ads based on famous figures such as Queen Victoria. Simply put, the modern subject can become a spectacle as in the theatrical consumer fantasy and the reciprocal performative gaze. And this depiction of the personalization of spectatorial consumption becoming a spectacle in its own right, also extends to the skywriting advertisement only a short time later, where the observers all read the airplane spelling out very different words. According to Mr Bowley, cutting out a sharp theatrical image himself, "[w]ith his hat held out perfectly still in his hand … 'It's toffee.'"[108] For others, just as clearly, it was "Glaxo" or "Kreemo."[109] Still another pivotal issue about advertising is demonstrated in this scene: the dialogical nature of modern advertising as an interaction which can produce varying meanings. Note how this is revealed through the disparate interpretations elicited by the skywriting advertisement from its different spectators.

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[106] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 17-20.
[107] Ibid., 15.
[108] Ibid., 22.
[109] Ibid.

Revealingly, this skywriting episode offers a dramatic spectacle of typically banal and everyday products, ones the public consumes without much conscious thought, the fading letters of the advertisement evoking the ephemeral nature of quotidian life and its ties to routine products and practices, which dissipates into obscurity, reflecting again Woolf's anxiety over the evanescence of dailiness.

At another point in *Mrs Dalloway*, while Peter is engaged in the ordinary task of simply eating dinner, emerges perhaps the most poignant instance of a quotidian event converted into a powerful spectacle. Enjoying dinner themselves, the Morris family takes note of a stranger in the restaurant. They are fascinated with Peter's demeanour, specifically his theatricalized conduct during this everyday activity, which is broken down into meticulously analysed steps: "it was his way of looking at the menu, of pointing his forefinger to a particular wine, of hitching himself up to the table" and the way that he said "Bartlett pears" that earned him the Morris family's respect.[110] The theatricality of this episode calls to mind the work of Erving Goffman, who as detailed in the first chapter, employed a system of dramaturgical tropes to delve into a microsociological analysis of urban performativity. Everything about Peter's actions – saturated with the brio of Oscar Wilde – reflects Goffmanian "impression management," and the very fact of his success in captivating the visual consumption of the Morris family verifies the performative worthiness of his comportment.[111] While it remains unclear whether he is fully aware of the spectacle he has wrought, the ease in which he affects it is suggestive of having been acclimated to Goffman's "front region," a position where a social performer automatically assumes their inclusion within a staged setting and a potentially viewed performance.[112] Shortly

[110] Ibid., 175.
[111] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 13.
[112] Ibid., 66.

afterwards in the smoking-room, Peter interacts with them, reciprocating their respect, and with all the panache of his earlier showmanship, in his thoughts he enumerates a list of quotidian details about various members of the Morris family. He reveals that "no family in the world can compare with the Morrises … [as] Elaine is training for the family business, and the boy has won a scholarship at Leeds … and they have two motor cars, but Mr Morris still mends the boots on Sunday."[113] Peter is so buoyed by participating in this quotidian consumer spectacle, and his encounter with the Morrises, that at this exact moment, he finalizes his plans for later that evening: "Yes, they liked a man who said 'Bartlett pears.' They liked him, he felt. He would go to Clarissa's party."[114]

As the previous quotation has shown through its intersubjective narrativity of shifting perspectives, resulting in Peter seeing himself through the vantage point of the Morrises, a crucial characteristic of the novel emerges: Woolf's handling of free indirect discourse and the elemental ways it reflects the text's fixation on the imbrications between consciousnesses, commodities, and spectacles. A highly germane example of this occurs shortly after Peter's visit with Clarissa, when upon returning to his hotel, he is surprised to have received a letter from her. As Peter sifts through the mixed emotions it has induced, he begins to imagine everything about Clarissa writing the letter to him. Despite the shifts from the subjective orientation of a stream of consciousness perspective, to an objective position, the transitions remain hazy, and though all this appears to be purely contrived on his part, as Peter is imagining Clarissa thinking about him, the deliberate narrative ambiguity makes its actual occurrence still seem a credible possibility: "She had felt a great deal [for him] … then forced herself with her indomitable vitality to put all

[113] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 175-76.
[114] Ibid., 176.

that aside … but there would come a reaction directly he left the room."[115] Here, Peter has crafted an entire spectacle, going as far as visualizing an emotional Clarissa penning the letter at her writing-table. Ultimately, Peter is expressing a desire to share his narrative from an insider's perspective with all its interiorizing advantages, while nonetheless still wishing for an experience, as though remotely perceived, through an external subjectivity so that it feels sufficiently spectacularised. In other words, Woolf's use of free indirect discourse is a narrative solution to the aesthetic demands of a modern subject who both insists upon "seeing" and being "seen," a storytelling device tailored for modernity's propensity for performative reciprocity. Put another way, by fusing together the form of the diary entry with that of a dramatic presentation, theatrically soliloquized, and certainly Woolf was an afficionado of both, free indirect discourse narrativizes self-conscious performativity.

Elaborating further into its formal elements, namely, the indeterminacy of a text's narrator and character, it exposes consumerist dimensions to the use of free indirect discourse. Critics have identified this as one of the crucial differences between realist and modernist fiction: a diffusion in the stable boundary between the subjectivities of characters and the objective storytelling of a narrator in the progression from these different literary periods.[116] However, Eric Rundquist, in his work on modernist free indirect style, claims that this relegation of a distinct narrator, rather than marginalize the storytelling function, paradoxically, increased its conspicuousness as a narrative feature: "Rather than obfuscating the diegetic function, the telling of the story, the experimental devices used in representation [free indirect style] often actually draw the reader's attention to the act of representation itself. This, of course, leaves one

[115] Ibid., 170.
[116] Eric Rundquist, *Free Indirect Style in Modernism: Representations of Consciousness* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2017), 61.

wondering about the representer, the narrator or author."[117] In this way, as the reader becomes conscious of the gap between what is represented and how it is represented, the forced reconciliation has the effect of also foregrounding the diegetic agent. Here, the salient effect is one involving a high cost of cognitive engagement; a deeply conscious effort is required from the consumer for this kind of textual consumption. A primary element of this project has been to chart, in a variety of different contexts, the progression from the material consumer to the experiential consumer. Woolf's handling of free indirect discourse, and its associated stream of consciousness technique, if one considers its challenging aesthetic demands, is precisely oriented to a certain type of reading consumer – the experiential consumer. And further, if the precise delineation between character and narrator is indeed a hallmark trait of realist literature, and commensurately if calculative certainties are reflective of the material consumer as the core consumption mode of that era, then it seems that Woolf's narrative techniques, replete with ambiguity and its attendant need for strong subjective engagement, does effectively mirror modernism's transition to the experiential consumer. Additionally, a consumerist perspective indicates how this type of reader is drawn into increased consumption. Here, it is useful to recall the second chapter's discussion on aesthetic reception and its connection to the marginal utility principle. In Stigler and Becker's analysis of exceptions to marginalist effects, in which utility actually increases with repeated exposures, they introduce their concept of "consumption capital": that continued engagement with certain activities over time develops a base of skills which improve the individual's capacity for such pursuits, thus reducing its cost, and in doing so, inspiring an increased desire for more consumption of it.[118] Though Woolf's handling of free indirect discourse, and more broadly her experimental techniques, poses some difficulties,

[117] Rundquist, *Free Indirect Style*, 61.
[118] Stigler and Becker, "De Gustibus," 78.

theoretical ideas of consumption provide insight into the reader's interaction with her work, factors that both support it and that strengthen its appeal.

Dealer of Dailiness: The Purveyances of Mrs Ramsay

It does not take long for the reader of *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* to realize that each of these texts is oriented around a significant experiential product, which in both cases is announced, or perhaps more accurately advertised, in the opening passage. Clarissa's intent to procure flowers for her upcoming dinner party certainly requires no introduction. Similarly, the prospective trip to visit the lighthouse is also immediately addressed in the first sentence of the latter text. There is clear evidence to suggest that each of them regarded their work as actually delivering commodifiable goods. Evaluate the following descriptions and their characterizations. For Clarissa, "she felt if only they could be brought together … [because] it was an offering; to combine, to create … it was her gift."[119] Clarissa feels great satisfaction, in no small part because her "offering" of the party seems like a tangible thing for the consumption of her guests. A similar outlook positions Mrs Ramsay as a dealer of dailiness as well: "Of such moments [her dinner gathering], she thought, the thing is made that endures."[120] Much like Clarissa, Mrs Ramsay takes pride in delivering an experience that has the feel of a true tangible commodity.

Mrs Ramsay is often observed working in this capacity. Early in the novel, she prepares to bring some everyday items to assist the lighthouse keeper and his son, for comfort and amusement in easing their days spent in seclusion.[121] Among the items is a pair of socks, which Mrs Ramsay is seen knitting throughout the first section, emblematizing both a quotidian activity

[119] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 134.
[120] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 105.
[121] Ibid., 5.

and its production of an everyday commodity. As an example that Mrs Ramsay is always on the lookout for an opportunity to sell the slightest daily moment as a bona fide commodity, she invites Charles Tanley to accompany her into town, to run an errand, playfully calling it a "great expedition."[122] At the Ramsay family vacation home, she is not unlike a modern-day cruise director, guiding the social interactions, and curating the consumption of different daily experiences. Mrs Ramsay deals out the everyday with decorations, food, and her understanding of people and human nature. In connecting people together, she does far more than just setting up the seating arrangement for the guests at the dinner table.[123] Mrs Ramsay not only encourages the relationship between Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, but she also cheerleads for their engagement, taking it as a source of great satisfaction when it transpires. Not content to sit back on this sense of accomplishment, during the dinner she swiftly identifies her next social mission, concluding that "William must marry Lily," feeling it was her responsibility that "[s]he must arrange for them to take a long walk together."[124]

To gain an idea of how seriously Mrs Ramsay takes her responsibility of providing quotidian purveyances, we need to evaluate in-depth her handling of the dinner party. Before it even begins, we can note how she is constantly focussed on wringing dry the experiential opportunities that exist in the everyday, a point demonstrated when she invites her children to participate in the routine of selecting their mother's jewellery for the evening.[125] The dinner actually begins inauspiciously, and she feels a deep personal responsibility to ameliorate the situation. Mrs Ramsay quickly senses that "[n]othing seemed to have merged. They all sat

[122] Ibid.10.
[123] Ibid., 83.
[124] Ibid., 104.
[125] Ibid., 81.

separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her."[126] This passage reveals how Mrs Ramsay perceives herself, as one who needs to actively engage in the process of producing and supplying quotidian experiential products. Within a moment she raises the stakes: "for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating."[127] It is significant that she describes all of this in production-oriented language, with the emphasis on "creating," and through the use of a chronometric metaphor, one befitting the workmanship nature of her role.

To fully express to what extent the dinner party is presented as a veritable experiential product, Woolf even casts it in the mould of the commodity form to amplify its congruence with this pattern. Specifically, Woolf infuses elements of commodity form abstraction into the gathering. At one point in this scene, the dinner table is sharply foregrounded with everything in the background, including the outside world, entirely blackened out. Only the table and the faces of its occupants are illuminated from the candles, which seem to float outside of its context, very much like the commodity sundered from the conditions of its productive origin.[128] In a similar vein to this abstraction of the commodity form, with its reified connotations, this quality emerges again in another key passage: "The words [from the dinner scene] … sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there … as if no one had said them, but they came into existence of themselves."[129] It appears that Woolf is signalling the ways that the dinner as an experience, is analogous to the characteristics shared by material commodities. Perhaps the closest we get to a concretization of this social gathering involves the fruit basket on the table, which is symbolic of its manufacturing as an experiential product. We witness Mrs Ramsay's

[126] Ibid., 83.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 97.
[129] Ibid., 110.

brief moment of disappointment when the hand of a guest finally breaks into the arrangement and disrupts it. The visual appeal of the fruit basket embodies the aestheticism of her experiential commodity, and Mrs Ramsay can be seen as a merchandiser, who for a moment, feels a sense of loss when the commodity display has been dismantled by consumer activity.

Further insight into Mrs Ramsay's role as a distributor of quotidian commodities can be gained in analysing the important connections that link her to Lily Briscoe. In just the same way that Mrs Ramsay is associated with the everyday experiential commodities of the novel, we can observe how Lily is the clear purveyor of its most significant artistic commodity, the painting that she is working on throughout the story. The key imbrication between these points is actually embedded in the painting itself. In the picture, there is a depiction of "Mrs Ramsay reading to James," an aesthetic treatment of her in the performance of what can be regarded as an archetypal gesture of dailiness, perhaps one of the commonest parental sights in the household during that era, and yet one of the most impactful within it.[130] Here, the character whose aim of delivering all the artistic products inherent within daily life helps inspire a tangible artistic product. Beyond just inspiration, Mrs Ramsay's assistance runs deeper. The dinner put on by her hostess becomes instrumental in aiding Lily as she struggles with resolving a problematic aspect of her painting. As Lily reflected upon an exchange between Mrs Ramsay and William Bankes, she is struck with a serendipitous moment of artistic insight: "She remembered, all of a sudden as if she had found a treasure … [and with] a flash she saw her picture, and thought, Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space."[131] While at the table, she even repositions the "salt cellar" on the tablecloth pattern as a mnemonic device for making the

[130] Ibid., 52.
[131] Ibid., 84.

adjustment to her artistic creation. With these connections in mind between the different commodities laboured over by these women, it should come as no surprise that at the moment the most important experiential commodity, the trip to the lighthouse, comes to fruition during the final passage of the text – one that outlived its strongest organizer and advocate – that the artistic commodity of the painting, which also developed under substantial toiling, similarly, at long last finds its completion. Interestingly, Lily uses the exact same description in reference to both. "'He has landed,' she said aloud. 'It is finished.'"[132] Only a moment later she echoes these words, looking at her painting: "it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue."[133]

Once Mrs Ramsay passes away and departs from the story at the conclusion of the novel's first section, the social tenor around the vacation home dramatically changes, and the void left by the absence of this distributor of everyday experiences becomes unmistakable. Still, prior to her unfortunate exit, in her final scene we are left with one last encounter that exemplifies her true nature and purpose. Mrs Ramsay takes inventory and itemizes many of the quotidian details of her day – a kind of scanning over the ledger of the day's contents, trying to determine what to share with her husband: "She remembered dressing … Andrew holding his plate too high at dinner … the birds in the trees … Which should she tell him about."[134] The list is far more exhaustive than what is presented here. Sifting through her quotidian inventory, Mrs Ramsay thoughtfully evaluates which offering to present to Mr Ramsay for consumption.

At a time when the commodity and its web of connotations were moulding the modern cultural landscape, we can also observe the basic formation of modern everyday life, even as it

[132] Ibid., 208.
[133] Ibid., 209.
[134] Ibid., 122.

appears to us today. A central claim of this chapter has been that Woolf identified the congruities that existed between market culture, the commodity, and quotidian life. Just as perceptions of the commodity had been elevated in ways that allowed it to far supersede its inherent value in consumer culture, it seemed to Woolf that the everyday, potentially saddled with similar challenges of endless repetition and apparent banality, could also benefit from some creative commodification. If common objects and items could be promoted and marketed to the modern consumer, then why not do the same with everyday experiences, which for the modern individual, far more constructively offered the prospect of leading to an enriched lifestyle.

Chapter Five

A Portrait of a Market Culturalist as a Literary Man

The notion that James Joyce entertained any serious interest in consumer culture no longer provokes a chorus of dissident voices. And though modernism's many rich imbrications with various elements of popular culture are now part of the academic bedrock of received wisdom, yet there remain further sediments of insight to deposit. When it comes to Joyce, there are essentially two viewpoints which dominate this discussion. First, Joyce's interest in consumer culture was mainly premised on advertising and its discursive practices; second, as a novelist in the early twentieth century, one who had to deal with the detritus of modernity, Joyce, by necessity as much as anything else, rendered treatment of consumer culture in his writing. The initial position is perhaps best articulated by Garry Leonard, who goes as far to argue that "advertising – and consumer discourse in general – constitutes a dynamic force every bit as influential on Joyce as … Dante, Shakespeare."[1] The other common perspective is aptly expressed by John Strachan when he asserts that "by the use of advertisement Joyce reinforced the popular cultural credentials of *Ulysses*. Its ubiquity in his novel is a sign of that work's modernity."[2] However, what is still largely underappreciated is the extent to which Joyce had an intense fascination with market culture – not just with advertising or consumer culture – but with the broader field of commerce and the many constituents that fall under the market culture umbrella. For Joyce it was not merely a zeitgeist-fuelled interest in advertising, or just a matter of burnishing his modernist credentials by proving himself adept in handling the materials of modernity. As in Woolf, a primary way in which this fascination with market culture manifests

[1] Leonard, *Commodity Culture in Joyce*, 574.
[2] John Strachan, "Ulysses and the Dublin Advertising Business," in *James Joyce in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Nash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 107.

in Joyce's work is in his efforts to reveal its constant association with quotidian life, and in depicting this relationship in consumerist terms. But while Joyce's early stylistic treatment of everyday experiences shares much with Woolf, the later Joyce, far more influenced by his extensive engagement with commercial enterprises and principles, evolves into a writer who employs different techniques than his high literary modernist peer. And crucially, tracing the progression away from this initial similarity not only demonstrates their differing appreciations of the productive links between aesthetics and commercialism – including its important implications on experiential consumption as a new dominant mode – but more prominently, it evinces how Joyce was willing to allow a market culture ethos to substantively penetrate his development as an author, radically altering his novelistic techniques and practices.

The Exhibitionary Aesthetics of a Dubliner

It appears quite likely that Joyce's initial attraction to market culture actually began with exposure to the allure of display and exhibition culture, a phenomenon that swept through the major urban centres of fin de siècle Europe. What began in London's Hyde Park with the Great Exhibition of 1851 and its Crystal Palace filled with goods and objects from all over the globe initiated a desire to capitalize on similar visually oriented platforms. One such spinoff – the bazaar – occupied an important place in Joyce's imagination, and deeply shaped the formation of his exhibitionary aesthetics. Long before he wrote "Araby," as a child Joyce had attended the real event.[3] It had been officially dubbed as "Araby: A Grand Oriental Fete," attracting over 90,000 visitors in Dublin from May 14 to 19, 1894.[4] Although it had been the most successful, it

[3] Roberta Gefter Wondrich, "Exhibitionary Forms in Ireland: James Joyce's Exhibits of Irish Modernity," in *Moving Bodies and Displaying Nations: National Cultures, Race and Gender in World Expositions Nineteenth to Twenty-first Century*, ed. Guido Abbattista (Trieste: EUT, 2014), 102.
[4] Stephanie Rains, "Modernity and Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: The Araby Bazaar and 1890s Popular Visual Culture," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (2007): 286.

was only one in a series of charity bazaars that had taken place in the city throughout the 1890s, an important point that has in recent years garnered the attention of social historians. There are two primary reasons for this relatively new area of interest: as evidence showcasing a competitive modernity with other international centres and their staging of similar events; the indications of an emerging bourgeois Irish culture predicated on the consumption of leisure activity.[5]

These bazaars provide essential historical source material to demonstrate an Irish cultural modernity that bears kinship to the visual and exhibitonary culture of the global metropolises, a fact previously overlooked. Ironically, Joyce himself appears to warrant some of the blame for the initial critical disregard over the cultural and historical significance of Dublin's bazaars in the decade leading up to the twentieth century. In Joyce's "Araby," the impressions of the bazaar, much anticipated by the story's narrator are decidedly underwhelming. Although the young boy is on a mission to purchase for Mangan's sister – the object of his affections and daydreams – a gift, he encounters disappointment: the "bare carriage" of a train transported the boy to a "big hall," with hardly a captivating atmosphere as "the greater part of the hall was in darkness," and only a few people milled around for this one-day event.[6] Stephanie Rains concludes that the variance of Joyce's tale with the true historical reality of the Araby bazaar helps account for the neglect in scholarly analysis. She argues that "supposing that the real event was, like its fictional re-creation, small and drab, most critics have ignored the substantial archival history of the Araby Bazaar of 1894 and the similar events which took place in Dublin during that decade."[7]

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[5] Rains, "Modernity and Consumption, 285.
[6] James Joyce, "Araby," in *Dubliners* (London: Harper Collins, 2017), 25.
[7] Stephanie Rains, "Joyce's 'Araby' and the Historical Araby Bazaar, 1894," *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, no. 1 (2008): 17.

It is vital to understand that while Joyce may have misrepresented the Araby bazaar in his fiction (for artistic reasons that we will later evaluate), it is precisely the characteristics of the real historical bazaar that Joyce had himself experienced, and which affected the development of his exhibitionary aesthetics. The matter of why Joyce chose to alter the real Araby bazaar for his depiction of it in *Dubliners* is indeed a rather puzzling one, and though it is certainly true that a writer of fiction need not express any strong fealty for precise historical accuracy, the issue is greatly complicated in view of Joyce's strict adherence to factual details in much of his work. Why the variance here, where elsewhere extreme fidelity had been practiced?

Although Rains raised the discrepancy, other critics have more closely examined it in greater depth. Katherine Mullin takes up the work of Rains as an invitation to present an explanation. In Mullin's estimation, Joyce had deliberately crafted the story's representation of an inconsequential and disappointing bazaar, to connect the boy's disillusionment with the flawed act of buying into false exotic visions over more authentic provincial ones. She argues that "the fête's failure allows Joyce to expose his young protagonist's 'eastern enchantment' … a fascination with commercialized simulacra of 'Oriental otherness' which blinds him to more authentic Eastern resonances closer to home."[8] The other key claim of Mullin's study is her interesting analysis of the way *Ulysses* reverts to the true nature of the historic Araby bazaar in the novel's depiction of the Mirus bazaar, "amount[ing] to a suggestive revision of Joyce's earlier response to the Araby of his adolescence, as the mature novel reveals second thoughts."[9] For Mullin, there are "intertextual resonances of Irish Orientalism" that alter Joyce's treatment of the bazaar and this reconsideration is part of his "creative journey from serious cultural critique

[8] Katherine Mullin, "'Something in the Name of Araby': James Joyce and the Irish Bazaars," *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, no. 4 (2011): 31.
[9] Mullin, "Irish Bazaars," 32.

in *Dubliners* to jocose celebration of the bazaar's kitsch aesthetics in *Ulysses.*"[10] However, as we will later explore, there may exist insights into this modification that rely less on intertextuality, and more on an expansion of Joyce's exhibitionary aesthetics.

Another interpretation for Joyce's creative reworking of the bazaar comes from Heyward Ehrlich in a study that examines James Mangan's brand of Irish Orientalism and its influence on the story "Araby." Ehrlich seems to suggest that the key to understanding the changes in Joyce's fictional version of the bazaar relates to his strong affinity for Mangan. According to Ehrlich, Joyce is drawn to Mangan for "having made his life, or at least his own fictional accounts of his life, into the first authentically Irish version of the myth of the romantic hero, the Byronic [figure] … who savors memories of his sinful and gloomy past."[11] Leaning on this rationale, of an author who wanted to position his young protagonist to play the "Mangian hero," the corollary is to portray the bazaar in a shadowy and dismal light to develop a framework that aligns these character figures. And, for Ehrlich, this ties into the story's final image where the boy's response lacks any measure of regret over his scorned vanity: "On the contrary, in the inflated rhetoric of the transformation scene at the end, we find the boy playing the Manganian hero one more time, alternately inventing, effacing, and enlarging himself, now in the Araby of his own memory."[12]

Interestingly, the very feature of artificiality and invention – and the resultant disappointment for the young boy – which Mullin identifies as the purpose for Joyce's refashioning of the bazaar, is also advanced by Ehrlich, but to a diametrically opposed end.

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[10] Ibid., 45.
[11] Heyward Ehrlich, "'Araby' in Context: The 'Splendid Bazaar,' Irish Orientalism, and James Clarence Mangan," *James Joyce Quarterly* 35, no. 2/3 (1998): 324.
[12] Ehrlich, "Irish Orientalism," 326.

Whereas Mullin sees Joyce's agenda as foregrounding the value of searching beyond the meretricious to discover a more authentic engagement, here, Ehrlich ascribes to the author a programme that lionizes personal imagination in getting away from a strict representation of reality for the purpose of aggrandizing one's sense of importance. Despite their competing interpretations, perhaps we can glean something useful from their overlapping emphasis on the issue of the imagination, and how this can direct other potential readings.

Much of the study on Joyce's "Araby" focusses on the orientalist dimensions of both the story and the real event itself, and while this element merits investigation, it is still important not to overstate its significance at the expense of a potentially larger aim. Regardless of whatever creative license Joyce undertook in misrepresenting the bazaar in his fiction, the fact remains that the theme of orientalism – attached to the original event – did not leave much wiggle room in altering that characteristic. It can be argued that the actual historical bazaar could have been of any cultural variety, because it seems that Joyce's true interest in the event did not lie specifically in its exotic origin, but rather in the primary subject matter of spectacle and exhibition. Had the event been a world's fair in Dublin, that Joyce had personally experienced, he would have been equally inclined to find a way to employ it as the background for his story. In fact, to illustrate this point, while living in Italy, Joyce had approached the Milan newspaper Corriere della Sera, requesting an opportunity to report for them as a freelance writer on the Dublin International Exhibition of 1907.[13] Although his appeal had been rejected by the Italian paper, it clearly reveals Joyce's fixation with display and exhibitionary culture.

[13] Wondrich, "Exhibitionary Forms in Ireland," 111.

Another indication of Joyce's chief interest in the bazaar involves how he viewed the bazaar as a space more associated with entertainment than the sale of goods. In some measure, this dichotomous relationship between spectacle and commodity, especially in the characteristic of how the former trumps the latter, operates as a function of the commodity form. Roberta Wondrich draws our attention to the paradoxical nature of the fetishized commodity, and how visuality, through all of its subjective effects always holds primacy over the physical possession of any object: "The impossibility of actual purchase [in many situations] and consumption in the context of the fetishization of commodities, thus, indirectly recalls the model of the Great Exhibition, where the spectacle of all the assembled commodities would capture the visitors' interest and imagination, but would not be accessed by purchase."[14] In other words, a simple but powerful premise emerges: the power of spectacle is harnessed from the denial or elusiveness of ownership. This model elevates the showcasing of a commodity over the significance of the commodity itself, in that the display element is responsible for catalysing the rewarding subjective experience that activates the imagination of the modern consumer. As such, the commodity form is complicit in making the consumption of an experience the true commodity.

With this idea of the consumption of an experience in mind, something fostered by the dynamics of the spectacle, we return to Joyce's "Araby," and evaluate the extent to which this story reveals a vital thematic concern for its author, one that finds its initial expression in *Dubliners*, but is later greatly expanded upon in *Ulysses*. Joyce's concentration is on collocating experiential commodities with tangible goods to reveal how the consumption of experiences, especially those anchored in the quotidian – not the consumption of things – are a central feature of modernity. That the bazaar, and its network of connotations, should become a source of

[14] Ibid., 117.

inspiration for Joyce's treatment of an experiential economy, is in accordance with the depth of their societal impact. While this addresses a larger global trend, Joyce can be seen approaching it on a granular level, with "Araby" as a microcosm to explore a subjective experience that shares similarities with the commodity.

The tendency in most close readings of "Araby" is to concentrate on the story's elements that confirm it as a quest adventure. All this hinges on the key reference in which the young narrator, while ruminating on the persistence of Mangan's sister within his daily reveries, presents a powerful analogy of his thoughts which involved him carrying a "chalice."[15] The mention of a chalice, combined with his commitment to bring her a gift from his visit to the bazaar, provide the essentials for exegeses that focus on a metaphorical search for the "holy grail." While this is a significant citation, it remains important to step back and consider the preceding passage that frames the boy's powerful image. As part of a weekly Saturday night routine, the boy begins by recalling that when his "aunt went marketing [he] had to carry some of the parcels."[16] And here, he remarks on the rather stock sights and sounds that always accompany the activity: "[they ambled] through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys … [and] the nasal chanting of street-singers."[17] And yet, it is in that very space, surrounded by standard ingredients of the everyday, the minutiae of the marketplace, that the boy synthesizes all this material into a poignant experience: "These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice through a throng of foes."[18] Thus, the boy's "chalice" is the commodity of his aesthetic engagement with a quotidian activity.

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[15] Joyce, "Araby," 22.
[16] Ibid., 21.
[17] Ibid., 22.
[18] Ibid.

Permeating the story is a constant impulse to convert the mundanities of life into gratifying subjective experiences, ones idealized in a form that mimics the commodity. All the critical attention given to the story's physical commodities, no doubt spurred by connotations of the "grail," miss the tale's greater quest of consuming idealized experiential goods. The boy himself, in the pivotal scene in which he speaks to Mangan's sister for the first and only time, is responsible for training our focus on physical items, specifically with his pledge to buy her "something." However, Mangan's sister, inadvertently – or perhaps with cunning depending on the interpretation – directs him towards trying to materialize the contents of his imagination. While discussing the bazaar and her inability to attend it, "she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist," catching the protagonist's eye; not a moment later, the boy declares his intent to bring her a gift.[19]

A major plank of Joyce's exhibitionary aesthetics emerges at key points of the story, one in which the visual serves as an accelerant – before receding into the background – to develop an idealized image that is transcendent in facilitating an aestheticized experience. The most exemplary scene, which occurs prior to any plans for the bazaar, is when the boy retreats into the back drawing-room of his home, and senses that the prospect of an experiential product is within grasp: "Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me [and] I was thankful that I could see so little."[20] The visual downshifts in proportion to the depth of his imaginative engagement. Another point of interest is that the boy's musings, though inspired by Mangan's sister, are filtered through the minutiae of the everyday,

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

calling to mind their similarity with the aestheticized experience of when he went to the market with his aunt. Yet, what is perhaps most remarkable involves the fact that this passage bears a strong resemblance (although Joyce authored this much earlier) to Virginia Woolf's fiction; in all reality, the preceding passage could just as easily have been the thoughts of Clarissa Dalloway, or even Mrs Ramsay for that matter, from Woolf's two most famous works (*Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*).

With the significance of experiential goods now at the forefront of our discussion, we can revisit a quizzical element about "Araby," Joyce's pronounced factual departure from the real historical bazaar. Joyce's treatment of the event as drab and fleeting occurs as an unavoidable consequence of the story's central purpose: to foreground the importance of consuming experiential products, and related to it, the ways that physical commodities both interfere with and frustrate that process. The "true" Araby bazaar never had a chance to make an appearance in Joyce's story because it was never really about a pursuit to secure a love token, but rather about the consumption of experiences triggered by the pursuit of a token object. Had Joyce replicated the actual bazaar with all the true splendour it engendered, it would have been difficult – having been swept up by the atmosphere, not to mention the service on hand – for his protagonist to leave the event without a gift, nullifying the fact that the quest from the bazaar was for an experiential product, one that the boy had been fantasizing about for a significant chunk of the story. With an accurate representation of the event, at minimum, the boy would have been gratified by the feast on display for his senses, again working against the thematic objective. To some degree, Mangan's sister, and the search for her gift, is a placeholder for the real objective, something perhaps indicated by the fact the reader never learns of her name.

Even well before the protagonist sets foot in the bazaar, the disenchantment commences; first with the "deserted" carriage in the early part of the train ride, and then amplified when the large "crowd" from Westland Row Station is uninterested in boarding it for the bazaar.[21] Once the boy gains access to the event a little ahead of closing time, his disillusionment increases when he notices "the greater part of the hall in darkness" and only a small number of "people were gathered about."[22] But likely, it is the "two men … counting money on a salver," that most tears the boy from his fantasy that the bazaar would provide an opportunity to hunt down the treasured object he had been obsessing about: "I listened to the fall of the coins."[23] If this imagery is rather familiar for the reader, it is because Joyce offers a clever inversion from the earlier scene, where the boy had been enraptured in the drawing-room listening to the fall of raindrops – "the needles of water playing" in the earth.[24] Essentially, the pleasing sounds of a transaction in the experiential economy are juxtaposed at the bazaar with the unsatisfying sounds of the transactions in the commercial economy.

Eventually the boy manages to approach a stall to find a gift and he encounters an unhelpful saleswoman whose only interest is to continue flirting with the two men she had already been interacting with. And yet it is not until the lady finally offers some perfunctory assistance – and he looks at the symbolic positioning of a couple of wares – that an overwhelming sense of defeat settles on the boy: "I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either sides of the dark entrance to the stall."[25] He then declines any help. It is as if "the great jars" of the stall serve as intimidating totems of the physical commodity,

[21] Ibid., 25.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 22.
[25] Ibid., 26.

preventing him from entering the world of an experiential marketplace. Once that experiential commodity (which, ironically, he had been enjoying prior to this shopping excursion) no longer seemed available, not the ostensible gift for Mangan's sister, he felt thwarted and lost all interest. As the boy leaves the stall his "eyes burned with anguish and anger," prompted largely by his miscalculation that the bazaar could be as alluring as the gift he would purchase in it, when nothing could possibly rival the products of his imagination.[26]

Attending to the Business of an Authorial Evolution

While both Joyce and Woolf were aligned in their promotion of everyday experiences as worthy of consumption – and its imbrication with literary art and economics – it appears that Joyce moved far beyond just offering aesthetic treatment of the quotidian, to a far deeper engagement with commercial ideals which held remarkable sway over his evolution as a modernist writer. The early Joyce crafted subjective moments not far removed from Woolf's depictions, a pattern he sharply deviates from in his later writings. Joyce developed an even stronger fascination than his modernist counterpart and having been more immersed in both intensive study of commercial practices and actual business enterprises, it impacted the ways in which he evolved as a writer, even influencing post-composition considerations (as will be seen with *Ulysses*). It is well known that while in Rome, Joyce had briefly worked as a bank clerk for about six months, a job he abandoned in early 1907.[27] Perhaps owing to the brevity of his career in the financial industry, the perceived influence of commerce on Joyce was seen as minimal at best, something that makes the following detail about him, relatively speaking, fairly unknown. Joyce had been heavily involved in some purely commercial pursuits. The first of these contains

[26] Ibid.
[27] Matthew Hayward, "Reconsidering Joyce's 'Notes on Business and Commerce,'" *Genetic Joyce Studies* 12 (2012): 1.

its origin in an important marketing idea that will resurface again later in this chapter in relation to Joyce's literary work, but for now displays his proclivity for commercial mindedness. Seizing upon the realization of an "untapped market" – his native Dublin had still yet to open its first cinema – Joyce went about pitching this commercial venture to a group of Italian investors.[28] Apparently, Joyce's business acumen was sufficiently impressive not only to secure financing for the project, but also to gain a ten percent share of all profits; even Joyce's trip back to Dublin to initiate the process was bankrolled by his investment team from Trieste.[29]

Returning to his hometown in the autumn of 1909, Joyce quickly disabused any notion that his business scheme was for strictly pecuniary interests, embracing with brio the many managerial responsibilities required in setting up the Volta Cinematograph: "finding suitable premises for the cinema … getting electricity installed, acquiring benches and chairs, supervising the decoration and personally designing posters for the grand opening."[30] All of this led to Joyce's old Dublin friends expressing intrigue with how "seriously" he "took this new role as a man of business."[31] From inside of the enterprise, a similar assessment was made by the Volta's "projectionist, Lennie Collinge, [who] remembered Joyce as a man quietly focussed on the cinema's daily operations."[32] The extent to which Joyce relished this new business role is demonstrated by his efforts to promote a commercial persona. Joyce had mailed to his brother Stanislaus in Italy copies of various newspaper reviews of the Volta's opening. Joyce, while still in Dublin, wanted these reviews, accompanied with "a number of suggested embellishments,

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[28] Anthony Patterson and Stephen Brown, "Marketers Wake! A Portrait of the Artist as a Marketing Man," in *Imagining Marketing: Art, Aesthetics and the Avant-Garde* (London: Routledge, 2000), 77.
[29] Patterson and Brown, "Marketing Man," 77.
[30] Ibid.,
[31] Philip Sicker, "Evenings at the Volta: Cinematic Afterimages in Joyce," *James Joyce Quarterly* 42/43, no. 1/4 (2004-2006): 100.
[32] Sicker, "Evenings at the Volta," 100.

mostly in the nature of additional build-ups and bouquets for Joyce himself," reprinted in the Italian press.[33] As it turned out, Joyce's involvement with the Volta cinema was short-lived because a strong hankering to return to his family in Trieste prompted his departure in early 1910.[34] Although the business was eventually afflicted by low attendance numbers, resulting in its sale to a British firm just a few months later, there was no indication the failure had anything to do with Joyce's initial management of the cinema; in fact, early on "the Volta was both a popular and a critical success when Joyce embarked for Trieste."[35]

Despite Joyce's inauspicious first commercial foray with the Volta, it would not take long for him to try his hand again in the business world. Before the end of 1910, Joyce had managed to take up a new post as a sales agent in Trieste for the Dublin Woollen Company, supplying Irish Foxford Tweed for the Italian and Austrian markets.[36] Similar to his approach with the Volta cinema, Joyce heavily applied himself to the project, as documented by the correspondence history between Joyce and the company. Records held at the Cornell Joyce Collection reveal twenty-two invoices, in addition to six letters, had been sent to Joyce from the Dublin firm in the six months from early November 1910 to late July 1911.[37] Again, while this business engagement was hardly an exercise in longevity, there remains evidence it had been somewhat successful. In a letter involving Joyce's solicitation to get the *Dubliners* published, he claims that his Foxford Tweed enterprise "had put 150,000 francs into the pockets 'of hungry Irish men and women since they drove me out of their hospitable bog.'"[38]

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[33] Alfred Paul Berger, "James Joyce, Adman," *James Joyce Quarterly* 3, no.1 (1965): 26.
[34] Patterson and Brown, "Marketing Man," 77.
[35] Sicker, "Evenings at the Volta," 105.
[36] Hayward, "Reconsidering Joyce's Notes," 4.
[37] Ibid., 5.
[38] Patterson and Brown, "Marketing Man," 77.

Joyce's direct association with commerce extends beyond these two ventures, even involving an interest in the educational aspects of business. He once compiled a collection of personally handwritten notes on various subjects related to the field of business. These documents, published as part of the *James Joyce Archive*, have been labelled "Notes on Business and Commerce," and while they have been available for decades, there has been a lack of critical attention surrounding them.[39] Joyce had filled out two notebooks, a 138 pages in total, featuring eight different sections: "Banking," "Commercial Law," "Clerical Work," "Insurance," "The Stock Exchange," "Shipping," "Advertising," and "Trade."[40] Matthew Hayward has analysed these notes, offering explanations for the scarcity in its critical evaluation. Aside from the mostly prosaic quality of the material, a crucial misunderstanding has led to an assumption of its trivial nature. Most critics have incorrectly concluded that these notes were developed by Joyce for preparation towards his brief banking career in Rome.[41] However, Hayward's research uncovered the key fact that these notes were taken at a much later date, long after he left the bank in early 1907, quashing any belief these documents were reducible to a mere footnote about one of Joyce's many career stops.[42] From tracking the actual publication dates of the sources that Joyce used to pen these notes, Hayward has established an approximate chronological window from 1912 to 1915.[43] With this information in mind, it tenders some significant avenues of investigation: their potential linkages to Joyce's personal interests and non-commercial work, including the composition of his literary texts.

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[39] Matthew Hayward, "'Knowing Damn All About Banking Business': Reopening James Joyce's 'Notes on Business and Commerce,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 52, no. 3/4 (2015): 493.
[40] Hayward, "Knowing Damn All," 493.
[41] Hayward, "Reconsidering Joyce's Notes," 1.
[42] Hayward, "Knowing Damn All," 494.
[43] Ibid., 499.

Although Hayward is unable to pinpoint any exact purpose for Joyce's notes, he does conjecture on the most likely scenario. In July 1913, Joyce had commenced employment on an English teaching job in Italy at La Scuola Superiore di Commercio Revoltella, and since the curriculum concentrated on teaching the English language, and business correspondence, through commercially focussed "narratives and dialogues," it seems plausible to locate here, in this position, a possible inspiration for compiling the business notes.[44] Despite the uncertainty, one point seems evident: Joyce's fixation with an eclectic set of commercial matters. For Joyce to have gone through the trouble of acquiring several different business texts, to have been sufficiently motivated in creating enough material longhand to work through two notebooks, to have been meticulous in systematically organizing the content, and to have done all of the preceding without any clearly identifiable purpose, leads to an unmistakable conclusion: Joyce possessed strong intrinsic interests in commerce and market culture, and these were not limited to just practical business applications. Accordingly, it is further revealing that Hayward's dating of Joyce's business notes places them chronologically beyond any useful value or connection with the earlier discussed commercial ventures.

Before moving on to an evaluation of how Joyce's commercialist instincts shaped his literary career, it is important to probe deeper into his attachment with market culture to better understand the source of this fascination. Joyce was a notorious pacifist, a detail that has been used over the years in a number of scholarly investigations, often linked to arguments regarding his attitude towards politics in general, and more specifically, the conditions of Ireland's history of British colonialism. A study by Andrew Gibson serves as a prime example. In *Joyce's Revenge*, Gibson argues that in *Ulysses*, this pacifistic ethos is linked to the Irish writer exacting

[44] Ibid., 501.

retribution on their British colonizers by non-violent means, namely through the wielding of literary weapons instead.[45] Gibson's claim is an important one, because, for present purposes, it draws our attention to strategies Joyce used to provide meaningful resistance; in other words, his commitment to ways of affecting agency as alternatives to physical might, and with this in mind, a rationale becomes available that helps account for Joyce's strong fascination with both market culture and the modern commercial man. Fleshing out this idea, we return to Joyce's "Business Notes," specifically the section on "Advertising." For this material, Joyce used a marketing treatise, a progressive text at the time with its reliance on the burgeoning discipline of psychology, Howard Bridgewater's *Advertising or the Art of Making Known*.[46] Although Hayward's focus is on the actual content that Joyce had pulled from the various textual sources, there is more to be gleaned from the source material that falls outside of these handwritten notes.

In the opening pages of Bridgewater's work, in a section titled "The Battle of Business," he discusses the parallels between the old ideals of military pride and the modern commercial world. Bridgewater describes "commercial warfare as merely a higher type of the warfare of ancient times. To compete successfully in modern warfare – Commerce – one must possess the very same attributes that led men to victory in the [old] days … courage, perseverance, the ability to 'rough it,' and last, but not least, resourcefulness."[47] Not only do some of these characteristics call to mind images of Leopold Bloom working his way through Dublin, they offer a model of masculinity beyond physical prowess, which certainly comports with Joyce's pacifistic and cerebral sensibilities. It is not difficult to imagine the appeal that Bridgewater's vision of yesteryear's warrior, recast now as a highly versatile man of commerce, would have

[45] Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15.
[46] Hayward, "Knowing Damn All," 496.
[47] Howard Bridgewater, *Advertising or the Art of Making Known* (London: Pitman & sons, 1910), 1-2.

held for Joyce, someone afflicted with eyesight difficulties from an early age, worsening with time, and certainly someone never admired for physical stoutness. The point about versatility is highly relevant, because, for Joyce, it intersects with both the commercial and literary domains, a trait he regarded as a sine qua non in the pursuit of either field, something shown in *Ulysses* through a reference to Bloom, the author's resident advertising man in the novel: "He's a cultured allround man … He's not one of your common or garden … There's a touch of the artist about old Bloom."[48] Joyce was likely inclined to perceive himself as an embodiment of this "allround" modern renaissance man, possessing equal parts commercial acumen, worldly knowledge, and artistic talent.[49] There is also the matter of considering Joyce's titling of *Ulysses* with its associations to ancient mythical warfare, and how he situates his modern novel in an environment saturated by market culture, foregrounding this new form of commercial warfare as articulated by Bridgewater. Perhaps this explains why *Ulysses* appears to promote a form of economic nationalism, rather than a rhetoric of aggression and violence, in dealing with the effects of colonialism in Ireland.

While the business ventures, employment experiences, and even personal interests all attest to Joyce's kinship to commerce, the portrait of Joyce as a commercial man, a market culturalist of sorts, most fully materializes when examining his many marketing and promotional activities for *Ulysses*. Kevin Dettmar has chronicled Joyce's variegated and extensive efforts in ensuring commercial success for his controversial novel. Dettmar demonstrates that Joyce was

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[48] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 10.581-583.

[49] It has been conjectured that Joyce's own personal experiences, particularly those in Trieste, had been formative in inspiring him to develop Bloom as a character in response to Stephen Dedalus, "a character whom, he complained, could not change – and [which led him to] embrace the Jewish, Dublin-born Leopold Bloom." Valerie Benejam, "A Writer 'dans le temps': Dramatic Time and Timing in Joyce's Aesthetics," in *Reading Joycean Temporalities*, ed. Jolanta Wawrzycka (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 27. If this personal inflexibility, of being utterly unable to adapt, qualities essential to living in the modern world, troubled Joyce about his earlier fictive creation of Dedalus, then it motivated the presence of the opposite characteristics he featured within Bloom.

not just an interested documentarian of commodity culture and advertising, but that he was essentially an "amateur advertiser himself."[50] Although a salient point, given Joyce's considerable exposure and interaction with commercial affairs and market culture, we can proceed further beyond the notion of "amateur advertiser," and to view more fully Joyce's purposeful salesmanship. At the outset of this chapter, the assertion had been advanced that the degree of Joyce's deep connection to market culture and commerce has not been fully apprehended. For Dettmar, Joyce's marketing efforts for *Ulysses* were not an anomaly, but instead a representative pattern of the "contradictory attitude the modernists held toward advertising, marketing, and mass and commodity culture."[51] Dettmar explains that the competing interests of maintaining artistic autonomy, while also needing mainstream validation, constitute an internal contradiction already baked into modernism.[52] Thus, he concludes that Joyce understood the value of disavowing concern for any aspect of the text's public reception, and yet, simultaneously was manoeuvring behind the scenes to still promote it. This conception of a built-in modernist paradox perhaps has functioned as a tempering factor in critical analyses that investigate the association between commerce and modernism.

Illustrating how Joyce navigates his way around these paradoxical exigencies, Dettmar reveals his main strategy: "He tended … to push others to push his books – so that he could maintain the vaunted modernist air of impersonality, while subtly influencing the reception and interpretation of his texts."[53] Through investigating some of Joyce's letters, Dettmar shows he attempted to recruit supportive critical reviewers for *Ulysses*, and further, how he tried to affect

[50] Kevin Dettmar, "Selling *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* 30/31, no. 4/1 (1993): 795.
[51] Dettmar, "Selling Ulysses," 796.
[52] Ibid., 797.
[53] Ibid., 798.

the content of these reviews.[54] For example, Joyce had managed to set into circulation specific advertising slogans to describe his novel, a technique that Dettmar dubbed "critical ventriloquism."[55] Dettmar goes on to explain how Joyce even recognized the marketing opportunity presented by the novel's American obscenity trial, specifically zeroing in on Judge Woolsey's remarks as the most profitable advertising opportunity.[56]

A substantial insight offered by this article surrounds the key shift that it identifies in Joyce's marketing strategy in the early 1930s: instead of continuing to influence reviewers, Joyce began focussing on authors who wrote critical books on literature.[57] Joyce had selected Stuart Gilbert to write a book which established the Homeric connections in *Ulysses*. Joyce also collaborated with Gilbert in its composition, a fact that was openly acknowledged in the book, and exploited, for its marketing steam. Despite all these useful interventions, Dettmar claims that it is Joyce's composition of the *Ulysses* schema, featured in Gilbert's text, which he views as the novelist's most brilliant marketing strategy. However, he concludes that Joyce eventually became ambivalent about the schema because of the overt way in which it expressed his personal effort to promote his work.[58] Dettmar demonstrates both points as he traces how the schema triggered a contentious negotiation between Bennet Cerf of Random House and Joyce when the former wanted to include it inside the American edition of *Ulysses*. Cerf insisted on it as he believed it would serve a key marketing function by aiding the reader's comprehension of the story, thus boosting its sales. Joyce adamantly opposed its inclusion on the grounds it interfered with the reading process, unduly influencing the reader's engagement with *Ulysses*, maintaining

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 799.
[56] Ibid., 800.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 802.

that the novel "must stand on its own feet without any explanation."[59] Eventually, *Ulysses* was published, enjoying good sales, and the schema, as Joyce wished, was kept out of it.

Dettmar concludes his study by outlining an important historical development which he maintains had been instrumental in adjusting Joyce's marketing approach, one involving the growth of an academic audience within expanding university English departments. According to Dettmar, the true marketing ingenuity that Joyce had applied to *Ulysses* was in his clever decision of eschewing the direct appeal to the public, in favour of targeting academia for this cause: "the best approach was not to sell it to the public, but instead to sell it to the public by way of the academics – employing distributors, franchisees, rather than a direct-marketing approach."[60] In Dettmar's evaluation, this explains Joyce's rationale from shifting his previous emphasis of influencing reviewers of his works to influencing critical studies of them. However, this viewpoint can be expanded upon to present additional insights which speak to the full scope of Joyce's marketing acumen. It is likely that Joyce had more elaborate plans than just tailoring his strategies in response to a growing professional literary community in academia, but rather that he actually customized his approach to maximize the advantage available in each stage of his product's marketing cycle. In the initial stage of a product's introduction to the market, in this case, shortly after a novel is published, it can be reasonably argued from a promotional perspective that the marketing emphasis would be placed on reviews of the work to help establish early positive reception. Naturally, in the next stage of the marketing cycle, when the product needs to establish longevity, the focus must change, and for *Ulysses*, this meant entrenching its status as an object worthy of academic exploration, which served to consolidate

[59] Ibid., 804.
[60] Ibid., 806.

its long-term marketability as a commodity. Joyce insinuated this himself when he famously stated that "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant."[61] Here, we even have evidence that Joyce already had this particular idea in mind, the thought of catering to an academic market well in advance of any actual efforts to specifically target it, something which indicates that Joyce's approach was more complex than merely adjusting his promotional tactics to capitalize on new developments within universities. And while it would be dangerous to overstate the significance of a quote that has largely been reduced to a cliché of a caricaturized Joyce, the evidence suggests that he was prepared – both in terms of predisposition and commercial knowledge – for executing this kind of market positioning for *Ulysses*, his most marketable literary commodity.

Joyce's Untapped Literary Markets

The influence of commercial ideals on Joyce was substantial, but a specific one only briefly addressed earlier, stands out as highly significant in its formative impact on his literary work: the concept of "untapped markets." If Joyce had been quick to seize upon the fact that his hometown of Dublin had an opening in the cinema industry, it only suggests how much stronger he would have been attuned to exercise the same kind of thinking in his primary vocation. Just as Joyce had surveyed the commercial scene and identified underserviced segments, he did much the same with literature, and using this approach, opportunities for literary entrepreneurship came into view, opportunities he would capitalize upon with much greater success than his venture with the Volta cinema.

The idea for *Ulysses* had a long gestational period for Joyce, one that began during the composition phase of *Dubliners*. In 1920, in a letter to Carlo Linati, Joyce revealed his original

[61] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 521.

intention: “Imagine, fifteen years ago I started writing it as a short story for Dubliners!”[62] Although he jettisoned the idea of including it in the collection, the prospect of writing the story continued to percolate within him. From the same letter, Joyce suggests that the project of writing *Ulysses*, at least on an intense basis, began around 1913. However, as shown from another of Joyce’s letters, in one to Harriet Shaw Weaver, an even earlier date of 1910 is given, though perhaps it involved a less formal engagement of what would become his modern epic tale. While precise dating is nebulous, one point seems clear; it is within the intervening years between Joyce’s composing of *Dubliners,* to his diligent labouring over *Ulysses*, which appears to have been most influential in his evolution as a writer. During this interlude, commerce had occupied an important place in the life of James Joyce: his entrepreneurial schemes, his penning of the comprehensive “business notes,” and his employment in commercial environments such as banking and as an English teacher of a business-based language curriculum.

Returning to Joyce’s fixation on Ulysses as a character, we get a glimpse of a key benefit from his commercial experience that forms the focus of this section – the opening of new literary markets. This insight from Joyce’s past is provided by Georges Borach, a former English student from the time the writer spent in Zurich, who had kept some diary notes regarding their conversations. Borach’s notes are highly significant in that they were compiled in 1917 at a critical juncture of Joyce’s authorial career, elucidating some key insights behind Joyce’s thinking while he was in the deepest stage of crafting his most substantial text. He told Borach that he found “the subject of Odysseus the most human in world literature” because he was a reluctant participant in the Greek war effort.[63] Joyce went on to explain that Ulysses, wanting

[62] James Joyce, *The Letters of James Joyce,* Vol. 1 (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 146.
[63] Georges Borach and Joseph Prescott, “Conversations with James Joyce,” *College English* 15, no. 6 (1954): 325.

desperately to abstain as he was busy with his own familial commitments, understood that the war "was only a pretext for the Greek merchants, who were seeking new markets."[64] If the prospect of securing "new markets" precipitated Ulysses' exciting adventures, then for Joyce, the thought of hunting down new literary markets of his own, and all of its poetic implications, likely stirred somewhere in his mind with a great deal of satisfaction as he refashioned this classic tale.

The number of ways that *Ulysses* represents the innovations of modernist literature is manifold, but for all its experimentalism, it is arguably the radical variety of different writing styles that emerges as its signature characteristic. Ever since *Ulysses* achieved its canonical status, critics have puzzled over the matter, not only in examining each individual style, and where applicable, connections to its original forebears in literary history, but also the rationale in their deployment by Joyce. In terms of Joyce's approach as an author, inseparable from this consideration of the writing styles, is the notion of exploring "untapped" literary markets, an endeavour that first requires some discussion of key scholarship on *Ulysses*' writing styles. Karen Lawrence's *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* methodically sifts and sorts through the stylistic elements of Joyce's tome. According to Lawrence, it is during the early stages of the novel where Joyce establishes a certain tone, something she describes as the "narrative norm," that holds the key to the whole evaluation of style. For Lawrence, the work begins in congruence with the narrative form of Joyce's two earlier works, *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In large measure, the narration is mostly conventional with the presence of a fairly distinct third-person narrator, along with the staples of "interior monologue, free indirect discourse, and dialogue."[65] Here, in the initial parts of *Ulysses*, Joyce appears to be continuing on

[64] Borach and Prescott, "Conversations with James Joyce," 325.
[65] Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 43.

the same pathway; however, Lawrence argues that it is all a ruse to mislead the readers, twisting their expectations, before the drastic upcoming changes in fracturing the novelistic form.[66] She discusses how Joyce in the first few episodes, sets up narrative rules, which constitute a "contract" with the reader that is deliberately breached in the later chapters.[67] Lawrence explains that the narrative norm, as a literary style, is "naïve," and likens it to the text and character "trying on a costume," one that quickly gets shed as the novel commences to don a dizzying array of stylistic narrative masks.[68] A primary function of this initial style, as she views it, is the author's aim of drawing attention to the "clichéd" nature of language, a quality that is heavily associated with the standard narrative form.[69] However, it is her assertion about what this stylistic odyssey reveals about Joyce – the evolution of the artist himself – that is perhaps the most germane insight that she advances. Joyce adapted his approach of writing *Ulysses*, Lawrence asserts, to the aesthetic development he was experiencing as an author, accounting for the radical changes in the novel's progression: "the changes in form and style reflect the shedding of an artistic belief no longer sufficient to his vision."[70]

For an alternate assessment of the different writing styles contained in *Ulysses*, we return to a text that was only briefly mentioned earlier. In *Joyce's Revenge*, Gibson argues that Joyce, relying on the different writing styles, labours for liberation against the English colonial power, both politically and culturally, and for good measure, enjoys taking some literary revenge on them.[71] For Gibson, the "Wandering Rocks" episode functions as the narrative fulcrum where the text pivots to its true agenda. As he interprets it, the chapter is a storytelling caesura, an

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[66] Lawrence, *Odyssey of Style*, 38-39.
[67] Ibid., 52-53.
[68] Ibid., 47.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 54.
[71] Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge*, 13.

opportunity to browse around and survey the scene before moving on to the political and aesthetic enterprise that drives the second half of the novel.[72] Nonetheless, it is the rationale ascribed to Joyce – by each of these critics for the different writing styles – that most distinguishes their viewpoints. While Lawrence depicts an author undergoing an artistic transition, playing with the novel's "forms" as a therapeutic exercise in the development of aesthetics, Gibson insists on Joyce's certitude of artistic vision and purpose, of someone very deliberately employing a strategy of "aesthetic warfare" through the varying writing styles.[73] An example of this retribution on the English, as affected by Joyce's stylistic manoeuvring, is shown by Gibson's close textual analysis of the episode "Oxen of the Sun." The central claim is that Joyce uses the technique of "contamination" as a "strategy of adulteration" to distort Englishness, whether applied to the genre of the anthology, an important tool of imperialism; specific English prose stylists; or even English idioms.[74] Whether one supports either Lawrence's argument or Gibson's thesis, the greater takeaway is that these views are not mutually exclusive in that Joyce as a market culturalist is purposefully presenting a marketplace of styles intended to cater to an array of consumer literary interests, a conception which will be explored later.

What unifies the analyses of *Ulysses*' different writing styles is that each Joycean scholar is searching for a unique skeleton key that unlocks the author's clandestine design. The aim is to explain the stylistic eclecticism as part of a coherent master plan by Joyce, to uncover a structure engineered to deliver a set of messages, and to serve a variety of rhetorical functions. But this over-rationalizing, risks giving in to a literary "shell game" that Joyce arranges, one in which the

[72] Ibid., 81.
[73] Ibid., 15.
[74] Ibid., 176-81.

hidden object, and perhaps the overreaching critic, is always in the author's hand. In fairness, the text invites this activity and rewards it as well. Of the many quandaries embedded in *Ulysses,* it is the continuous shapeshifting of form that is most perplexing. It is helpful to consider the progression of Joyce's artistry, including his background experiences, that led to his crafting of the novel. Aside from the continued rejection of quotation marks, Joyce's writing had undergone a transformation from *Dubliners,* and *A Portrait,* to the composition of *Ulysses*. What accounts for this movement from a largely conventional approach, or Lawrence's conception of the "narrative norm," the set of characteristics that she identifies as consistent with his earlier writing, to an author whose only literary convention was to pioneer as many new ones as possible?

Joyce's exposure to commerce, and his development of the "business notes," were earlier evaluated in relation to his overall literary persona, now we can examine their impact on his finished literary product, its actual manifestation on the long list of styles in *Ulysses*. Thus, a key assertion – the opening of new literary markets – needs to be brought into the centre of the discussion. It appears that Joyce's study of the Bridgewater advertising treatise factors heavily again, influencing his goal of capitalizing on "untapped" segments in the world of literature. Much of this originates from a part of the text that touts the value of imagination in the business sphere. In one instance, illustrating the way companies use creativity to obviate the imagination of their competitors, Bridgewater references an American soap manufacturer's strategy of brainstorming a list of over two dozen potential names, ones connotatively related to their product – and incurring the expenses of legally registering these names – which a rival company may eventually use for the same commodity.[75] The treatise goes on to expound this pre-emptive

[75] Bridgewater, *Advertising,* 47.

naming strategy within the context of the British economic market in the early twentieth century, where the inclination towards using these proactive measures proved even more aggressive. Bridgewater explains that "English manufacturers have gone to the extent of protecting themselves, not merely in their own line of goods, but in all lines of manufacture, thereby preventing their trade-name from becoming commonplace by their repeated use."[76]

Most crucially, Bridgewater identifies the logic for an approach to creative work that grounds itself, primarily, in the anticipation of future developments, including innovation, in a product category (of which literature qualifies) and using it as a competitive edge to both establish and maintain dominance. Viewing this from an author's perspective, as Joyce would have when he pored over the Bridgewater text, this activity can be regarded as providing inspiration, leading to literary innovations, and as an extension, tapping into new literary areas. This opens an entirely new rationale for what Joyce is doing in *Ulysses*, and how it informs his evolution as an artist. Indeed, Joyce appears to be on a mission in the novel to invent as many different writing styles and literary innovations as possible, shoehorning them in at a rate that eschews any fear of compromising artistic unity. Though it could be argued that Joyce is also parodying or crafting a pastiche of some existing forms, he still makes proprietary use of these literary elements in his programme of authorial entrepreneurialism. One could reasonably conclude that in the frenetic pursuit of this cause, Joyce is deliberately depriving other literary artists, pre-emptively stripping them of their "imagination" and creativity, limiting opportunities for literary inventions of their own, mirroring within the context of literature the tactics espoused by Bridgewater's marketing text.

[76] Ibid., 48.

It is this characteristic, the unchecked flux of novelistic forms, that prompted Franco Moretti to describe "*Ulysses* as a mad clearance-sale of literary styles."[77] In terms of volume, Moretti is certainly accurate; however, the approach is far more purposeful than his assessment suggests. Rather, Joyce is interested in showcasing different writing styles, with all of them attached to his unique signature brand. And although none of these activities are patentable in the same way as they are in the commercial milieu, thus doing little to prevent the attempt of imitation from competing authors, it secures for Joyce something of far greater significance, the special status bestowed to the originator of so much pioneering work. In fact, much can be said about the very impact of attracting imitations as a touchstone of achieving iconic status, a point observed by Fredric Jameson in his stance "that a style is inimitable exactly to the extent that it is imitable."[78] Just as Joyce had rushed to be "first to market" with the cinema business in Dublin, he does the same here, only with far better success. All of this is indicated by Joyce himself, in the author's own words. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, in which Joyce explains his writing technique for *Ulysses*, he provides a crucial hint at the underlying nature of the enterprise: "The task I set myself technically in writing a book from eighteen different points of view and in as many styles, all apparently unknown or undiscovered by my fellow tradesmen … would be enough to upset anyone's mental balance."[79] Remarkably, Joyce not only reveals the project's chief objective of maximizing narrative inventions, but, more saliently, he lays bare the position that his innovative work remains either "unknown or undiscovered" by his literary peers. Even the precise wording is highly indicative of an artist who is practising the strategy of pre-emptive literary creation. Joyce's assertion is unmistakable – he is claiming for himself the "discovery"

[77] Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso, 2005), 206.
[78] Roger Luckhurst, "Repetition and Unreadability: J.G. Ballard's 'Vermillion Sands,'" *Extrapolation* 36, no. 4 (1995): 294.
[79] Joyce, *Letters,* Vol. 1, 167.

of these new literary styles and narrative techniques, and much like the first act of an explorer surveying newly found territory, Joyce's statement is marking this terrain with his authorial flag.

A discussion of the many styles in *Ulysses* also benefits from considering its impact on the reader's engagement. John Carey in his study *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, argues that modernist writers had deliberately fashioned difficulty in their texts to bar consumption by the majority of the population, thus ensuring their own elitism from the exclusionary results of their abstruse writing tactics.[80] Carey claims that, while through Bloom, *Ulysses* seems to embrace "mass man," he is nonetheless rejected because Bloom would never have possessed the capacity to read such a novel.[81] Carey explains that "[t]he complexity of the novel, its avant-garde technique, its obscurity, rigorously exclude people like Bloom from its readership."[82] But Carey's position assumes an all-or-nothing semantic proposition; however, as previously discussed, Joyce's approach was thoroughly consumerist as a literary market culturalist. The structure of the novel – its department store of styles – offers something for every kind of reading consumer. The design of the text virtually encourages a dipping in approach; its lack of conventional plotting invites the kind of Wildean marketplace sampling (as analysed in chapter two) which reflects the consumerist ethos of its organization. In other words, the reader can drop in at any point of Bloom's ambulatory tour of everyday life and enjoy an aesthetic treatment of the quotidian. It can accommodate an "open house" reading style for the consumer to tour the different departments of literary styles. Thus, while Bloom as a reader may not have found all parts of the text equally palatable, it is rather easy to imagine him comfortably reading various

[80] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 28.
[81] Carey, *Intellectuals and the Masses*, 32-33.
[82] Ibid., 32.

sections, such as "Aelous," its newspaper headlines consistent with his vocational experiences, or much the same with the advertising discourse in "Lestrygonians" and "Nausicaa." In addition, one would be remiss in ignoring how the different sections of styles have the potential to fulfil an educative function in promoting increased abilities, and here the analogue of how department stores engaged their clients in an aesthetic education presents some insight into a similar process. Just as the real department store had vastly different departments for different types of consumers, much the same emerges in Joyce's literary department store.[83]

A final point related to Joyce's employment of styles, and which further indicates his promotion of the sampling feature of his work, involves his aim for establishing recognizability of an authorial brand. Jonathan Goldman has done research on Britain's trademark laws between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and applied these, in conjunction with their contemporary cultural preoccupations, to an analysis of *Ulysses* and how these "notions guide his work."[84] Examining the numerous examples of logos and trademarks in the novel, Goldman settles on the important idea that Joyce had tried to develop readable "codes" of quick recognition through his stylistic techniques, essentially, much like a logo, which would enable an automatic visual identification of his work. For Goldman, it is a collection of qualities that signals the distinctiveness of Joyce's work, "notably [that] his polyvalent use of style, contributes to an identity based not on one characteristic but on the idea of characteristics, recognizable codes."[85] In other words, Joyce's writing resists authentic imitation because

[83] Joyce had been interested in the department store as a cultural form. In a letter to Frank Budgen, Joyce had made a special point of asking his close friend to send him a catalogue of Whiteleys or Harrods department store, which along with Selfridges, were prominent retailers in London. Joyce, *Letters,* Vol. 1, 177. The lack of evidence that Joyce had purchased anything from a catalogue suggests, that as with the "Business Notes," he felt intrigued with the department store as a core constituent of market culture.
[84] Jonathan Goldman, "*Ulysses* and the Fiction of Trademark," *James Joyce Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2013): 48.
[85] Goldman, "Fiction of Trademark," 53.

"stylistic instability is the primary characteristic of the text … [as] no single style represents Joyce."[86] Still, Joyce certainly did not want that feature to detract from its recognizability. Accordingly, Goldman references a letter Joyce had written to Arthur Power after the publication of *Ulysses*, in which he explains his desire that his work would induce the same kind of recognition as the famed medieval text *Book of Kells*: "I would like it to be possible to pick up any page of my book and know at once what book it is."[87] The main advantage is that Joyce's writing is crafted in ways to both assert and protect all the pioneering work of tapping into new literary areas. As a final thought, consider how well Joyce's writing objectives comply with the aspirations of every commercialist who ever dreamt of success in the marketplace: to develop a commodity that is instantly recognizable, and further valorised as a classic original.

Ulysses and the Ambulatory Advertising of the Everyday

While Joyce's efforts to promote the value of quotidian life are multifarious, one approach is most responsible for the basic shape of the text: the ambulatory advertisement of the everyday. Throughout the course of the novel, the reader witnesses Bloom, at times even in paralyzing detail, do so many different things. From an early morning trip to Dlugacz's shop to purchase food to cook breakfast, to paying his respects at Paddy Dignam's funeral, or to helping an inebriated Stephen Dedalus sober up at a cabman's shelter, one activity more than anything else defines Bloom's day – the simple act of walking. To put it bluntly, in *Ulysses*, Bloom is a walking advertisement for the consumption of everyday life. Bloom's ambulatory travels not only connect him to all the key locations and moments, but they essentially mediate his experiences of the day. Ambulatory movement, or perhaps more specifically, kinesis, is yet

[86] Ibid., 56.
[87] Quoted in Goldman, 57.

another salient aspect of Joyce's exhibitionary aesthetics; and this is linked to the Bridgewater advertising treatise, which features a section on the importance of movement in advertisements. "Moving objects," explains Bridgewater, "excite more attention than objects at rest. This explains the use of all sorts of moving signs in street publicity."[88] We can be certain that this passage resonated with Joyce because his "business notes" directly offered his own commentary on the principle: "Intensity obtained by movement."[89] It is striking that Bloom does indeed function in the novel as a "moving sign" of quotidian consumption, and certainly his ambulation through Dublin entails a form of "street publicity." It is difficult to think of any of this without immediately recalling the Hely's sandwich men, and their reappearances, who, like Bloom, are a walking advertisement. In a sense, these street publicists serve as concrete analogues of what Joyce portrays by subtler means with Bloom. And certainly, our contemporary Bloomsday celebrations, as a performative event, speaks volumes about the effectiveness of the novel's street advertising of everyday life. Related to the power of kinesis is the ongoing motif of circulation in the novel; not only are modern subjects seen in constant circulation, but this extends to objects as well. The text draws our attention to the circulation of common everyday things, such as a bar of soap, letters, newspapers, and advertising tracts, in a state of constant transit. Of all these, the "throwaway" flyer for a touring reverend is a highly instructive example emblematizing this process. In the "Lestrygonians," episode "[a] somber Y.M.C.A. young man … placed a throwaway in a hand of Mr Bloom."[90] Shortly afterwards, Bloom sends it back into circulation, tossing the "crumpled paper ball" into the Liffey river where it "bobbed unheeded on

[88] Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 13.
[89] James Joyce, *The James Joyce Archive*, Vol. 3, ed. Hans Walter Gabler and Michael Groden (New York: Garland, 1978), 259.
[90] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 8.5-6.

the wake of swells, floated under by the bridgepiers."[91] The advertising flyer has already passed through Bloom's hands, but its journey in the text is only just beginning, making three distinct and well-spaced appearances in "Wandering Rocks," the last of which had the "crumpled throwaway, sail[ing] eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, amid an archipelago of corks, beyond new Wapping street past Benson's ferry."[92] And yet, it is worth noting that a handbill, a truly quintessential item that symbolizes the ephemera of early twentieth-century life, recurs in the episode of the text containing the most expansive view of the quotidian, its 19 different vignettes featuring Dubliners engaged in their daily affairs, as they "bobbed unheeded" in the "swells" of city life. Just as Bloom's circulation through the city advertises an unheralded everyday existence, including its seemingly "throwaway" characteristics, physical objects of daily life can be seen mirroring the same operation of keeping within sight, for the attentive modern experiential consumer, the persistence and resilience inherent in everyday activities, and material objects, that constitute daily reality.

Martina Vike Plock has assessed the significance of *Ulysses*' many physical items, part of which involves the "strategic use of them as narrative devices."[93] In reference to "Wandering Rocks," she argues that the objects, including the throwaway, "serve as conjunctive agents … [that] belong to a number of devices that help establish continuity between the episode's nineteen separate micronarratives."[94] However, Plock's main argument is that the "Ithaca" episode establishes a very different depiction and attitude towards material culture than what is presented throughout the rest of the novel: "In this episode, both Bloom's body and different objects, instead of being in constant motion, suddenly become static. Bloom no longer busily exchanges

[91] Ibid., 8.57-59.
[92] Ibid., 10.1096-1099.
[93] Martina Vike Plock, "'Object Lessons': Bloom and His Things," *James Joyce Quarterly 49*, no. 3/4 (2012): 559.
[94] Plock, "Object Lessons, "559.

objects but permanently places them in his second drawer."[95] For Plock, this signals a personal investiture in objects, as the ones that Bloom puts away are part of a much larger collection of things that are itemized and shown to contain deep emotional value.[96] During previous episodes, Plock explains, the function of objects was to situate Bloom in a network of exchanges based on commercial and social considerations. However, in "Ithaca," objects are used to emphasize his "emotional attachment" to his surroundings and "the world in which he lives."[97] For support, Plock traces the beginning of the episode where Bloom relies on using particular objects to engage Stephen in some meaningful conversation, and how he continues with this tactic once they are at Bloom's home.[98] While Plock does present some useful commentary on the emotional ties between Bloom and his objects, there is a different way to interpret the "static" condition of this character and his things in the penultimate episode. It can be argued that since Bloom's ambulatory advertising of everyday existence, very much embodied in both his physical self, and the objects that circulate through the city, is finally brought to an end in "Ithaca," then the act of putting the objects away in the drawer is actually a symbolic gesture of closure for that activity, just as Bloom himself is also finally in a state of rest.

One specific category of objects is rather revealing in the programme of advertising the everyday and in demonstrating the redemptive possibilities contained within its ephemeral nature. Everywhere one looks in the novel paper is found: the sheets of paper Bloom scoops into his hands at the butcher shop; the copy of *Titbits* as he sits on the latrine; the many newspapers and letters; the handbills and posters on wall space; and even floating down the river with the "throwaway" in the Liffey. The pattern also includes various fields connotatively attached to

[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 560.
[97] Ibid., 559.
[98] Ibid., 563.

paper, such as newspapers, journalism, mail correspondence, advertisements, and the stationery industry, to name a few examples. Paper is so central to the text that it functions as a metonym of the ephemeral; it captures the essence of the misleading perception of the transitory nature of the everyday, and the ways that it proves to be far more durable than appearances suggest.

Why had Joyce been so keen in setting his text awash in paper? As a native Dubliner, Joyce had been exposed to an urban setting that contained rampant use of handbill advertising. John Strachan has examined the history of Irish advertising, focussing on its highly visual nature. Strachan reveals the reason that Dublin's landscape was filled with ads of all types, specifically referencing the British stamp duty, which imposed a tax on advertisements featured in newspapers until the mid-nineteenth century.[99] As a tax avoidance strategy, advertisers developed a wide array of marketing techniques, most of them relying upon colonizing any part of the landscape capable of attracting the eyes of the public: "One did not pay the stamp duty on an advertisement reproduced on a handbill, or a wall-poster, or plastered on an omnibus or a greenhouse, or reproduced on a window-bill."[100] Strachan explains that once this kind of advertising culture took root, its tradition continued even after the abolition of the tax.[101] Naturally, the use of paper became a staple in executing these advertising techniques. But given Joyce's strong interest in advertising, the paradox of ubiquity and transience that these highly resilient paper-based ephemeral forms of marketing came to represent, must have left a strong impression on him.

There are moments involving paper that evince the power of the ephemeral. In the "Aeolus" episode, while Bloom is at the *Freeman's Journal* office, in an important passage he

[99] Strachan, "Dublin Advertising Business," 97.
[100] Ibid., 103.
[101] Ibid.

clarifies this viewpoint: "It's the ads and side features that sell a weekly, not the stale news in the official gazette."[102] Here, Bloom is showing an awareness that everyday life, whether through commodities being promoted in advertisements, or human-interest pieces and stories, is viable as marketable material. Bloom is sage enough to apprehend how the previously trivial has been upgraded in the modern world. A short time later, as he observes the machinery in the *Freeman's* factory, he reflects on "the obedient reels feeding huge webs of paper … Miles of it unreeled. What becomes of it after? O, wrap up meat, parcels: various uses, a thousand and one things."[103] Again, Bloom offers some incisive commentary, noting the proliferation of paper, contemplating its short-term nature, and its penetration and significance to quotidian life.

Still, the message surrounding paper is perhaps most pivotally expressed in the scene with Bloom and Bantam Lyons where the comedic miscommunication belies the significance of the encounter. In "Lotus-Eaters," as Bloom leaves Sweny's, in a trifling gesture of handing over his newspaper to Bantam, one merely intended to hasten the verbal exchange, he inadvertently supplies a betting tip on the Gold Cup horserace. While Bloom is insisting that he "was just going to throw it [the newspaper] away," Lyons reads into it a betting prediction on a longshot horse.[104] As the day progresses, the reader eventually learns that "Throwaway" does indeed beat the odds to claim victory over the heavily favoured horse "Sceptre." It appears that Joyce is making a statement, in no small part related to the whimsical and happenstance exchange between these men, which is entirely mediated by the paper: ultimately, what is perceived as worthless and only fit to be discarded, is in fact, valued at a higher rate than the perception of power associated with the "sceptres" of the world. Simply put, it is the "throwaway" elements,

[102] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 7.89-90.
[103] Ibid., 7.136-138.
[104] Ibid., 5.534.

the rejected scraps of modern daily life, in other words, the ephemeral parts that carry the "day" (in this case 16 June 1904) and win the race. Even from a purely economic standpoint, the potential for the greatest financial gain in the text is situated in one of its most seemingly inconsequential events. Just as the horse "throwaway" was expected to circle the track and not achieve anything, Bloom, a symbol of the quotidian, runs the circuit through Dublin, and also defeats perceptions by demonstrating the potential inherent within the everyday.

Bloom's Salesmanship of the Quotidian

Bloom's promotion of the everyday as worthy of consumption is hardly limited to his function as just a walking advertisement. Officially, in terms of job description, Bloom is an ad canvasser for the *Freeman's Journal*, in which capacity he handles the arrangements between the advertisers of Dublin's business community, and the newspaper that publishes their advertisements. Some critics have been incisive in noting that, he spends, relatively speaking, very little time in the day working on this job, and even less on securing new advertisement placings. While his success in selling advertising space is questionable, he fares much better when it comes to the salesmanship of the everyday. What underpins and motivates this salesmanship? Earlier in the chapter, we discussed "Araby" and the disillusionment of his young protagonist, an important issue here in relation to Bloom, because to really understand what makes the latter character tick, and how he approaches that June day, it is essential to identify the progression between these key figures in Joyce's writing. The boy in "Araby" seeks to grasp the "experience" from the commodity, one that he strove to purchase at the bazaar. But Bloom – a fully grown up and evolved version of the boy – understands that the experience is the commodity; the boy is all about the destination, whereas Bloom is all about the journey, the

perpetual traveller who consumes experiential commodities along the way. Thus, Bloom's position in the novel as a travelling salesman is rather appropriate.

As every clever pitchman knows, it is invaluable to have a mascot associated with the product, or some kind of invented persona that helps market the commodity. Indeed, we do well to consider that a childhood moniker of Joyce's was "Sunny Jim," a marketing character associated with a famous cereal brand.[105] Certainly, Bloom understands this with his creation of Henry Flower, a conceit that occupies far more importance than merely providing a pseudonym for his surreptitious correspondence with Martha Clifford. In some ways, Henry Flower can be thought of as a trademarked character advertising quotidian experiential goods. This connection to commerce is established with the "calling card" under that persona, an Edwardian era antecedent to the contemporary business card, which Bloom uses to collect his mail at the post office. In a related vein, Mark Osteen has drawn some connections between Henry Flower and the many alter egos of Leopold Bloom, with the many constructed selves satisfying different roles through the device of pseudonym.[106] It is the nicknaming quality of this persona, and invention of identity, that prompts Osteen to conclude that "Henry Flower is a brand name, like Mermaid cigarettes."[107] Trademarked characters operate as powerful marketing tools because their one-dimensionality allows space for the consuming audience to read into the persona their own thoughts, desires, and impulses. It is on this point that a strong link surfaces between Bloom's Henry Flower and his salesmanship of the quotidian. Bloom's fantasy of his Flowerville dreamhouse is hardly a naming coincidence; the invention of Henry Flower as an alternate self,

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[105] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1958), 23.
[106] Mark Osteen, *The Economy of Ulysses: Making Both Ends Meet* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 133.
[107] Osteen, *Economy of Ulysses*, 133.

feeds the invention of an alternate place. In "Ithaca," the home itself is not just described in exquisite detail, but also in the fetishized terms of most commodities in the modern world.[108]

Ellen Carol Jones, having investigated Bloom's dream property, and its meticulous enumeration of the lavish items contained in the house, concludes that it is largely coloured by the "languages of advertising and commerce."[109] However, the crucial takeaway from Jones is that "[t]he detailed enumeration of objects in Bloom's fantasy acts as a prospectus, and, as such, the entire detailed fantasy constitutes an advertisement."[110] Elaborating further, and in alignment with the "accretion of commodities," its expansion additionally signalled by the location's numerous names, is the development of a "lifestyle."[111] Still, what can profitably supplement Jones' evaluation is to consider an element that truly compounds its status and effectiveness as an advertisement. Though Bloom is presenting in this scene an alluring home life, one that is highly aestheticized, most telling in its characterization and function as an advertisement, is that it is given a narrative. The Bridgewater advertising treatise actually encourages the inclusion of imaginative narrative features within the structure of an ad to effectively engage the audience. To make this point, Bridgewater juxtaposes the approach employed by two different bootblacks. The first simply hollers a line offering his shoeshine services, while the other more successful bootblack across the street cries out to "[g]et your Sunday shine!" with the adjustment upgrading the sales pitch into a narrative form that is relatable to the lives of passing bystanders.[112] Following this pattern, Bloom's advertisement of Flowerville does more than just list the elements and accoutrements of posh living, it tells a story about the kind of daily life involved; it

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[108] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.1510-1540.
[109] Ellen Carol Jones, "Commodious Recirculation: Commodity and Dream in Joyce's *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* 30/31, no. 4/1 (1993): 743.
[110] Jones, "Commodious Recirculation," 744.
[111] Ibid., 745.
[112] Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 41-42.

is matched with "intellectual pursuits" and "lighter recreations," even extensively describing the personal qualities that would inform Henry's vocation as a magistrate of the area.[113]

While Bloom's Henry Flower and all the trappings of the Flowerville lifestyle model an aestheticized consumption of quotidian life, the need still arises for an exemplar grounded in the gritty realities of daily life, and here, the protagonist of *Ulysses* emerges as a practical choice. In a sense, Bloom is not just a salesman, he is a sales demonstration on the consumption of daily urban life. At the core of Bloom's approach to experiencing the world is synthesizing his intrapersonal skills with a keen understanding of his surroundings. This idea has a specifically commercial resonance. It is known that Joyce held in his Trieste library Edward Mott Woolley's book *The Art of Selling Goods*.[114] A passage from the text helps to summarize Bloom's orientation: "The real salesman is one who knows … himself as well as he does his goods … Let the salesman know as much about the world and about others as he does about himself and his goods."[115] Applying this as a useful context, Bloom must understand himself as a modern subject, he must understand his goods, which in this case, involves experiential goods, and he must understand the nature of the modern metropolis and his fellow citizens within it. Or in the "Cyclops" episode, a very specific kind of "citizen," and though Bloom and the boorish xenophobe in the bar find little agreement, the decision to still patiently engage in the discussion that his counterpart heatedly ratchets up, does much to indicate his desire to understand others. To accomplish these objectives, it would be scarcely possible to devise a character who is situated less favourably for them than the person of Leopold Bloom. As a modern subject in what is an increasingly fragmented urban environment, and compounded by its colonized status,

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[113] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.1590-1600.
[114] Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133.
[115] Edward Mott Woolley, *The Art of Selling Goods* (Chicago: American Business Man, 1907), 166.

he is further alienated by his Jewish heritage. In terms of work life, he appears neither attached to the *Freeman's Journal*, nor the clients whom he attempts to sell advertising space. As a family man, he has been detached from both father and son by tragic circumstances, in addition to waiting to be cuckolded during the events of the day. Simply put, Bloom's silhouette, seemingly, sketches a dislocated modern subjective experience. And yet, for all these reasons, it is pure marketing genius – because he is an effective product testimonial in the way he strives to triumph in registering a meaningful presence in the face of such adversity. To the wary buyer, he cancels out every imaginable objection to the sales pitch of viewing the everyday as laden with value and brimming with potential. It is precisely Bloom's highly unlikely candidature that renders him most suitable in modelling consumption of quotidian life. Essentially, he is the opposite of the expected model – Henry Flower and the associations of Flowerville – which may explain his construction of that persona when fantasizing about a more fanciful and aestheticized, if less realistic, consumption of everyday experiences.

Kieran Keohane, in a study of Joyce's fiction, has explored the idea of managing oneself as an ideal subject in the modern world. Keohane, utilizing the concepts of Simmel's sociological impressionism, zeroes in on Bloom as a case study. According to Keohane, an analysis of Bloom provides a productive example of how to navigate through the complex conditions of the modern urban space: "Bloom has to take care of himself, to maintain his integrity while negotiating his way through city life, and it is in this way that Bloom is the heroic modern Ulysses."[116] The modern urban experience, Keohane argues, is characterized by the necessity to handle the main challenge to subjectivity it induces: "permanent liminality."[117] Thus,

[116] Kieran Keohane, "The Revitalization of the City and the Demise of Joyce's Utopian Modern Subject," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 3 (2002): 35.
[117] Keohane, "Revitalization of the City," 35.

he evaluates Bloom as possessing the kind of qualities that make him a model urban dweller, "the ideal-type … who occupies … a condition of perpetual transition."[118] More broadly, Keohane insists that Joyce deploys Bloom in the capacity of "place-holder of the condition of permanent liminality, and thus transforms the terrible fate of modern subjectivity into its most beautiful and enduring form."[119] In other words, Joyce's brand of flânerie is to position Bloom, owing to the character's jouissance, as someone capable of being at home in a state of constant homelessness.[120] Above all, it is Bloom's highly compartmentalized and adaptive internal nature that enables him to perceive matters through multiple perspectives. Keohane asserts that Bloom "is divided and Protean himself: a stranger, a flâneur, an insider and an outsider to discourses of Empire, nation, church and commerce; an ad-man, a civic-minded private man, a womanly man, a man who even tries to see things from a blind man's point of view."[121] If we appreciate the oscillating features of this medial placement, it is evident that in promoting the consumption of the everyday, Bloom is both pitchman and pitched product, both advertiser and the advertised, and ultimately, that he emerges as an ideal experiential consumer.

The Theatrical Consumer Fantasy in Joyce's Fiction

A major element of this project involves the notion of the theatrical consumer fantasy, and how it relates to the high modernist texts of both Woolf and Joyce. It does not take long for a reader of Joyce's fiction to identify his favourite word associated with sight. Dating back to his earliest work, the word "gaze," in all its different forms as either verb or noun, is used so repetitively that its countless appearances become a narrative writing tic. Most dictionary entries

[118] Ibid., 39.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 41.

of the word emphasize the quality of intent as a distinguishing feature of the action, and it is of further note that etymologically, it is a derivative of gawk. All of this is instructive given Joyce's fixation on everything to do with eyes in his texts; for example, in *Dubliners*, "eyes," and variations of "gaze," appear almost 100 times in a work that depending on the published edition, only runs in length about 200 pages. Similarly, almost on par with this frequency metric, *Ulysses* contains about 500 references to these same ocular connotations in a little over 900 pages. A crucial aspect of the theatrical consumer fantasy, the toggling of the subject position from the gazer, to the object position of being the gazed upon, is synoptically expressed by Bloom during a moment of reflection in "Lestrygonians," not surprisingly an episode steeped within the motif of various forms of consumption: "[we] see ourselves as others see us."[122] The idea of imagining oneself being viewed or seen from an external perspective, of wanting to attract the gaze, is critical to the theatrical consumer fantasy. This feature first takes shape in *Dubliners* where many characters imagine themselves becoming an object of consumption from an external vantage point. In "A Little Cloud," the protagonist while on his way to an appointment to meet up with an old friend, begins to entertain the possibility of penning his own book of poetry. Here, Little Chandler, rather than thinking of ideas that may constitute material for his poetry, his imaginative engagement is based on a remote perspective, an external view from the outside. Thus, he focuses not on what he will write, but instead about what will be written about him in various critical reviews: "He began to invent sentences and phrases … *'Mr Chandler has the gift of graceful and easy verse.' … 'wistful sadness pervades these poem.'* … It was a pity his name was not more Irish-looking."[123] Much the same of absorbing one's experience from an imagined

[122] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 8.662. A similar suggestion appeared in a text of the same time period by influential psychologist Floyd Henry Allport: "Our consciousness of ourselves is largely a reflection of the consciousness of which others have of us." *Social Psychology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), 325.
[123] James Joyce, "A Little Cloud," in *Dubliners*, 63-64.

external source is shown with another character in "A Painful Case," where James Duffy, the reader is informed, "lived at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts … an odd autobiographical which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense."[124] However, the strongest desire to attract a consumptive gaze likely belongs to Maria, the protagonist from "Clay." Before departing for a dinner party, she regards herself in the mirror, viewing her own body as though perceived by someone else: "she looked with quaint affection at the diminutive body which … [i]n spite of its years she found it a nice tidy little body."[125] And more to the point, expects this action to be continued by others when she steps on the tram and "thought she would have to stand … because none of the young men seemed to notice her but an elderly gentleman made room for her."[126] Her appreciation in being noticed by someone is as transparent as her frustration in failing to become an object of the consumer gaze: "she reflected how much more polite he [the elderly gentleman] was than the young men who simply stared straight before them."[127] Associated with this is Joyce's use of free indirect discourse. Much like Woolf, as analysed in the preceding chapter, Joyce customized this technique to engage both internal and external perspectives.

Although the movement between the subjective and the objective factors into many parts of *Ulysses*, an important passage in "Ithaca" reveals this taken to an extreme. During a scene in Bloom's bedroom, as he is surrounded by objects, a circuit of visuality is placed in motion, one that strongly depicts the alternation of viewpoints. A query, its phrasing telling enough, initiates

[124] James Joyce, "A Painful Case," in *Dubliners*, 98.
[125] James Joyce, "Clay," in *Dubliners*, 91.
[126] Ibid., 92.
[127] Ibid.

the process: "What interchanges of looks took place between these three objects and Bloom?"[128] Before even getting to the response, we might consider how the catechistic technique further reflects roving perspectives. The interaction begins with the personification of objects: "the undecorated back of the dwarf tree regarded the upright back of the embalmed owl … [which] with a clear melancholy wise bright motionless compassionate gaze regarded Bloom," the interchange completed as his "gaze regarded the matrimonial gift [of a timepiece]."[129] Essentially, the activity of viewing is characterized by a circuit of gazing in all different directions, its connective energy even sufficient enough to involve inanimate objects. A close examination of specific advertisements in the novel, some of which are the most detailed in the text, reveals the fingerprints of the theatrical consumer fantasy all over them. One example occurs towards the end of "Lotus-eaters" as Bloom subjects a university cycling ad to his critical evaluation: "He eyed the horseshoe poster over the gate of college park: cyclist doubled up like a cod in a pot. Damn bad ad."[130] Afterwards, Bloom imagines a far better replacement, revealing his advertising acumen: "Now if they made it round like a wheel. Then the spokes: sports, sports, sports: and the hub big: college. Something to catch the eye."[131] Mark Osteen, in his study *The Economy of Ulysses*, examines this scene with the aid of a graphic facsimile of Bloom's described advertisement. In reproducing it visually according to Bloom's specifications, Osteen points out the wheel's strong resemblance to the human eye. Osteen explains the logic of the advertisement, how it mimics the eye, and functions to "not only attract the viewer's eye – it would mirror it."[132] The effect, according to Osteen, is to make the consumer feel that the ad is

[128] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.1339-1340.
[129] Ibid., 17.1341-1343.
[130] Ibid., 5.549-551.
[131] Ibid., 5.551-553.
[132] Osteen, *Economy of Ulysses*, 138.

looking back at them: "the consumer and ad converge."[133] For Osteen, the purpose here is to depict the creation of consumer engagement and while he aims to show, on a general level, elements that foster a dialogical interaction, all of this dovetails remarkably well with the theatrical consumer fantasy where the subject-object position is constantly oscillating, swapping as the modern consumer both gazes, and imagines being gazed upon.

Bloom's cycling ad is not an isolated instance of the theatrical consumer fantasy in *Ulysses*. In concert with this, we can return to Bloom's marketing scheme for a "transparent show cart," and its similar logic, which had been analysed earlier in chapter three.[134] A reference to this ad idea reappears in "Ithaca," prompting another one resembling it, when Stephen offers Bloom his version. Stephen's "suggested scene" presents a hotel nestled within a secluded mountain pass, and in it a woman, after some restlessness and pensive contemplation, writes something on a sheet of hotel paper. She then leaves it behind, exiting with as much anxiousness that preceded the composition of the note. A moment later, a man who had observed the whole scene play out, emerges "from his dark corner" to grab the sheet, reading it by the fireplace light.[135] While both scenarios have much in common, Stephen's clarifies more deliberately, the transition between the subject-object positions, as evidenced with the viewer actually entering the physical space of the advertisement to claim the message. In other words, the second scene articulates more extensively the kind of theatrical consumer fantasy invoked by the first one, and a key way it does so is through making the point about how this interaction is rather protean in its ability to generate customizable fantasies for different consumers. Indeed, these men as characters are a study in opposites. Thus, Bloom's ad seems bright and cheery, relative to the

[133] Ibid., 138.
[134] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 8.129-133.
[135] Ibid., 17.611-616.

brooding atmospherics that pervades the idea proposed by Stephen, yet they both originate from the same structural logic behind the theatrical consumer fantasy.

Marketing an Unrefined Quotidian

Joyce's relentless marketing of the everyday does bear much resemblance to Woolf. However, the approaches used by each writer are radically divergent. Joyce, like Woolf, attempts to commodify the quotidian, but most striking, is that it is a far grittier presentation, with the lack of aestheticizing the everyday, demonstrating the view that the quotidian in its unrefined form is sufficiently marketable. As evaluated in the previous chapter, for Woolf, the potential in the everyday is held in the prospect of its aestheticization. In Joyce's *Ulysses*, the strongest appeal of the everyday resides in embracing its raw form, in highlighting its unrefined nature; in other words, the most important selling feature is the unprocessed quality of the quotidian.

Liesl Olson's critical commentary is rather instructive in that she has probed both Woolf's and Joyce's treatment of the quotidian. Olson claims that previous accounts of modernism focus too heavily on transcendent moments, with much of it concentrated on Woolf's "moments of being" and Joyce's "epiphany."[136] To support this, she assesses the techniques that *Ulysses* relies on to depict the realities of everyday life. Olson references the novel's efforts to record the minutiae of a single day, its documentation which she interprets as completely devoid of any transformational alterations. She insists that Joyce deliberately uses "lists" to actually prevent the possibility of heightening its everyday events.[137] It is precisely through the encyclopaedic range of quotidian activities, and through its unfiltered presentation, Olson asserts,

[136] Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
[137] Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary*, 45.

that is most characteristic of the way the novel "celebrates everyday life."[138] In the simplest terms, Olson extols the virtues of the everyday, its pure ordinariness, and its nature as is, functioning as sufficient justification: "the endurance of the ordinary – untransformed, pervasive, and difficult to represent – [serves] as an essential feature of modernist literature."[139] While this certainly accords with Joyce's unvarnished representation of daily reality, we should also consider other intended effects of Joyce's artistic choices. For Joyce, an unprocessed and uncompromisingly blunt depiction is, in fact, an effective method to achieve the objective of amplifying those ordinary moments, especially in its jarring contrast to the handling of similar subject matter in much modernist literature. And though the listing of everyday events may appear specifically designed to preclude intensification, it is the collective effects of producing perhaps the most comprehensive catalogue of any lived day in the history of literature, that is transformative in the depiction of quotidian experiences. It is also significant to observe that a key method in which Joyce presents an unrefined and unprocessed quotidian is through this approach of radical inclusiveness of details and facts, an imperative that refuses to limit the stimuli available to the reader.

The fastidious cataloguing, what Olson has evaluated as supporting an agenda, other critics have alternately attacked as remarkably superfluous and artistically ineffective. George Moore, commenting on *Ulysses* shortly after its publication, expressed an opinion that captured a sizable strand of the text's initial critical reception: "it is absurd to imagine that any good end can be served by trying to record every single thought … That's not Art, it's like trying to copy the London Directory."[140] And yet, this sort of critical stance is myopic in ignoring the author's

[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 32.
[140] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 529.

aesthetic aims on subjective engagement. From a different perspective, an obsessive fidelity to representing "every single thought" and action, may constitute a worthy artistic pursuit. A chief premise of this academic study posits that Joyce's artistic aesthetics were deeply influenced by market culture, and even this peculiar aspect of his writing style appears affected from his experience inspecting Bridgewater's advertising treatise. Consider the following excerpt from a section entitled "The Commercial Value of Imagination": "The unimaginative man will never be able to compose a good advertisement. He is the sort who will tell you that he never reads novels, but confines himself to 'facts!' He forgets that every incident described in a novel is in fact a fact, for it has happened in the mind of the author."[141] Revealingly, Bridgewater is associating the presentation of "facts" as potentially demonstrative of imagination; in other words, the extensive deployment of factual content can become an expressive measure of imaginative skill, and essentially, this supplies insight into why a marketing man, or an author who is inspired by marketing, might lean on such a strategy as a manifestation of literary virtuosity.[142]

Another salient feature of how this passage from Bridgewater relates to Joyce's writing is that it informs a curious change from his earlier works to what appears in *Ulysses*. In both *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, conspicuously absent from these texts is the intensive inclusiveness of facts and details, the very same quality just previously noted, that emerges as a signature characteristic of his most famous work. We should also recall from an earlier discussion, that, based on the best available evidence, it is most likely that Joyce had

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[141] Bridgewater, *Advertising*, 40.

[142] Joyce's radical deployment of factual description has been well noted. Joyce once stated that "I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed from my book." Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses and Other Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 69.

compiled his business notes on Bridgewater's text after having written *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, but prior to commencing *Ulysses*. With this chronology in mind, it seems reasonable to conclude that the ideas expressed in the Bridgewater passage may have impacted Joyce's decision to radically shift from a relatively restrained use of details and informational material in his prose, to a hyper-factual writing style.

The propensity for the writing tendencies identified in this section is a feature that Joyce readily acknowledged about himself. During a conversation with Frank Budgen, he admitted to possessing a "grocer's assistant's mind."[143] Not much textual sifting is required to apprehend the significance of this personal trait in its shaping of *Ulysses*, a characteristic that drew a caustic rebuke from D.H. Lawrence, another prominent literary modernist figure. In an essay in which Lawrence evaluates the state of novel writing in the early 1920s, he takes direct aim at Joyce and some of his contemporaries: "'Did I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn't I'? asks every character of Mr Joyce or Miss Richardson or Monsieur Proust. 'Is the odour of my perspiration a blend of frankincense and orange pekoe and boot-blacking, or is it myrrh and bacon-fat and Shetland tweed?'"[144] Lawrence is certainly assailing what he views as an overrepresentation of subjective consciousness, however, these writers are also stylistically unified in their strong attention to detail, all of which Lawrence perceived as a threat to the modern novel. Although other modernist writers had been included in the Englishman's polemic, the preceding quote regarding a "twinge in my little toe," in all probability, references a scene from "Ithaca," perhaps a suggestion that his harshest criticism is directed to the Irish author. In this scene, after the physical expense of a full day's ambulation, Bloom becoming "[s]ensible of a benignant

[143] Joyce, *The Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. 3 (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 304.
[144] D.H. Lawrence, "The Future of the Novel," in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 151.

persistent ache in his footsoles … disnoded the laceknots … took off each of his two boots … detached the partially moistened right sock … [and then] lacerated the protruding part of the great toenail," subjecting the loose fragment to an olfactory inspection under his nostrils before discarding it.[145] If Lawrence had been irritated by the trifling and uncouth subject matter, likely, he was also equally agitated with Joyce's decision to commit the better part of a page in his novel to this banal and trivial action. At the risk of granting Lawrence greater analytical depth than he may have intended, it is entirely possible that Lawrence focussed his invective on the "toe" given its connection as an after-effect of a day filled with nothing of greater purpose than the mundane act of pedestrianism. But here, we must return to Joyce's admission regarding his "grocer's assistant's mind," which explains so much about his treatment of the quotidian in terms of both content and form: first, the mind of the grocer's assistant must account for all inventory, and for a novelist like Joyce, this includes interest in even the minutest products of quotidian life; second, the approach of the grocer's assistant must include a commitment to keep the most detailed written records, and Joyce's exhaustive narrative ledger that is *Ulysses* certainly qualifies him.

The synthesis of all these ideas is perhaps best evidenced in the novel when Bloom is prompted to "Compile the budget for 16 June 1904."[146] The tally sheet for the day, which identifies a list of Bloom's purchases and expenses, takes up an entire page (Bodley Head text), and it presents in unrefined form, through the objectification of his experiences, the basic raw ingredients that constitute Bloom's activities of the day. Beyond its accounting of an already completed day, it almost reads as a recipe for how to prepare and "spend" a day, a notion

[145] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.1479-1488.
[146] Ibid., 17.1455.

suggested by the use of the word "budget" to label the tally sheet. A budget is a template that directs current or future practice, it does not relate to past transactions, and yet, Joyce attaches it to purchases Bloom had already made. And while it may seem puzzling, Bloom's expenditures are all tied to acts of experiential quotidian consumption, which, in the everyday life of Bloom, are ongoing and will continue to be so in the future. Associated with this, the budget provides an unmistakable example of the "grocer's assistant's mind" in action, the structure of which elucidates a primary preoccupation of the text: the associative links between the raw material of physical commodities and experiential goods. More specifically, it shows how the commercialist in Joyce views experiences as products which are consumed like tangible items. Examining the detailed budget more closely, we notice it maps out in chronological sequence Bloom's quotidian experiences of the day. Although money is charted, essentially, what is given thorough enumeration by the tracking of currency is his experiential consumptions of the day. For instance, under the debit category, the first listed item of "1 Pork kidney" calls to mind far more than just a purchase from the butcher's shop; it signals his first movements around the city, and before he even steps into Dlugacz's, or cooks the organ, Bloom is already consuming the sights and sounds of Dublin, which are occasioned by the shopping trip. In this way, the budget reveals the interrelation of experience and consumption in *Ulysses* and how the language of everyday experiences is inseparable from the language of commerce and the marketplace. The budget is presented as a shorthand journal of his daily experiences, and since Bloom prepares it before retiring to bed, it is not only an experiential mnemonic which recounts and consolidates to memory its contents, but it also functions as a guide of how to re-create that kind of day, or in the grocer's assistant's mind, recognizes the supplies that are connected with the consumption of experiential goods.

Ultimately, Bloom's budget summarizes the greater project of *Ulysses*: a remarkably comprehensive exhibition in the value of consuming everyday life. It foregrounds Joyce's fixation with the basic unrefined elements of the everyday, the smaller, and often overlooked parts that synergistically combine to construct a greater whole, something that is largely metaphoric of the novel's internal logic. Essentially, this engenders what Rebecca Walkowitz has called "epic triviality" in her evaluation of Joyce's fiction.[147] "Joyce's triviality," argues Walkowitz, "helps to inaugurate a practice of collage in the twentieth-century novel." It is certainly true that Bloom's budget can be conceptualized as a narrative collage of quotidian life, one pieced together in the form of a financial statement for an experiential consumer. On this point, it is noteworthy that while reflecting on his literary career, in a letter to George Antheil, Joyce once described himself as a "scissors and paste man."[148] Moreover, Joyce's enthusiastic embracing of an unrefined quotidian can be further understood as a matter of personal aesthetic autonomy, a viewpoint that meshes well with a key assessment offered by Walkowitz: "Using the materials of everyday life, Joyce forges new strategies of intellectual resistance and cultural improvisation."[149] It is quite likely that Joyce was exercising his aesthetic autonomy, or "intellectual resistance," when in the midst of writing *Ulysses*, he claimed during a conversation with Claud Sykes, [t]o me an Irish safety pin is more important than an English epic."[150] While Bloom's budget lacks a safety pin of its own, it is still filled with enough simple objects that gesture towards a redemptive everyday life.

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[147] Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 57.
[148] Joyce, *Letters*, Vol. 1, 297.
[149] Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 57.
[150] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 423.

Coda

As this study has argued, the internalization of the commodity form had been pivotal in nurturing a subjective orientation which helped influence the modern individual's sensibility of viewing everything as potentially consumable commodities. Even the immaterial, including experiences, began to acquire a status of tangibility as actual commodities available for consumption. The aesthetic movement of the later nineteenth century had also been decisive in consolidating this consumer-oriented consciousness, particularly through promoting a subjectivist perspective, through championing artistry in everyday life, and through the agenda of encouraging the modern subject to function as an aesthetic agent. It had been the fusing of "economic man" as an established social construct with the modern individual as aesthetic agent which led to the appearance of the experiential consumer. The modern cityscape and its emphasis on marketplace activity would go on to provide the experiential consumer plenty of opportunities for aesthetic engagement in the early twentieth century.

An instructive way to capture the essence of this academic project is to consider the extent to which the high literary modernists and commercial modernists of the early 1900s first began attending to participatory culture, one whose cultural footprint on society would significantly expand as time marched onwards. In short, these cultural figures were at the vanguard of this movement. That our contemporary world, including the marketplace, is greatly directed by an ethos of participative engagement would have come as little surprise to the likes of Woolf, Joyce, and Selfridge. These figures understood that modernity had invited a renegotiation of social dynamics at every level, and the literary and commercial spheres were not exempt; just as an author could no longer expect a reader to passively consume a text, no less could a commercialist expect all consumers to passively absorb the offerings of the marketplace.

These figures also understood that consumption had become a far more complex set of social practices, engendering increasing levels of co-creation and performativity. Even something as intrinsically passive as the "gaze," under the influence of a nascent participative consumerism became complexified, evolving into the reciprocal performative gaze as the modern experiential consumer refused to settle into the tradition of fixed positions.

Notions of passive consumer consumption had been the basis of scathing indictments against consumer culture, with Guy Debord's critique famously emerging among them. Debord had imagined that "spectacular society" would degenerate into modern individuals acting as automatons merely absorbing the totalizing images and messages of a tyrannizing and reified market consciousness.[1] Yet, the modernist idea of co-creatorship evaded Debord, and others with similar philosophical preoccupations. However, this kind of thinking did not entirely escape a more optimistic approach by Michel de Certeau, an important social theorist himself. Here, de Certeau's conception of strategies and tactics is rather germane. Though "strategies" may be implemented by larger structural forces within society, individuals functioning within the spaces of everyday life are still capable of employing "tactics" as resistance.[2] In fact, a crucial way in which to resist an encroaching spectacularised commodity culture is precisely through treating experiences and experiential commodities as a rival source of pleasure against material goods, or to consign purely material consumption a secondary role in the enhancement of the former. What this represented for Woolf as a modernist author is clear enough. One of Woolf's tactics had been to incorporate a consumerist perspective within the experiential economy of some of her most influential texts; in addition, Woolf used some of the spectacular elements of consumer

[1] Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 15, 23.
[2] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xix.

culture as a tool to depict the vibrancy and energy of the modern cityscape but doing so in the service of enriching her characters' subjectivity. The sum of the preceding had been largely exemplified by Woolf's narrator in "Street Haunting" while on an excursion to purchase a pencil, an emblem of the author as creator of experiential commodities. Woolf had also tailored from consumer culture her own tactic of "lifestyle branding" through the ideals and projects forwarded by the Bloomsbury Group. Joyce's tactics had been just as productive, for example with the proliferation of writing styles in *Ulysses*, a kind of department store approach to a variety of literary goods. Throughout this work, Joyce had shown how his protagonist Bloom could seemingly, at every turn, engage with market culture, while still making just a minimal number of purchases in the entire day. While Woolf may have preferred lifestyle branding, in alignment with his stronger project of literary entrepreneurialism, Joyce preferred "literary branding," evidenced by his commissioning of reviews for *Ulysses*, in addition to his craftiness in working behind the scenes to help market the novel. And of course, Joyce's scheme of converting the "strategy" of the American obscenity trial, into a "tactic" to sensationalize and market both himself and his text, emerges as perhaps the best example of this pursuit.

Woolf and Joyce were prescient in apprehending the growing significance of experiential consumption and how it would continue to progress as an important mode of consumption in everyday life. For the modern consumer, it began with a reanimation of the spirit of flânerie, in addition to a strong desire to extract from the modern cityscape every prospect for aesthetic engagement. We might recall that the original flâneur had been inclined to remain incognito; but not so for the emerging experiential consumer who demanded an opportunity to both spectate and perform, to become a visible agent in the co-production of experiences, and in the personal meanings produced by them. Thus, a trip through the department store, or anywhere in the

marketplace for that matter, whether culminating in an actual purchase, certainly would have involved aesthetic reception and its linkages to experiential consumption. Just as there are traces of the original flâneur in both Clarissa Dalloway and Leopold Bloom as everyday consumers, similarly, there were undeniable traces of both Woolf's and Joyce's most famous characters within the clientele that would go on to frequent a staple feature of every global metropolis of the later twentieth century: the shopping mall. And extending further, this figure endures in our contemporary world, as experiential consumers now take up residence on every social media platform.

It is no small irony that commercial modernists worked to reconfigure their spaces with some of the techniques and principles of literary modernism. Selfridge helped to revolutionise the modern marketplace by steeping his advertisements in rhetoric and aesthetics, by marketing experiences, and even in pioneering the use of the advertorial, trailblazing the path forward for other department stores in particular, the retail sector in general. Indeed, this had been sufficiently unexpected that it provoked a highly vituperative response from *The New Age*, an influential modernist journal of the early 1900s. That the new programme of modernist commercialism integrated similar ideals for their own advancement of commerce, explains why proponents of the modernist movement lashed out against such an enterprise which encroached on their own aesthetic territory. Yet, the use of a non-commercial framework for a commercialist agenda is thoroughly modernist. Literary and commercial modernists were modelling a unique consumer aesthetic for a burgeoning mode of consumption, for a new modern subject – the experiential consumer – and it was deeply based on individualism and subjectivism, which could be applied to a variety of different contexts. With the growth of a participatory ethos, the expanding theatricality of the modern urban space, and the increasing demand for performativity

among individuals within Western Europe of the early twentieth century, all of this had effectively positioned the experiential consumer as the ultimate modern type of subject fully at home in modernity.

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