

For Freud uncanny feelings are provoked by a compulsion to repeat, a compulsion related most directly to the death drive. The sexual content of Freud's meanderings goes uncommented on. Of course, where Freud keeps returning to is not without note; the very fact that his is return to a space of sexuality should alert us to the connection between sexuality and space, and to note the sexual drive as one among many propulsions that animate and rhythm the city.

The enduring vividness of Poe's story is enhanced by all these other writings that seem to accrue out of the same material matrix that generates 'The Man of the Crowd'. I have suggested that Poe's story is not an explanation of the modernizing impulses of the city, but itself a symptom of the illegibility that is being planned into the modern metropolis. Similarly, the desire that drives both the old man and the narrator (and what erotics of knowledge is he driven by?) is itself illegible within the narrative, as it was no doubt within the environs of the city. Here legibility is not an option: any definitive interpretation of the story (and by extension, of the city) cuts down the productive plurality that the story suggestively figures. Rhythmanalysis (both in the story and in reading the story) is about plural, multiple rhythms, their dissonances and harmonies. In figuring an illegible urbanism navigated by a man whose purpose is similarly illegible, harmonies and dissonances begin to suggest themselves, if only as questions.

Was the commodity-driven city that was emerging in the early nineteenth century in or out of step with the veiled sexuality of the city? Was the inordinate trouble that urban modernizing went to, in attempting to hide the savage unevenness of its ambition, similar to the trouble it went to veil the sexual rhythmicity of the city? Or was the force of capitalism primarily directed at inhibiting the visibility of class differences, rendering the city as an illegible palimpsest of economic divisiveness?

Poe's story is an example of the tenacity of an urban imaginary that continually figures the city as a site of uncanny 'sexual' encounters (or the vividly 'absent' lack of them), an arena of the most modern and the most arcane and a territory where 'social outcasts' lurk. Poe's London is a heterogeneous city where difference disrupts the cultural and social management performed by the physical geography of the city.

Chapter Three

City of Attractions – Commodities, Shopping and Consumer Choreography

Window Displays and Choreographed Shopping

Some windows seem built for looking out of, some for looking into and some for both. The café window in Poe's story functioned for looking out into the street, as did the window in Henri Lefebvre's Paris apartment (mentioned in Chapter One). But the café window in 'The Man of the Crowd' also offered the opportunity, the invitation for looking in. To be looked at, to be seen relaxing and luxuriating, is the view from the other side of the window, unwritten in Poe's story. The narrator of Poe's story looks out from the bow window on the ground floor of a hotel, into the bustling London street. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the period when Poe was in London, the hotels located in the West End of London were the province of wealthy young bachelors who displayed themselves in the bow and bay windows of the exclusive clubs and coffee houses that the hotels housed. These institutions were the bastions of male privilege, where the large windows offered the opportunity to see and be seen, and to watch yourself being watched. In her book on gender and urban space in London in the early nineteenth century, the architectural historian Jane Rendell demonstrates how 'ground-floor bow windows in clubs [and hotels] provide places to display exclusivity to the public street' (Rendell 2002: 64). Yet the elite masculinity on display in Regency London will soon be challenged by even more alluring visions that will significantly feminize the modern city. Yet this feminizing of the city also continues by other means the masculine privilege of the city: it both reconfigures and continues the asymmetry of gendered relations.

The vision of exclusivity that Poe's narrator might offer the passer-by in the early nineteenth century will be more perfectly realized in other windows later in the century. In the shop windows of department stores

and the exclusive shops of arcades and streets dedicated to luxury goods, seduction and exclusivity worked hand in hand as metropolitan cities gave themselves over to the circulation and display of commodities. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the play of attractions, the forms of solicitation and seduction (the inviting, enticing, inciting and exciting of the urban dweller), would take on a certain overarching orchestration. The commodity in all its forms would provide an overwhelming pulsation, a tempo of attraction and distraction for the rhythm of the city.

In this sense the shop window display vividly exemplifies 'the city of attractions'. But display windows are accompanied by other attractions all clamouring for attention: posters and billboards, myriad forms of illumination, countless signs pointing, encouraging, warning. Later, of course, even the most surreal and extravagant shop display will be hard-pressed to compete with neon and video, and the endless phantasmagoria of television. But for now (from the late nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth), the shop window will be 'the proscenium for visual intoxication, the site of seduction for consumer desire' (Frieberg 1993: 65), where mannequins perform 'a mute solicitation of the passerby's gaze' (Gronberg 1998: 82). It is the shop window and its relation to the street that will be our entry into the city of attractions, into the choreography and spatial organization of the consumer city.

The shop window in the form that we experience it today was the beneficiary of a number of new technological developments. It was transformed with the introduction of large sheets of glass (only technically achievable from the mid-nineteenth century) and it constantly benefited from new lighting technologies. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch suggests:

What we think of as night life includes this nocturnal round of business, pleasure and illumination. It derives its own, special atmosphere from the light that falls onto the pavements and streets from shops (especially those selling luxury goods), cafés and restaurants, light that is intended to attract passers-by and potential customers. It is advertising light – commercialised festive illumination – in contrast to street light, the lighting of a policed order.

(Schivelbusch 1995: 142)

Light and glass combine to form a physical and phantasmagoric spectacle that is the condition for a new form of urban visibility. The illuminated transparency mobilizes an advertising technique designed to fuel desire rather than satisfaction. Jean Baudrillard, for instance, notes that: 'whether as packaging, window or partition, glass is the basis of a transparency without transition: we see, but cannot touch. The message is universal and abstract. A shop window is both magical and frustrating – the strategy of advertising in epitome' (Baudrillard [1968] 1996: 42). It is this immaterial materiality that ushers in a new theatricality to the city:

The more the streets could supply potential customers, the more the shops opened up to them. The display window, that began to develop as an independent part of the shop around the middle of the eighteenth century, was the scene of this interchange. While previously it had been little more than an ordinary window that permitted people to see into and out of the shop, it now became a glassed-in stage on which an advertising show was presented.

(Schivelbusch 1995: 146)

The shop window as stage points to a staged theatricality that is distinct from the participatory and impromptu theatre of older forms of urban drama, where the drama is conducted between human social agents. The shop window stages this drama as a spectacle in which objects become social actors.

Window displays, advertising posters and other elements of a burgeoning commodity culture superceded, but didn't obliterate, the cultural attractions of an earlier period of urban history. For instance, in both the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the Vauxhall pleasure gardens had been a feature of fashionable leisure in London (see Ogborn 1998). Other pleasure gardens followed, and by the middle of the nineteenth century Cremorne Gardens in London's Chelsea was a centre of leisure, day and night. These gardens were modern, commercial ventures, which combined organized entertainments with the improvisations of sexually charged sociability. Cremorne supplied gas-lit, open-air dancing, fireworks, balloon displays, theatre and a place to forge sexual liaisons (Nead 2000: 109–46). Its closure in 1878 marked the demise of the pleasure garden as the privileged space of commodified leisure in the city, which coincided with a period that saw the opening of a large number of department stores. The various amusements of the gardens continue but as separate elements of urban leisure, scattered across the city. This is not to say that the growth of one caused the ruin of the other, merely that the image of a modern space of concentrated and spectacular consumption was, by the late nineteenth century, more likely to be found in the example of the department store than elsewhere.

Similarly in Paris, the image of streets given over to street performers seems to have been replaced with the names of the largest department stores; Bon Marché, Galleries Lafayette, Grands Magasins du Printemps and so on (Plate 3.1). In the early nineteenth century, the central attraction of the city street was more likely to have been a carnivalesque spectacle on the street. Describing the Parisian streets of the 1830s, Siegfried Kracauer writes:

The boulevard du Temple, for example . . . was the scene of a perpetual fair. Was it not a source of ever recurring delight to wander through the throng that surrounded the sword-swallowers, the human skeletons, the

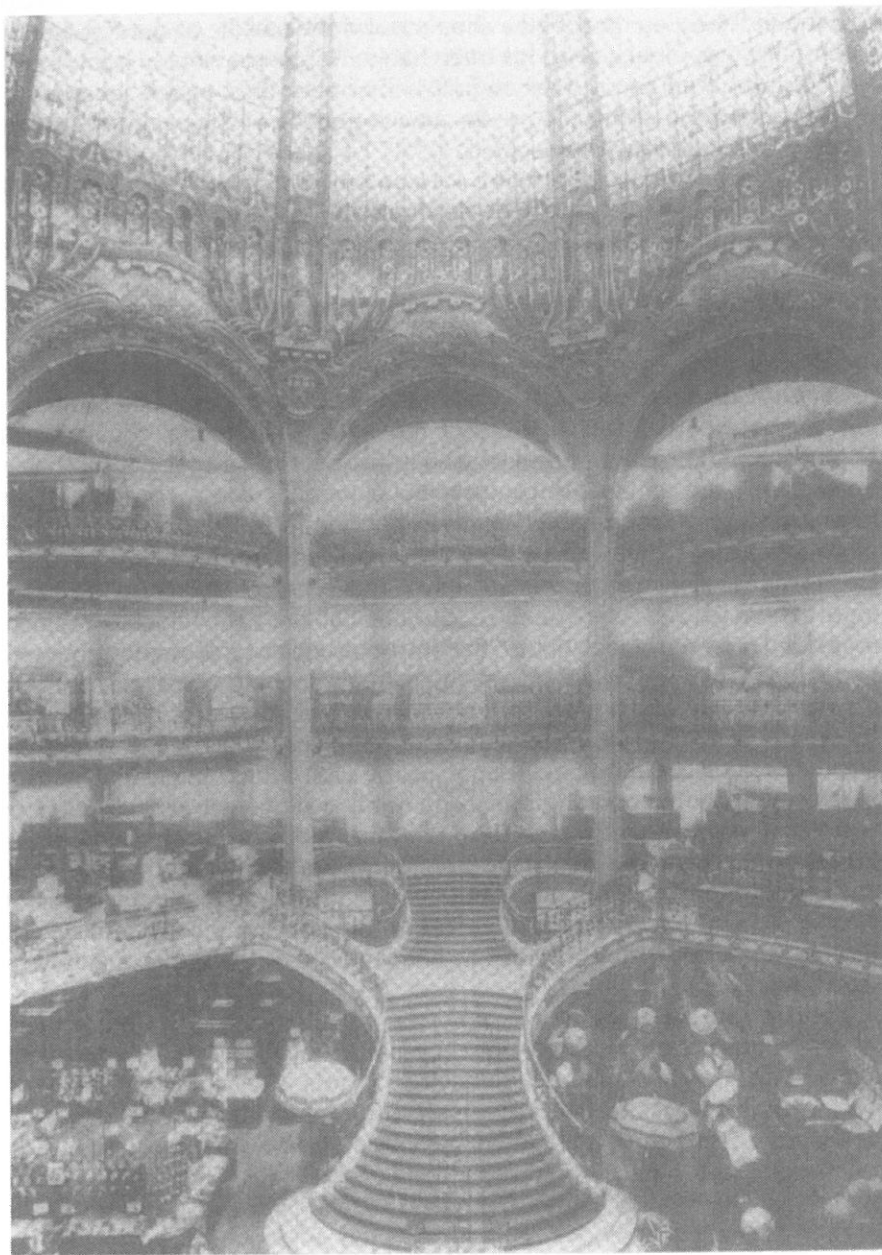


Plate 3.1 Galeries Lafayette, Paris: the art nouveau glass dome and staircase were built in 1912

dwarfs, the giantesses; to watch an exhibition of performing fleas, then a learned dog parading his knowledge, then a young girl apparently being roasted alive?

(Kracauer [1937] 1972: 21)

Such descriptions might still accord with a certain flavour of city life, with its buskers and theatrical displays, but the point is that this is no longer the paradigm for spectacular attractions.

I am using the phrase 'city of attractions' in a way analogous to its use by the film historian Tom Gunning when he designates aspects of early cinema as a 'cinema of attractions' (Gunning [1986] 2000). By using the term 'attraction', Gunning, as well as nodding towards Sergei Eisenstein's theory of a 'montage of attractions' (Eisenstein [1923] 1977), wants to highlight exhibitionism, the use of erotic address and the materiality of display as essential ingredients in early cinema. For Gunning the cinema of attractions 'displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator' (Gunning [1986] 2000: 230). To take this notion of 'attraction' as the focus for city life in the late nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, is to recognize the commodity as it takes its most urban form (department stores) and its most vivid means of expression (advertising). 'Attraction' seems to capture the play of force, seduction and aggression – the push and pull of the spectacular culture of the commodity. The shop windows of department stores will act as our entry into these new 'technologies' of consumption.

Émile Zola's 1883 novel *Au bonheur des dames* (translated as *The Ladies Paradise*) provides the classic *mise en scène* for consumer desire. In its opening pages it describes a young woman, Denise, arriving in Paris from the provinces with her two brothers and going in search of their uncle. A large draper's shop, which was the typical foundation of most department stores, transfixes them. 'Stopped short' and 'astonished' they gaze as the shop workers adjust the window displays and arrange the 'mountain of cheap goods' in the main entrance to the shop. For Denise the sight of this shop made 'her heart swell, and kept her excited, interested, and oblivious of everything else' (Zola [1883] 1992: 6). Walking alongside the façade, they are drawn to each tableau presented by the windows. But it is the sight of an array of dresses against a background of lace that has Denise 'rooted to the spot with admiration':

At the back a large sash of Bruges lace, of considerable value, was spread out like an altar-veil, with its two white wings extended; there were flounces of Alençon point, grouped in garlands; then from the top to the bottom fluttered, like a fall of snow, a cloud of lace of every description – Malines, Honiton, Valenciennes, Brussels, and Venetian-point. On each side the heavy columns were draped with cloth, making

the background appear still more distant. And the dresses were in this sort of chapel raised to the worship of woman's beauty and grace.

(Zola [1883] 1992: 7-8)

Zola's description of the shop as a whole, and the windows in particular, vividly foregrounds a number of elements central to the display techniques of the department store. Alongside the insistence on luxury and expensive commodities is the inclusion of bargains to tempt frugal customers. Coupled with the concentration on the particular (*this dress, that hat*) is the excess of the general (the 'cloud of lace', the 'mountain' of goods). Zola's emphatic use of religious motifs (altar, chapel, worship) to describe this unmistakably secular display vividly connects with the ambiguous connotations that commercial culture seemed to elicit.

The choreography of shopping – the rush for bargains and the arrest of movement, as potential consumers are rooted to the spot, as they gaze in awe at the luxurious displays – needs to be emphasized. The invitation to identify passionately with material commodities, and the presumed benefits that owning them might realize, makes the display techniques of shop windows, advertising posters and shop interiors more than simply an inventory of available goods. In being 'rooted to the spot' by the luxurious display of a shop window, commodity displays might be seen as *hailing* individuals (in an analogous way to hailing a cab). For the Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, ideology was more than a set of false beliefs; it was the process by which individuals recognized themselves (and became constituted) as subjects. Althusser describes this recognition as an almost involuntary response to being hailed by ideology:

Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else).

(Althusser 1971: 174)

Althusser's description of ideology offers some suggestive parallels with the experience of commodity culture and its rhythms of movement. As a theory of ideology, however, Althusser's description is problematic (for instance, he seems to suggest that it is only by recognizing ourselves as subjects of state power that individuals are constituted as subjects). This is

not the place to delve into the theory of ideology. It is as a description of the continual *rhythmic interruption* performed by commercial culture that I want to use Althusser's theory of ideological hailing, and for this I need to recode it. The police's 'Hey, you there!' needs to be replaced by the 'Hey, you there!' performed in the countless advertising hoardings of a city and the numerous window displays of department stores. (In fact as a head-turning performance such displays might yield better results than the hailing by police and other agencies of the state – after all when the police are doing the hailing, the last thing you want to believe is that it really is you being hailed.) It is Althusser's notion of recruitment and recognition that powerfully connect to the passionate involvement between spectator and commodity.

The idea of the department store as a temple or cathedral for a thoroughly 'disenchanted' secular culture, which worships material goods, is a persistent analogy for modern shopping and one familiar to the late nineteenth century. Similarly the juxtaposition of isolated and unique commodities with the stacks of standardized goods tells something of the way individualism is sold within capitalist culture. The commodity signals the contradictions of a mass individualism, where those with the means to purchase can be unified in their singularity. In other words, commodity culture sells you specific benefits ('this product will change your life and will make you into a unique individual') on condition that it does so as a mass product.

The department store's contradictions, as it fluctuates between uniqueness and mass, as well as its secular religiosity, is well described by the cultural historian Christoph Asendorf:

On the one hand, an element of the old representational architecture, a reminiscence of a castle's round towers, and on the other an attempt to create little islands of calm in the middle of the teeming current, where the customers can prepare themselves for new excursions across the sea of commodities. The differentiated arrangements of space bundles and scatters perception in a well-calculated relation. In the construction of churches and palaces there is a comparable organization of space, only in this case it is oriented around a single point, altar, or throne, while the main thing in the department store is to put every commodity upon a throne for display to all customers.

(Asendorf 1993: 99)

Asendorf brings together these elements and relates them to the sense of tempo that department store shopping articulates. This sense of both calm and teeming conditions relates specifically to the rhythm of shopping and the kind of passionate contemplation and frenzied activity that modern shopping solicits (a variety of different hailings).

As such, we can see shop windows and shop interiors as techniques that

both organize and disorganize the attention of consumers. In Zola's case the shop window arrests the gaze of the young Denise, soliciting her attention and stopping her in her tracks. Stopping and starting seems to characterize the rhythm of the shoppers' movements (even if in this case it is the nascent window shopper). The orchestration of department stores, both outside and in, combined fast-paced movement and halting contemplation. The hurried and excited rush of shoppers clamouring for bargains, the restless flow of consumers (potential or actual), who move swiftly from one delight to the next, are juxtaposed with the moments of spellbound intoxication as shoppers are brought to a standstill. The rhythm of this new form of shopping might be seen as characteristically syncopated; a rhythm neither simply fast nor slow, but uneven and continually interrupted. Chaotic and regulated, fluid and fragmented, the rhythm of shopping displays vivid contradictions.

Using a slightly different analogy, Michael Miller finds the same uneven rhythms in the shop the Bon Marché:

Part opera, part theatre, part museum, Boucicaut's [the shop's proprietor] eclectic extravaganza did not disappoint those who came for a show. Merchandise heaped upon merchandise was a sight all its own. Bargain counters outside entryways produced a crush at the doors that attracted still larger crowds, thus creating for all the sensation of a happening without and within. Inside the spectacle of flowing crowds intensified, orchestrated by barred passages, by cheap, tempting goods on the first floor that brought still another crush to the store's most observable arena, and by a false disorder that forced shoppers to travel the breadth of the House.

(Miller 1981: 168)

The teeming flow of shoppers corresponds to the teeming arrangement of goods, while the spellbound awe that arrests Denise is focused on commodities picked out and sanctified amongst the tumult. On the one hand the mass (mass consumption, mass production), on the other the singular altars dedicated to the exquisite and rarified product. Together such display strategies orchestrate the varied rhythms of shopping.

Continual stopping and starting, the uneven rhythm of consumer movements, is not necessarily the overreaching desire of nineteenth-century social propriety. Writing about the 1860s (a time that sees the consolidation of the department store as a cultural form) feminist cultural historians like Lynne Walker and Lynda Nead describe how movement and rhythm was a peculiarly significant, yet complex, issue for women:

Middle-class women were commonly chaperoned in the 1860s, although some respectable women walked alone in the streets of London. Either way the formula was to keep the eyes downcast, to dress neither too

much out of fashion nor too fashionably, and not to dally to look in shop windows or watch the life of the street.

(Walker 1995: 75)

Yet dallying, of course, is precisely what 'cathedrals of consumption' invite you to do. The advice for virtuous women venturing out into the streets alone (mainly from popular magazines of the time) was to maintain a purposeful pace and not to be slowed by the distractions surrounding them. Writing in 1862, Eliza Lynn Linton delineates the necessary protocols for keeping women 'safe':

If she knows how to walk in the streets, self-possessed and quietly, with not too lagging and not too swift a step; if she avoids lounging about the shop-windows, and resolutely foregoes even the most tempting displays of finery; if she can attain that enviable street-talent, and pass men without looking at them yet all the while seeing them . . . she is for the most part as safe as if planting tulips and crocuses in her own garden.

(Linton cited in Nead 2000: 66)

The demand of this piece of advice requires a complex performance that negotiates speed (not too fast, not too slow) and visual awareness (to look, but not to be seen looking at the looker). Such advice on female propriety flies in the face of the more instrumental demand to look, gape and gawk at the wonders on display in shop windows. Of course the slippage that is continually made is between material objects and sexual desire. In both instances (in negotiating the gaze of men, and in refusing or capitulating to the gaze of things) it is 'passion' that is at stake. And in this sense the regulating and organizing of passion, as well as the deregulating and disorganizing of passion, is an ambiguous, yet defining characteristic of urban modernity.

The Push and Pull of the Commodity

For Asendorf, window displays can be seen as organizers of passion:

The department store accomplishes the perfect organization of passions, beginning with the configuration of the display windows. The goods are so arranged that they 'enchant' and 'captivate' – even the most modest stocking or glove is presented as if it is covering a tempting body, as if it were there only to lend expression to the beauty of every female shopper, a beauty that is completely untouched by the burdens of daily life.

(Asendorf 1993: 102)

Yet we might also say that passions and perceptions are simultaneously being disorganized by the display practices of department stores. In nineteenth-century literature it became something of a commonplace to describe the effects and affects of commodity culture as a form of intoxication. Intoxication suggests the unbinding of the senses, of passion and desire unleashed, and it is this that suggests that the very phrase 'organization of passions' itself rests on a contradiction: a passionate self, in the eyes of Victorian probity, is a disorganized self. In as much as nineteenth-century decorum and propriety placed enormous value on the taming of passion and the control of sensuality, any address to sensual passions could well be seen as an invitation to impropriety, thereby disorganizing forms of social regulation. That passions were being disorganized (or unleashed), or that this is what seemed to be happening, is made evident by the intense attention that was aimed at the female shoplifter, by psychiatrists, retailers and the police.

As Michael Miller points out in his study of the Bon Marché, 'what particularly struck this generation of psychiatrists [in the 1870s and 80s] was both the sheer number of kleptomaniacs arrested in department stores and the fact that so few of these were incited to steal elsewhere' (Miller 1981: 201). What shocked the keepers of moral and social propriety was not that shoplifting should happen, but that the practitioners should be relatively wealthy women. Working-class theft was not the same kind of problem as bourgeois theft; it was simpler to explain if not eradicate. Theft by 'respectable' women was problematic, not least because it seemingly could not be explained in terms of material need.

Kleptomania as a diagnosed malady was invented as a partial solution to middle-class and upper-class female shoplifting. If these women were not driven by need or greed (already having a relative excess of wealth), one way of explaining it was to pathologize their actions. Like hysteria, kleptomania was initially seen as biological – linked to the specificity of the female body. Elaine Abelson (1989: 187) describes this explanation in terms of women being 'diseased by their own sexuality'. For the medical fraternity, kleptomania, as a specifically female disorder, was diagnosed as a symptom of 'uterine disease'. Thus it was treated as one of the more spectacular effects of menopause, menstruation, lactation or ovulation (Abelson 1989: 186–7).

The conjuncture of femininity (naturalized as biology), a desire for sensuality and repressed sexuality, soon provided the familiar contours for explanation. That this might also trouble the account of femininity that such an explanation relied on or that it might result in moral blame being levelled at the shop owners does not seem to worry unduly either medicine or retailing. The idea that sexual frustration only needed the trigger of conspicuous consumption for women to loose their grip on social decorum puts in play more disruptive elements. One is the phenomenal power of commodity culture, the other, the presumed energies of female sexuality that might be unleashed once social decorum was fractured. Dr Legrand

du Saulle, who coined the term 'department store thefts' in 1883, claimed that:

Women of all sorts, drawn to these elegant surroundings by instincts native to their sex, fascinated by so many rash provocations, dazzled by the abundance of trinkets and lace, find themselves overtaken by a sudden, unpremeditated, almost savage impulse.

(Legrand du Saulle quoted in Miller 1981: 202)

This conflation of 'savage' energies, female sexuality and lack of control is the same conflation that we saw in the previous chapter in the work of Gustave LeBon. Seen from the perspective of the female shoplifter, this is not the simple surrendering to an instinct kept in check by social decorum, rather it seems to respond to a need and a promise. On the one hand the promise of sensual luxury, and on the other a need for bodily desires left unsatisfied by the conditions of bourgeois marriage:

When I grab some silk, then I am just as if I were drunk. I tremble, although not from fear because the sordidness of what I have just done does not occur to me at all; I only think of one thing: to go into a corner where I can rustle it at my ease, which gives me voluptuous sensations even stronger than those I feel with the father of my children.

(Quoted in Miller 1981: 204)

Here, though, the example is of a working-class woman, the eroticism articulated by kleptomania is focused on a singular item, silk. Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, a psychiatrist employed by the Paris police, made a number of studies of women shoplifters who stole silk from department stores. The case studies repeated a central motif: the women stole the crisp new silk, masturbated with the silk and then threw the cloth away (Doy 2002: 107–11). Such cases give the impression of department stores as, potentially, the stage for female sexual frenzy, of unbound passions.

The second explanation, which was less well received, was the idea that it was the shops themselves that were to blame for the moral lassitude engendered. The extreme class-bias shown in cases of shoplifting worked on the assumption that middle-class female shoplifting can't be based on something as tawdry as greed. Indeed, as Miller goes on to describe, the logic of bourgeois women's shoplifting resulted in a recognition of the powerful force of commodity culture: 'If kleptomaniacs committed so many thefts in department stores, then it was not only because they were predisposed to steal but because the department stores created the conditions for them to do so' (Miller 1981: 202). In some ways this argument was not altogether distinct from the argument that suggested that these wealthy women shoplifters were ill: both rested on a notion of women as vulnerable to passion. What both explanations fail to suggest is that women might be

neither lost to the lure of the commodity nor prisoner to the 'savage' impulses of their sex, but instead purposefully engaged in a dialogue with the commodified femininity being circulated by the department store.

If window displays could entice, they could also incite, and such incitement wasn't necessarily erotic or surreptitious. The incitement could be exuberantly political, locked in critical dialogue with the insistent gendering of commodity culture. This, at any rate, might be one reading of an event that took place in London in 1912. On 1 March 1912 the Women's Social and Political Union (the militant voice of the suffragette movement) smashed nearly 400 shop windows in London's West End. For Mr Lasenby Liberty (owner of the department store Liberty's) the attack was incomprehensible, the women were smashing 'the very shrines at which they worship' (Liberty quoted in Rappaport 2000: 215). That the passionate intensities offered by the shop displays could be perceived as a prison of femininity, while at the same time affording new pleasures to women consumers, points to the contradictory power of commercial culture.

In Alfred Döblin's novel of 1929 *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, a desire to smash the shop windows of luxury shops and department stores introduces us to the antihero of the novel. When Franz Biberkopf is first released from Tegel Prison and finds himself once more in the centre of Berlin, he first sees the 'hundreds of polished window-panes' that front the expensive department stores of the Friedrichstrasse. For Biberkopf they are an invitation to violence: 'let 'em blaze away', he says, 'are they going to make you afraid or something, why you can smash 'em up, can't you, what's the matter with 'em, they're polished clean, that's all' (Döblin [1929] 1996: 5). For Biberkopf the display windows evoke a world of sexual and material allure that insistently mocks his sexual and material shortcomings. These displays promoting the latest fashions are, for Biberkopf, a simulation of a world hollowed out: 'wax figures stood in the show-windows, in suits, overcoats, with skirts, with shoes and stockings. Outside everything was moving, but – back of it – there was nothing' (Döblin [1929] 1996: 5).

Berlin Alexanderplatz was written during the Weimar Republic at a time of excessive commercialization in urban Germany. At the time Döblin was writing, the first international congress of window dressers was held in Leipzig (1928) and the Alliance of German Window Dressers was formed (1925). In 1930 there were 6000 window dressers in Germany (Ward 2001: 201). As Janet Ward shows in *Weimar Surfaces*, the shop windows and shop architecture of Berlin and elsewhere was being thought of as a technology of persuasion. Shop fronts were designed to sweep you into their embrace: 'the store window, in particular, as the primary mise-en-scène of the designs and desires of Weimar consumerism, was host to the daily (and especially nightly) acts of seduction that occurred on the city street' (Ward 2001: 197). Against what was a concerted play of sexual and economic seduction, the idea that such shops also seemed to invite violent and criminal responses is hardly surprising.

Perhaps the ultimate representation of the attraction and distraction of the commodity in urban culture is not to be found in novels or theories of capitalism, but in a shop window display. In 1932, instead of using the display techniques of window dressing to emphasize the magic and wonder of specific commodities, a Berlin department store simply displayed the frenzied desire for consumption (Ward 2001: 217–18). This window staged a tableau where all that the viewer sees are the backs of female mannequins dressed in street clothes (coats, hats and so on) clambering over each other in an attempt to get to the goods. With the mannequins pushing, struggling, tugging and falling over each other, this was a humorous yet violent staging of consumer desire coded as 'woman'. With hardly a glimpse of any of the actual items for sale in the shop, the mannequins seem to become one single clamorous body whose energies are directed unblinkingly towards consumption.

Refashioning and Reshaping the City

The new domains of shopping that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and continue into the present can be seen to indicate a general spectacularization of the urban; they are symptoms of commercial impulses governing the city. The innovations and invitations of consumer culture are vividly apparent in the vast range of advertising forms, from posters to posed mannequins, and in the lavish array of shopping environments. What is more surreptitious and requires another telling is the way that emergent consumer culture rearranges the social space of the city. The spatial refashioning that is accomplished by modern commercial culture is part of much larger shifts brought about by modernity. Such shifts in social space, as we will see in the next chapter, are particularly devastating when recognized as the consequences of colonialism and neocolonialism. For now it is the refashioning of the public and private realms that is the focus. We would do well, though, not to think of these terms as either stable or fixed to specific attitudes, practices and spaces, but instead to think of them as changing and changeable, contested and defended. As such, boundaries between what counts as public space and private space are not systematically dismantled and rearranged, rather they are confused and blurred. Social space, in uneven and specific ways, becomes porous.

Richard Sennett, in his book *The Fall of Public Man*, surveys the shift in ideas of public space and provides a quick snapshot of the revolutionary innovations of the department store:

the store was based on three novel ideas. The markup on each item would be small, but the volume of goods sold large. The prices of goods would be fixed, and plainly marked. Anyone could enter his shop and browse around, without feeling an obligation to buy.

(Sennett 1986: 141).

The consequences of such innovations are crucial for Sennett and they signal a transformation in characteristic forms of public behaviour and public life. For Sennett the marketplace or the bazaar was (and still is in many places) premised on an involvement in the process of exchange, informally instituted in the rituals of haggling over the price of goods. As Sennett puts it 'haggling and its attendant rituals are the most ordinary instances of everyday theatre in a city' (142). If, for Sennett, the public space of the marketplace is theatrical, this is, to a large extent, done away with in the department store, because 'dramaturgy takes time'. A commercial culture based on 'low markup, high volume', that is, on speeding up the flow of goods and profits, 'had therefore to do away with such theatrical behavior' (142). In the period that sees the emergence of the department store, then, something is changing about the very nature of public life, its rhythms and its forms of sociability.

This isn't the replacement of the public by the private but a sort of emptying of the public, an obliteration of its traditional characteristics, which are to be replaced by a thinner and more instrumental sociality. In another way, however, private and public were increasingly blurred by the gendered associations that these terms had in the social imaginary. If public and private have their synecdoches in the corresponding images of the street and the home, then they also had their gendered representatives who inhabited such space. Women 'belonged' in the private, while the public sphere 'belonged' to men. As a generation of feminist cultural historians have shown, this certainly didn't mean a kind of symmetrical distribution of social space or indeed that actual women simply kept to the private and weren't present in public. Rather it suggests the kind of structural mindset that could make women's presence in public seem at odds with the existing spatial order. Of course 'respectable' women did enter the public realm, and while attempts to curtail their freedom took various forms (chaperones to prevent gentlewomen from experiencing monadic mobility), women's circumscribed freedoms included charitable work that allowed (limited) access to a number of urban spaces not under the propriety of bourgeois respectability.

The terms 'public' and 'private' interrelate on at least three levels. On one level public/private articulate a sense of social access and inclusion: it is public space that parades its inclusiveness; it is the private where the principle is exclusion. On another level public/private have tended to designate a phenomenology of space: public space has tended towards exterior, outside space, while private space has connotations of bounded, enclosed space. While there are too many exceptions to see such spatial differences as rule-governed (private parks, public buildings), it is the connotative sense that matters most. It is this connotative aspect that links these terms to a psychology of space – private as psychological interiority, and public as exhibition and performance of exterior persona. Thirdly, public and private signify protocols of behaviour: what is appropriate

behaviour in private might not be deemed so in a public space, and vice versa. The ground for the interrelation of these three levels is history, and it is in history where the peculiar grafting of meanings has been achieved.

The instability of the terms 'public' and 'private' haunts the history of the modern city. We can see this today when entering a shopping mall; the mall appears to be a convincingly public realm, yet shopping malls are invariably privately owned and often policed by private security firms. The mere semblance of publicness becomes glaringly apparent when we notice the way that homeless men and women are refused access to such spaces. On a more phenomenological level, to walk around a shopping mall is to find oneself in an outdoors that is also an indoor environment. We may walk along the 'streets' of shop windows, surrounded by palm trees and piped music, warm within a temperate climate, while outside it is raining and grey. Outside, once more, in the cold and rain, giant hoardings picturing sunbathing couples, intimate interiors and romantic 'private' moments continually puncture the urban environment, forcing the 'private' into the public sphere. The refashioning of public and private space is a much-debated topic and has consequences for a range of social and cultural issues. Any porosity between private and public, then, has to take into consideration the changing nature of what counts as private and public in the first place.

The idea that the open streets of cities were unfit for the gentlewomen of the nineteenth century, for instance, suggests that private and public is not simply a category of place, but is linked to other categories as well, such that to be both a woman and to be public was fraught with problems. Elizabeth Wilson argues that the moral anxiety that accompanied prostitution was so prevalent that the merging of 'woman' with 'prostitute' almost became inevitable; 'Prostitutes and prostitution recur continually in the discussion of urban life, until it almost seems as though to be a woman – an individual, not part of a family or kin group – in the city, is to become a prostitute – a public woman' (Wilson 1991: 8). In France such a connection was reinforced through the vernacular term for a prostitute, *femme publique*, in Britain by the term 'streetwalker'.

Feminist approaches to the city are invaluable for supplying a critical scepticism that interrupts the gendered associations of 'public' and 'private' spaces as they are reconfigured by the emergence of the arcade, the department store and the mall. The very asymmetry of the couplings (private/public, home/street, feminine/masculine) and the instability of the way they are grafted together (private/home/feminine) suggest that it is only by grounded historical inquiry that such connections will become visible. Feminist scholarship also seems to suggest that rather than discarding the kinds of insights supplied by Benjamin (and his literary host Baudelaire), a sceptical pursuit of their analogies, a pursuit that always has to imagine that women's experience often falls outside the realm of available representations, will be the most productive route. Thus feminism, as

an approach to cultural history, is an act of critical reading, unpicking the seams of patriarchy, so to speak. But it also strives to recover and rescue women's experience from the condescension of patriarchal history.

The two tasks that run concurrently for feminist cultural historians, then, are the deconstruction of patriarchal culture and the reconstruction of its missing ingredients. Of course this coupling is itself problematic: reconstruction in any exhaustive sense may well be impossible due to the extensiveness of patriarchal representation. Mica Nava (1996: 38), for instance, says that she began her study of department stores 'to argue against those theorists who defined modernity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a public stage from which women were excluded'. But, in conducting her study, it shifted to become a 'genealogy of absence', a study of the way women's modernity had been disavowed in the histories of modernity (including those by some feminist historians). What Nava finds is that in placing women in the foreground of modernity, another history of modernity becomes possible, one much more ambiguous and fragile than the one provided by the major/male poets and theorists of the modern. For Nava this modernity is to be found in the new spaces where women were allowed to roam (department stores, libraries, galleries, teashops, hotels and so on); it was to be found in the work that connected women to urban space (charity work, shop work, clerical work and so on). Nava also suggests that the suffragette movement, rather than seeming to be a threat to commercial culture, was perceived as an opportunity:

In England, as in the United States, the high point of the department store coincided with the peak years of suffragette militancy. The owners of the department stores were well aware of the importance of the movement and several manufactured, displayed and supplied a wide range of goods – from tea services to outer garments – in purple, white and green, the symbolic colours of the struggle. They perceived their innovations in retailing as part of the same modernising process as women's emancipation and saw no conflict of interest between women's growing independence and the economic success of the stores.

(Nava 1996: 55)

One particular North American store, Wanamaker's, actually gave women time off during suffrage parades (56).

Seeing modernity in this light usefully feminizes modernity itself and makes some of the interpretations of emerging urban forms interestingly unsettled. For instance, one of the most distinctive forerunners to the department store and the shopping mall were the arcades of the early nineteenth century. These spaces turned outdoor public space into something like a semi-domestic interior. Walter Benjamin took the arcades to be part of a crucial prehistory to urban modernity, offering both a taste of the future and a reminder of its renegaded promises. From 1928 till his death

in 1940, Benjamin collected material relating to the emergence of Paris as the 'capital of the nineteenth century' for a project he called the *Passagenwerk* or *Passagenarbeit*. Quoting from an early nineteenth-century guidebook, the *Illustrated Guide to Paris*, Walter Benjamin writes:

These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the *passage* [arcade] is a city, a world in miniature. (Benjamin [1935] 1999: 3)

A product of the new glass and iron technology, arcades were built in cities across Europe, the United States and Australia (Plate 3.2). Although many of these have since been destroyed, the arcades in metropolitan centres like Brussels, Paris and Milan still provide a major focus for commercial activity (for full international listings see Geist 1983). Built throughout the nineteenth century, 'the arcades were a cross between a street and an *intérieur*' (Benjamin [1938] 1983: 37).

Benjamin sees these new social spaces as home to a particular form of masculine sauntering (*flânerie*):

The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.

(Benjamin [1938] 1983: 37)

The analogy of street to home is, as we should expect, riven with gendered associations. If the domestic sphere was discursively nominated as female and the street as male, the transformation of the street into an *intérieur* should suggest a general feminization of the urban, even if it is only at the symbolic level. However, the distribution of difference between home and street, private and public, masculine and feminine is not symmetrical, and here the particularity of feeling 'at home' in the arcade suggests the masculine mastery of urban space. Indeed the arcades, a cornucopia of luxury commodities, were a place where women had an uncertain status.

For instance, Burlington Arcade in London, an early arcade built in 1818, was a space where women were often proprietors, consumers and commodities simultaneously. Jane Rendell's research on the Burlington Arcade has shown that the women using the arcade in the early nineteenth century fell into various categories; shop workers, shop owners, shoppers

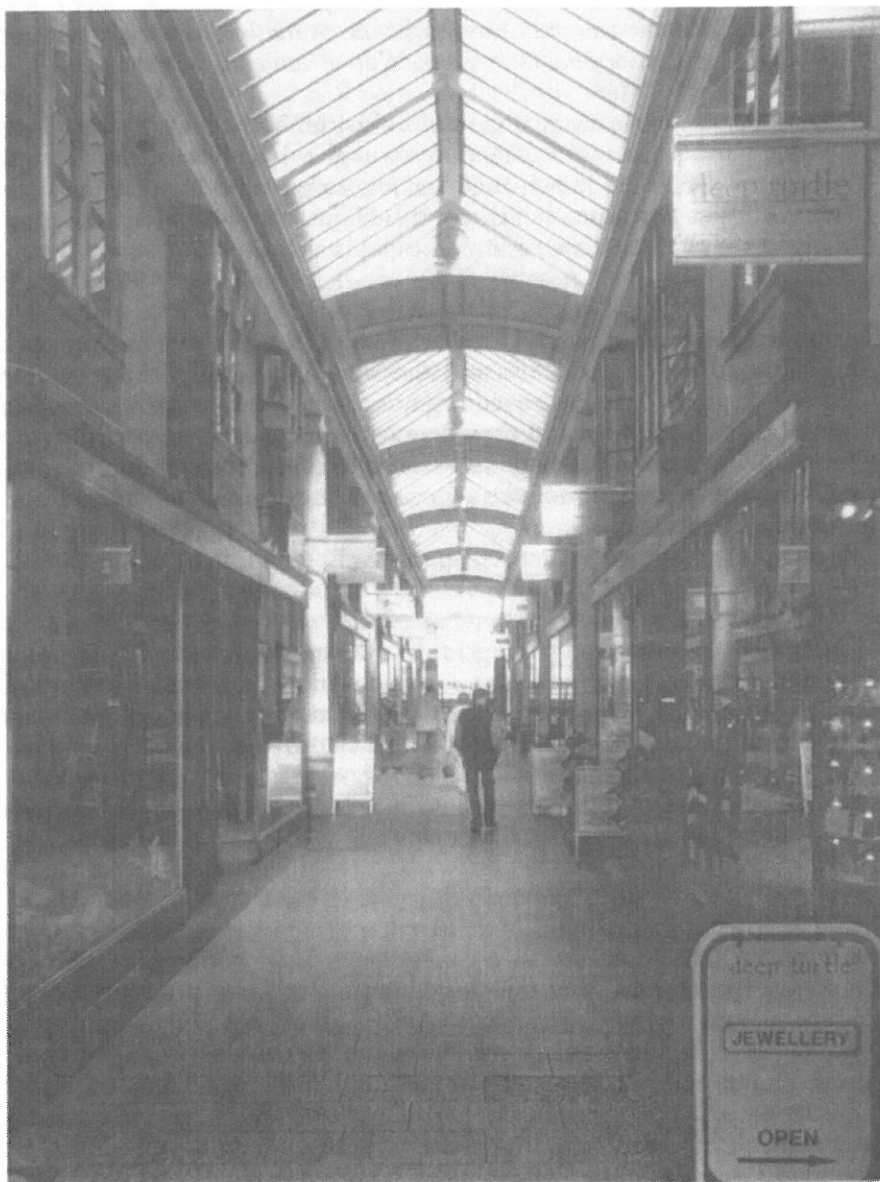


Plate 3.2 The Lower Arcade, Bristol, built 1824–25; architects James and Thomas Foster (photograph by the author)

and high-class prostitutes (working-class prostitutes were barred from entering the arcade) (Rendell 1996). Using the feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray to reconceive Marxist political economy, Rendell (1996: 224) suggests that 'women are the commodities in patriarchal exchange'. In the light of this, the dedication of arcades to commodity culture might inevitably impact on women's status within the space. It is the prostitute who most vividly fills the role of commodity, but because women are identified as commodities (wives, mothers and daughters as well as prostitutes), all women are potentially in danger of being mistaken for prostitutes within patriarchy. 'By far the most pervasive gendered representation is, and was, the prostitute, a figure with whom all women who occupied the arcade were conflated' (Rendell 1996: 227). But she also warns us that 'our knowledge of female experience is obscured historically through the construction of gendered systems of representation' (225).

The role of women in relation to commodity culture is filled with ambiguity, a circumscribed freedom, enhancing the exoticness of commercial space. Yet exoticness was also the role that the commodity had to play, and in many department stores the commodity was linked materially to imperial trade routes, the circulation of exoticness as a commodity. While most department stores in Britain had dedicated 'oriental' departments, specific shops emerged with the sole intention of being purveyors of exoticness. Liberty's in London specialized in Turkish embroidery, Indian silks and pyjamas, Persian bronzes, Japanese vases, Arab smoking rooms and so on. It advertised itself as 'importers from India, China and Japan' (Aldburgham 1975: 35) and flourished alongside the cognoscenti's enthusiasm for Moorish culture or Japanese style. Shops, like Liberty's, decked their interiors in an opulent overabundance of carpets and silks, decorative objects and furniture. For the cultural historian Rosalind Williams, this was a crucial aspect of the commodity spectacle:

The décor represents an attempt to express visions of distant places in concrete terms. It is a style which may without due flippancy be called the chaotic-exotic. But within one exhibit not chaos but repetition is often employed to numb the spectator even further.

(Williams 1982: 69)

But Liberty's points to other forms of circulation as well. In 1878, with a staff of just 12 people, it is interesting to note that this included a Japanese salesman, Haro Kerosake. Urban modernity, especially in imperial, cosmopolitan centres like London, was fuelled by and helped to fuel global networks of imperial consumption. It points to an urban reality that by the second half of the nineteenth century was insistently multicultural. As Jonathan Schneer writes in his book *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*:

The empire, formal and informal, likewise contributed to the capital's

cosmopolitan character. From Asia came Indians, Malaysians, Chinese, and Japanese. Like the Irish and the Jews they tended to live and work in the rookeries and slums, the ghetto which took up a good portion of East London. Twenty thousand 'Malay and Lascar' dockers and sailors passed through this part of the city annually, many making it their home base. Along the Limehouse Causeway and adjoining streets there was a small Chinatown. Scattered throughout the poorer sections of the imperial metropolis there was also a sprinkling of African and West Indian immigrants.

(Schneer 1999: 8)

Colonial and imperialist ambitions refashion the city in a variety of ways, not least through the migrant traffic of people, the global circulation of bodies. As we will see in the next chapter, the spatial distribution of cultural and ethnic enclaves is a vivid indication of the structural inequality of colonial urbanism.

Entering a department store often meant leaving the drab, workaday world to encounter the fantastic realm of the commodity. At times this meant being cast into a geographically distinct world. To enter a department store could mean not simply stepping off the relatively public space of the street to enter another, more insistently commodified space, it could also mean stepping into another culture. But this 'other culture' is also pervasive in the imperial capital itself, in the population who labour and the circulation of imperial commodities. In this sense colonialism is not something that takes place (literally) 'over there' (in Africa, say), it is also something that fashions out space within Western metropolitan centres ('back here' or 'over there', depending on where you are situated).

Residual Rhythms

To be seduced by the spectacularity of such wondrous sights as the exterior and interior of the Bon Marché, Macy's, Selfridge's or Liberty's is hardly surprising, but it shouldn't be allowed to eclipse the thoroughly heterogeneous practices of urban modernity. The potential of rhythmanalysis lies in its ability to attend to multiple rhythms and polyphonic orchestrations. The department store, as we have seen, simultaneously encouraged the rapid circulation of bodies and goods, as well as arresting the attention, movement and passions of consumers. It was an element that encouraged an uneven global circulation of 'exotic' commodities and migrant citizens. Yet a rhythmanalysis of urban modernity needs to extend attention beyond the glamour of *emerging* and *dominating* cultural forms to take account of the tenacious persistence of more established practices (the corner shop as well as internet shopping, so to speak). To attend to the range of what Raymond Williams (1977: 121–7) called 'the dominant, residual, and emergent'

aspects of culture provides an insistently polyrhythmic perspective on the city.

It is true that modern shopping and its associated forms of publicity quickly succeeded in creating or colonizing the most visited and fashionable areas of the modern city. Urban planning went to considerable lengths to further the desirability and thereby the class exclusivity of particular shopping areas. Written into the planning of Regent Street, for instance, were rules forbidding the use of the street for any practices that were not in keeping with the exclusively gentrified demeanour of the street (Hobhouse 1975: 33). Yet, as mentioned in Chapter Two, fashionable streets invariably seemed to feed into notoriously impoverished areas. A form of gentrification, linking city planning with the interests of high street shops, worked to evict impoverished citizens and their practices from proximity to the newly emerging 'cathedrals of consumption'. Church Lane in London, for instance, a street consisting of low-rent housing, second-hand furniture shops and the like, which connected to the prestigious Oxford Street, was demolished in 1877 (Plate 3.3). Commentators at the time were in no doubt as to which forces were exerted in bringing about its demise:

Church Lane stood condemned as an unwholesome, over-crowded thoroughfare, and the houses on either side are now almost entirely destroyed, and the inhabitants have been compelled to migrate to other more distant and less convenient parts of the metropolis. This lane was certainly one of the worst streets in the neighbourhood, but it stood in disagreeable proximity to New Oxford Street, and the tax-payers of that important thoroughfare had to be conciliated.

(Thomson and Smith [1877] 1994: 128)

A growing spectacle of consumption, while not obliterating the slower recycling practices of selling second-hand furniture, was striving to put such practices and their rhythmicity at a distance, ousting them from their closeness to the intoxicating circulation of more commodified goods.

The emergence of department stores necessarily meant that blocks of shops were devoured to make room for the new retail leviathans. Within a few years of setting up shop in Oxford Street in 1902, Bourne and Hollingsworth had expanded into a department store and had swallowed up a vast array of neighbourhood shops. It is worth listing what had to be removed to make way for this *one* department store:

1 pub; a brothel; 1 dairy; 1 private residence; a branch of Finch's; a wholesale lace merchant; a barber; a nest of Polish tailors; a coffee house; a sweet shop; a carpet layer; Doan's Backache Pills; a costume manufacturer; a cigarette factory (Savory's); a wholesale milliner; a wholesale blouse maker (Frances); a retail milliner; a wine-merchant's cellar; a music publisher; a soda water manufacturer; a musical instrument shop



Plate 3.3 Second-hand furniture shop, Church Lane 1877 (just prior to demolition), John Thomson

(German); a jeweller; a baby linen manufacturer; a palmist; a wallpaper merchant; a beauty parlour; an estate agent; British headquarters, New Columbia Gramophone Co.; 2 solicitors; 1 chapel.

(Hollingsworth cited in Adburgham 1979: 169–70)

It is also worth noting that Bourne and Hollingsworth wasn't the only department store in Oxford Street at this point, nor was it the biggest. If the diversity of the shops and manufacturers listed above gave way to large-scale business interests, this doesn't mean that these smaller and seemingly idiosyncratic businesses simply disappeared. What it meant was that a form of spatial zoning resulted that pushed smaller concerns further from the metropolitan centre. It also suggests that various immigrant communities (the Polish tailors represented in a racist image as congregating in a nest) were being pushed out of prime commercial sites.

There is, of course, a range of cultural and spatial effects that result from the emergence of the department store and other forms of industrialized shopping. On the one hand, main street or high street shopping takes on a much more homogeneous flavour. This tendency continues into the present, where shopping malls and retail parks provide habitat for only the most dominant brands. Yet this is clearly not the only form of exchange practised in cities. Once off the high street or out of the mall and the streets manifest something of the heterogeneity that existed prior to Bourne and Hollingsworth. Wallpaper merchants and soda water manufacturers might be few and far between but the range of independent beauty parlours, 'alternative' therapy shops, second-hand clothes stores, delis and so on are constantly evident. One point to note, then, is the spatial specificity of different forms of exchange. The other point to note is the tenacity of seemingly outmoded practices of circulation.

Perhaps surprisingly, at the very moment that department stores were consolidating their new dominions and their financial dominance, other forms of circulation (forms that could hardly be conceived of as modern) actually increased in number. As James Winter (1993: 109) notes: 'the proportion of street traders to central city population increased by something like 25 percent between 1851 and 1911, despite the rapid development of large-scale retailing operations in the last quarter of the century' (Plate 3.4). Any account of modern shopping that doesn't also register the persistence and growth in such smaller scale and more impromptu forms of circulation is only going to show one side of the urban rhythmicity of commodity exchange (see Highmore 2002). Costermongers (street sellers) and mudlarks (collectors of useable trash from the mud of tidal rivers) might be relegated to the past, but the car-boot sale and the internet marketplace are very much in the present. The second-hand furniture shop might not be a stone's throw from the Fifth Avenue shops, but it hasn't disappeared either – it has relocated. The impromptu street stalls set up by the homeless on the pavements of cities around the world is the underside of department store life. It provides a glimpse of an economics that tries to cater to the needs of those whose access to resources is actively and savagely restricted.

Today's modern cities, like their predecessors, are characterized by plural rhythms and a range of circulatory patterns. Shopping malls are



Plate 3.4 The cheap fish of St Giles (London's costermongers), 1877, John Thomson

now often perched on the edge of cities, attached by the umbilical cords of arterial roads and motorways and accompanied by large-scale parking. But the local urban neighbourhood is often characterized as much by second-hand shops and small retailers as by supermarkets. Writing about the

modernization of Paris by Baron Haussmann, T. J. Clark insists that 'Haussmann's modernity had been built by evicting the working class of Paris from the centre of the city, and putting it down on the hill of Belleville or the plains of La Villette, where the moon was still most often the only street light available' (Clark 1984: 23). Modernization is, as you might expect, uneven, but it is actively uneven, it works to expel, to distance, as much as it works to choreograph the movements of those it interpolates. Clark's words emphasize the unevenness of technological resources and the divergent spatiality and access to their benefits and limits. Modernity, if it is going to remain a meaningful approach to contemporary urban culture, will need to include these more residual cultures, these more socially hidden spaces, alongside the glamour and clamour of the new.

The coexistence of two distinct spatialities, however, is not always hidden. At times the juxtaposition of cultural space and the emphatic vividness of uneven development is insisted upon by urban planners and civic managers. The colonial city is often structured on the insistence of cultural contrast. In the next chapter I am going to look at the city of Algiers. But rather than start with the colonial conquest of the city, I want to begin on the eve of decolonization in the 1950s. The point of starting here is to remind us that the critical investigation of urbanism is not something that emerges in the corridors of academia – the critical work of decolonizing the city is carried out in the street and at the cost of many thousands of lives.