

This is the version of record of the following chapter: Anneleen Arnout, 'Spaces and Places', in: *A Cultural History of Shopping in the Age of Empire*, edited by Erika Rappaport and published by Bloomsbury publishing. The final authenticated version is available in print via <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/cultural-history-of-shopping-9781350027060/>

## **Chapter Two**

### **Spaces and Places**

**Anneleen Arnout**

Denise began to feel as if she were watching a machine working at full pressure, communicating its movement even as far as the windows. [...] There was a crowd before them, groups of women pushing and squeezing, devouring the finery with longing, covetous eyes. And the stuffs became animated in this passionate atmosphere: the laces fluttered, drooped, and concealed the depths of the shop with a troubling air of mystery; even the lengths of cloth, thick and heavy, exhaled a tempting odour [...]. But the furnace-like glow which the house exhaled came above all from the sale, the crush at the counters [...]. There was the [...] the marshalling of the customers, bewildered amidst the piles of goods, and finally pushed along to the pay-desk. [...] quite a nation of women passing through the force and logic of this wonderful commercial machine (Zola 1886).

The “house” Denise is marveling at is *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the fictional department store that is central to Emile Zola’s famous novel of the same name. As one of the most eloquent expressions of contemporary fascination with the department store, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) has been quoted time and again by scholars interested in nineteenth-century retail and consumer history. As Zola first shows it to us through Denise’s eyes, the department store is a

truly exceptional space. The sight of its façade alone has Denise “stop short, astonished.” The “enormous place” makes “her heart swell” and keeps her “excited, interested, and oblivious of everything else.”

Dazzled like Denise and inspired by Zola’s vivid description, generations of scholars have viewed the department store as the emblem of retail and/or consumer modernity (e.g. Pasdermadjian 1954; Jefferys 1954; Williams 1982; Laermans 1993; Leach 1993; Lancaster 1995; Coles 1999; Bowlby 2000). They all highlighted the pivotal role the department store played in the development of retailing and consumerism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The founding of the Bon Marché in Paris is usually seen as the starting point, though some argue A.T. Stewart’s Marble Palace in New York was first. Both were dry goods stores or “magasins de nouveautés” that started to challenge traditional retail practices (Miller 1981: 21-27; Benson 1986: 12-30). Contrary to the specialty shop that had become the norm (Stobart 2008: 77-80), the early department stores diversified the product range. They introduced fixed prices and cash payment and based on high turnovers and low profit margins rather than high markups. As they grew, they cut out intermediaries to negotiate with or become producers themselves. Their policy of free entry meant that customers could browse without the obligation to purchase. A long line of scholars has argued that together, these features made the department store into the birthplace of modern shopping (e.g. Williams 1982; Benson 1986; Laermans 1993; Bowlby 2000). Equally important in this respect were the visual strategies aimed at tempting the (female) consumer. From early on, department stores dazzled potential customers with grand architecture, attractive window designs, large illustrated advertisements and all sorts of events (e.g. Leach 1993: 39-90). [See figures 1.3, 3.5 and 3.6] One could argue that these strategies worked their “magic” on scholars too, who might have been too quick to believe in the “revolutionary” character of the department store. Over the last two and a half decades, research on earlier periods has shown that many of the

so-called innovative business practices associated with department stores had actually existed before in some form or other. Fixed prices had for example been common in the decades before the foundation of the Bon Marché. Early-modern consumers felt free to browse in specialty stores and leisurely shopping was already a practice for certain groups as early as the Renaissance (Walsh 1999; Welch 2005; Lesger 2013). And yet, contemporary commentators and novelists, such as Emile Zola, felt like the department store was radically redrawing social and urban relationships. In Paris and London, and in many other cities, shopping spaces did mushroom, and consumerism increasingly came to define urban space and urban identities. The social implications of this process were avidly discussed in the press and made for the subject of many a novel, play and magazine article.

However, Zola's narrative did obscure that this process superseded the department store. It was underpinned by a myriad of shopping spaces, both old and new. Every town and city obviously had had its markets, fairs and shops for a long time. The latter had already started to cluster on central shopping streets in both bigger and smaller cities and towns in Europe long before the nineteenth century (Van Aert 2009; Lesger 2011; Coquery 2014). In the early nineteenth century, the shops themselves could take the shape of plain corner shops, bazaars, emporia or luxurious specialty shops. In metropolitan settings these were often designed as visually appealing and physically comfortable spaces. Shop windows had already proliferated on the shopping streets of Paris, London and many British towns, but they could still be relatively sparse elsewhere (Walsh 1999; Rains 2010: 9; Homburg 2014). Where the architecture of windows in commercial properties had not yet differentiated from residential ones, shop owners still used their façade to advertise their store. Shop signs hung at right angles from the façades and goods were hung, draped or set up along window, window sills and on the pavement (Lesger 2013: 157-160; Homburg 2014). The streets served as shopping spaces in other ways too. Markets were held along them and ambulant traders used the streets

to sell their wares (Bluestone 1991; Kelley 2016). One could also buy goods from public sales held on streets or squares, though research has shown that auctions were increasingly held indoors in auction rooms too (Guichard 2009; Lyna 2010).

As the nineteenth century progressed, the number and variety of shopping spaces visibly increased. Over the past few decades, scholars have pointed towards the resilience of “traditional” retail forms and spaces and they have studied other newcomers too. In the late nineteenth century, the department store shared the street with bazaars, arcades, auction houses and a plethora of specialty and other shops (Furnée & Lesger eds. 2014; Mitchell 2014). Close by there were market halls. On the streets themselves, ambulant traders still sold their wares and street markets continued to be vital features of urban life (Bluestone 1991; Kelley 2016). [Figure 5.3] For a rather large group of urban consumers, the interaction with the department store was limited to a quick or a lingering gaze at the shop windows. Those that did enter visited other shopping spaces too. Shoppers rarely limited their activities to just one type of shopping space. They might target specific spaces at specific times, but even if they did, they had to pass through other shopping spaces to get to them.

This, however, is not how scholars have generally conducted their research. On the contrary, most studies have singled out specific shopping spaces in relative isolation from their commercial and/or urban surroundings. This is only one of the ways in which our knowledge of shopping spaces has proved fragmented. There has also been a geographical unevenness in scholarship, with Britain and Paris especially well-covered, compared to the rest of Europe and especially the rest of the world. Comparisons have, furthermore, been few and far between (Furnée & Lesger 2014: 2). There has also been thematic fragmentation. Only recently has the spatial turn fully transpired within shopping history and have scholars looked into the social and cultural production of nineteenth-century shopping spaces (e.g. Rappaport 2000 & 2002; Lesger 2013; Furnée & Lesger 2014; Toftgaard 2016; Arnout

2018a). A wealth of earlier studies has nonetheless focused on the geography, economy, architecture, the gendered nature, social structure and/or social life of and in individual shopping spaces. (e.g. Miller 1981; Geist 1983; Abelson 1989; Tiersten 1999; Tangires 2003; Charpy 2009a). As both Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau have argued space is produced in the interplay between matter, ideas, discourses, meanings and practices (Lefebvre 1974; De Certeau 1984). It is necessary, then, to piece together the varied “landscapes” that scholars have painted over the past decades to get a more comprehensive overview of the “places” and “spaces” that shaped nineteenth-century shopping.

This chapter will follow the consumer down, to, from and in the myriad of available shopping spaces. First, it will look at the geography of shopping. After that, it will zoom in on the new consumer monuments of the day, which it will subsequently compare with the wider shopping landscape. A fourth and fifth section will explore how urban (and rural) dwellers used and experienced the different shopping spaces and places. A final section looks into the social characteristics of these spaces and offers some viewpoints for future research.

### **The geography of shopping**

Historical geographers have since the late 1960s and 1970s studied the geography of retailing. The first studies focused on the dispersal of multiple and co-operative shops in England. These were inspired by location theories, which were largely based on principles of accessibility (e.g. Shaw 1978; Wild and Shaw 1979). The principle of general accessibility, for example, helps to explain why city centers became retail centers. To be successful, retailers need to be within easy reach of potential consumers. With urban growth and changes in transportation in the nineteenth century, consumers start to live further away from the city center and will not want to travel far for goods that are cheap and bought often such as food. Shopkeepers selling basic items will tend to follow their clients into residential areas. By

contrast, more expensive items that require a larger customer base will tend to be sold in central locations (Davies and Bennison 1978).

In the early nineteenth century, all cities had at least one or a handful of shopping streets, but their location and the extent of the shopping landscape varied between cities. In Yorkshire towns, for example, shops had already clustered in central streets, but only really started to concentrate in Central Business Districts (CBDs) during the nineteenth century (Shaw 1978; Stobart 2003). In cities like Amsterdam and Antwerp, arterial roads had already developed into shopping streets and shops had already spread into remote neighborhoods before 1800 (Lesger 2011; Van Damme and Van Aert 2014). Other cities, like Brussels, sat somewhere in between. They already had shops in residential areas but lacked arterial shopping streets (Debackere 2013).

As the century progressed, most towns and cities witnessed a numerical surge in shops in both central and peripheral areas. Where physically possible, shops clustered even more densely in the central areas: the number of shops and shopping streets there increased. At the same time, the shopping landscape expanded geographically. Arterial roads developed into shopping arteries. Shopkeepers followed their clients (even) further into residential neighborhoods. Food shops were always first, but retailers selling more expensive and durable goods soon followed too. Though the degree of development depended on the local context, suburbanization came with the rise of secondary shopping centers. In some English and American towns and cities, those suburban shopping centers already started to take precedence over the city center, but in most towns, this process only began around 1930 (Wild and Shaw 1979; Stobart 2003; Novak and Gilliland 2011; Lesger 2013: 201-206).

Overall, studies show a remarkable continuity in retail geography over the course of the nineteenth century. In general, the central shopping streets of the early modern period remained in place, but the development of new shopping streets could nonetheless lead to a

gravitational shift. This for example happened in London with the development of the West End, but it also occurred in smaller cities (Bertramsen 2003; Stobart 2003; Arnout 2018a). What motivated these types of shifts is often difficult to determine. Clé Lesger (2013: 227) has pointed towards the relationship between urban growth and public transport. In several American and British cities where urban growth predated the extensive development of public transport, the city center became less accessible, which stimulated the growth of suburban shopping hubs. Elsewhere, new public transport connections kept city centers within easy reach of the expanding suburbs. They made the city more accessible but often favored one neighborhood over the other (Bertramsen 2003: 220; Rains 2010; Lesger 2013: 227-238). Public works and urban redevelopment had a similar potential to influence retail geographies. The boulevards in Paris are an obvious example, but the same has been argued for Birmingham (Shaw 1992a: 145; Schwartz 1998: 21; Gillet 2014: 189). Each factor could play out differently in different cities. Public works was a bigger factor in Paris compared to London, where public transport and land speculation were more important (Schwartz 1998: 21; Bertramsen 2003: 220). Local geography and physical reality also determined how people travelled through the city and, because of that, informed location choices among retailers (Stobart 2003: 170; Lesger 2013: 21-25).

Certain institutions or attractions also influenced retail geography. Though a different argument has been made by Gareth Shaw for Kingston-Upon-Hull (1978), most scholars have found that department stores, established in the core, consolidated existing retail geographies rather than altered them. Their presence could lead to the displacement of smaller shops – if only because of their sheer size – and they also forced other shopkeepers to keep up with their sales tactics (Rappaport 2000), but they often also drew similar businesses – big and small – to their vicinity (Crossick and Jaumain 1999b). In Brussels, for examples, the department stores functioned as a catalyst for an already budding commercial district (Arnout 2018a: 173-

183). Similarly, shopping arcades needed to be established in a thriving commercial environment in order to be viable, but they also boosted commercial activity in their vicinity (Geist 1983: 110-114). Market places (and buildings) often attracted clusters of food shops (Stobart 2003: 170-171). Other urban institutions could have a similar effect. Parisian auctioneers for example set up their auction houses near the theatres on the boulevards, because of the shared sense of the spectacular (Charpy 2009a).

### **Shopping monuments**

This boosting effect was not merely quantitative. The development of big consumer monuments had a broader cultural significance for the practices and meanings of shopping. The first of these new shopping spaces was the arcade. The concept originated in late-eighteenth-century Paris, where the Duke of Orléans constructed the Galerie de Bois in the garden of the Palais Royal. Made out of wooden paneling and colonnades and holding shops, brothels and gambling houses, it quickly became the center of Parisian public life (Geist 1983; Dautresme 2000). Property developers soon noticed the Galerie's success and started to replicate the concept. They built pedestrian passageways that cut through building blocks. The new "passages" were covered with a (partially) glass roof and lined with boutiques, restaurants, cafés and amusement halls. It is in this form that the arcade started to appear in other cities and countries, first in London and subsequently – while already out of fashion in Paris – in cities all over the world (Geist 1983).

Market buildings had existed in Europe since the medieval period, but their nineteenth-century incarnations can nevertheless be considered new spaces. Contrary to their predecessors, they did not function as guild-halls, warehouses or workshops. From the early to the late nineteenth century, market halls were introduced in cities across the globe as "modern" alternatives to prevailing open-air markets (e.g. Tangires 2003; Harada 2016; Fava



et al 2016). In part, municipalities wanted the markets off the streets because they caused traffic build-ups. They also believed that covering markets would render them more efficient, more comfortable and more hygienic instruments of food distribution than their counterparts in the open-air (Schmiechen and Carls 1999; Rappaport 2014; Toftgaard 2016; Arnout 2018b).

Like the department store, the newness of the arcade and the market hall was not situated in innovative retail practices. If anything, it was their architectural form that made them stand out. All three building types took the form of urban monuments, functioning as points of orientation in the urban fabric. Contrary to the latter two, market halls were mostly governmental projects of urban boosterism (Stobart and Van Damme 2016: 366). Municipal governments, especially in Britain, designed and planned the halls to be civic monuments of majestic proportions (Schmiechen and Carls 1999; Mitchell 2017: 2) [figure 2.1] Grainger Market in Newcastle, for example, already stretched over 7,432 square meters in 1835 (Morris 2003: 113-114). Elsewhere, both on the European continent and in the United States, they could assume a more modest appearance, though more often than not they were equally monumental (Lemoine 1980; Tangires 2003; Toftgaard 2016; Willot 2018). As the century progressed, municipal authorities began organizing architectural competitions to choose the designs, which resulted in progressively modern and imposing buildings (Morris 2003: 109-123; Stobart 2008: 123). The format also spread to other continents. The two-story brick Peralvillo slaughterhouse in Mexico City was for example built as a sight to be seen. A balcony overlooking the great hall allowed residents and visitors to inspect the state-of-the-art facilities and soon after its inauguration in 1905, the building became a regular stop for tourists (Pilcher 2006:108-109). In the same period, Japanese city officials started to look to the West for inspiration on how to reform their market system (Harada 2016). The first public

markets were constructed in Osaka in 1918 in the form of large wooden or concrete buildings, complete with warehouses (Hirano 1999). Figure 2.1 placed here

Like other urban monuments of the time, market halls were often talked about in municipal circles as indispensable features of any self-respecting modern city (Lohmeier 1999). The same argument was used in favor of arcades. In Odessa, one commentator deemed the local arcade a “marker of progress” (Hilton 2012: 62) and in The Hague, councilors felt that an arcade was long overdue because all neighboring capitals had one (Furnée 2002). As a building type, the arcade had started out relatively modestly. The first ones were only a few meters wide and their roof was only partially made of glass. With time, new arcades began to take on increasingly monumental proportions and their style became more exuberant. Several, such as the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, the County Arcade in Leeds and the Friedrichstrasse Arcade in Berlin, branched out from a central rotunda. Others, like the New Trade Halls in Moscow, had galleries on the upper levels and bridges crossing over the ground floor passage. By the turn of the century some arcades even housed department stores or grew into them (Geist 1983).

Even more so than the market hall, arcades functioned as pinnacles of urban life; hotspots of entertainment, consumerism and public life. Though plenty of them lost their status as symbols of modernity (Dianina 2003; Gillet 2014: 189-190), others retained their centrality in urban life throughout the nineteenth century. In Brussels, for example, the Galeries Saint-Hubert continued to be seen as a quintessentially modern space until well after its semicentennial. [Figure 2.2] No longer modern in any material sense, it was the atmosphere and the crowd that gathered there in the artificial light of the night that made it into a “singularly modern sight” (quoted in Arnout 2018a: 48).

Figure 2.2 here

Though not the revolutionary agent it has so often been mistaken for, the department store had by 1900 become the ultimate urban consumer monument. Their “architectural drama” was “inescapable” (Crossick and Jaumain 1999b: 21). Their style – usually historicist or eclectic – was reminiscent of that of other new urban monuments, such as railway stations and banks. It was mostly the scale of the stone-clad buildings that made them stand out (Trentmann 2016: 191). While most started out modestly, they soon grew into “monster shops” and the scale only increased with time (Rappaport, 2000; Rains 2008). In 1887 the Bon Marché occupied an entire city bloc with its 52,800 square meters of shop floor [Figure 2.3]. A year earlier, Eaton’s in Toronto had expanded to over 50,000 square meters (Belisle 2011: 21) and by the early twentieth century the new Marshall Fields in Chicago and Macy’s in New York had shop floors of about twice that surface (Benson 1986: 32). [Figure 3.5] Japan had its own monumental shops, such as Mitsukoshi, which contributed to the pleasure of shopping in the Ginza district in Tokyo [Figure 2.3 and 2.4]. Place 2.3 and 2.4

These new retail monuments also stood out because of the ample use of new technologies and materials. Exhibition halls were famous for their displays of new mechanical devices (Friedberg 1993: 83). Department stores were usually among the first urban buildings to have electricity, escalators, elevators, and air-tubes. Cast-iron was used profusely in decorations, bannisters, railings, signs, awnings, and marquees (Benson 1986: 39; Leach 1993: 73-74; Crossick and Jaumain 1999b; Rains 2010: 135-136). All were fitted out with glass roofs, which became progressively larger and more intricate with time. Though not always in the shape of the gigantic stained-glass domes that crowned the Printemps and the Galeries Lafayette in Paris, the atrium with glass roof was a set fixture in the architectural language of the department store. Iron was used less ostentatiously on the façade and the interior (Crossick and Jaumain 1999b; Capuzzo 2008). Contrary to the designs for late nineteenth-century market halls (see e.g. Lemoine 1980; Morris 2003), architects usually went

to great lengths to hide structural elements in department store buildings (Leach 1993: 76; James 1999: 252). Structural and stylistic experiments were in fact few and far between before the first world war – the exceptional experiments with art nouveau in Paris and Brussels notwithstanding (James 1999; Proctor 2003; Capuzzo 2008).

The choice of style and building materials obviously bore upon more than the technical or practical alone. Shopping space was infused with social and political meanings and could therefore become contested terrain. The conflict over the rebuilding of Regent Street in fin de siècle London can serve to illustrate this point. When Richard Norman Shaw presented his design in dark Portland Stone, complete with elaborate ornamentation and wide, heavy columns, the commercial tenants of the street objected. They feared the design would transform an essentially “feminine” avenue – which ought to be light and sunny – into a masculine, uninviting street. They stressed how crucial “uninterrupted glass frontages” were. The aristocratic and architectural elite, in turn, considered this obsession with glass “vulgar” and “ostentatious” and much preferred Shaw’s design, because it expressed the “strength, stability and virility of the British Empire” (Rappaport 2002).

Between the different shopping spaces, there was a cross-pollination of architectural features and spatial practices and discourses. The arcade, for example, reworked the elements of existing shopping streets into a perfected form. It was evenly paved, sheltered from the elements, with symmetric façades, an endless row of beautifully designed shop windows and a varied selection of goods on offer. In a similar way, market halls were built as perfected marketplaces, thus producing a new sensual environment (Rappaport 2014) though not fundamentally altering the practice of marketing. As the century progressed, many market hall stalls started to increasingly resemble fixed shops or department store counters (Arnout 2018a: 144-145).

As a building type and commercial format, the department store borrowed heavily from earlier and contemporary commercial forms, including that of the exhibition hall (Friedberg 1993; Rappaport 2014). Like the arcade, it combined shopping with entertainment, its material form was designed to exude luxury and visual splendor and was a semi-public space (Geist 1983: 113, 118; Leach 1993: 71-90). The arcade's semi-public character was emphasized by its architecture. The porticos and the glass roof marked the boundary between the interior space of the arcade and the regular public streets it branched off of, though the interior façades resembled exterior façades. This translated into a socially ambiguous character too. The semi-privately-owned arcades in Brussels were, for example, freely accessible. This made them into nodes of public and social life, but they also came with a stricter set of rules than the public streets surrounding them (Dautresme 2000; Arnout 2018a: 69-76). In terms of spatial organization, the department store was more akin to the market hall. Both were built around an atrium covered by a glass roof and had open-plan ground floors lined with columns supporting a ring of galleries (Proctor 2006). Even the lay-out with counters and the grand staircase, typical of department stores from Paris to Tokyo (Tamari 2006: 106), were prefigured in the market hall.

As an architectural type, the department store was equally tributary to other older retail forms. Most had after all grown out of regularly sized shops and followed a pattern of continuous, though oftentimes uneven and piecemeal growth (Benson 1986: 18-20; Coley 1999; Crossick and Jaumain 1999b: 22; Proctor 2006; Rains 2010: 13-15). Store owners first expanded to the back rooms, opened up upper floors and covered courtyards. When the full potential of the existing building was reached, adjacent buildings were annexed and integrated with minimal adjustments. At a later stage, management might decide to rebuild the store into a more coherent whole. Only a handful achieved the idealized shape of the fictional Au

Bonheur des Dames – a symmetric, square or rectangular-shaped building taking up an entire building bloc (Benson 1986: 18-20; Rappaport 2000; Bertramsen 2003; Proctor 2006).

While it is easy to distinguish the famous department stores that have survived to this day or have left clear, visible traces in the sources, there really was no such thing as “the” department store (Bertramsen 2003; Mitchell 2015; Stobart 2017; Arnout 2018a: 184-185). All cities had smaller and larger specialty shops that stretched over multiple floors in grand buildings and shared organizational characteristics with the department store. Among these were the bazaars and emporia that had been popular in England in the early nineteenth century [see Figure 1.4 in previous chapter] (Mitchell 2010: 876). Emporia were drapers’ stores that had extended their product ranges to include a wide variety of textiles and other fashionable goods. Some even sold furniture. The expansion of the product range was accommodated in new, elegant buildings. The shop floors extended to upper levels and there were large plate-glass windows on the ground floor (Walsh 1999: 67; Stobart 2008: 105-109). Though not comparable in size to the fin de siècle department stores, these emporia are exemplary of the presence of unusually large shops before the mid-nineteenth century (Walsh 1999; Mitchell 2010: 879).

There was a close resemblance between the spatial organization of department stores and bazaars (Stobart 2008: 109-115; Mitchell 2010). The most innovative English and French bazaars exploited new technology to create vast open-planned spaces, lit from above and surrounded with galleries. [Figure 1.4] Much like market vendors did in the early market halls, individual traders rented out counters on a daily basis but unlike market vendors they only sold consumer goods. Many bazaars stretched over multiple floors and some of them, like the London Soho Bazaar in 1816, had over a hundred and fifty counters (Morris 2003: 93-99). While the bazaar disappeared from many English towns by the mid-century, it lived

on in continental Europe, with new bazaars opening even at the end of the century. (Homburg 2014: 140-146; Lesger 2013: 238-244).

### **Moving bodies**

Between the multitude and variety of shopping spaces there was a continuous recycling, but some characteristics became less prominent, while others were highlighted as the century progressed. Each shopping space marked a moment in the development of shopping as a spatial practice and imbued it with an increased sense of movement. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shops turned increasingly inward. Most consisted of a modestly sized room designed as a comfortable and luxurious interior space (Stobart 2008: 55-59, 87-92; Lesger 2013: 172-190). Customers often sat down and were not encouraged to walk around. Though browsing was possible, it was mostly done over the counter. Even in the larger emporia of the early nineteenth century, customers were often accompanied to the counter, where he or she could browse sitting down. In practice, the introduction of the indoor shop had made the actual experience of shopping into a sedentary one – especially where upscale shops were concerned.

With the inward turn, shopkeepers increasingly traded their outside displays for displays behind shop windows that were designed for the purpose (Lesger 2014: 116-121). The proliferation of shop windows in turn led to the emergence of the new practice of window-shopping, which paradoxically brought an increasingly essential part of the shopping experience out on the streets again. Strolling by and admiring shop windows slowly became an essential component of shopping as a spatial practice. [Figure 3.1] In early nineteenth-century England, for example, visits to “bookshops or drapers” were combined with “visits to pump rooms and gardens, walks along promenades, or tea with friends” (Stobart 2014: 29). Crucial to this development was the transformation of shopping streets, which took an early

start in late seventeenth-century England. Most other cities, like Paris, retained their medieval appearance until well into the eighteenth century. For those cities, the nineteenth century invariably came with ample and sometimes extremely invasive urban redevelopment projects.

Population and traffic growth made it more difficult to navigate the streets, providing the context for the arcade, market hall and department store to flourish. All provided the urban dweller with a comfortable space, where he or she could walk in safety, sheltered from the dangers of the streets and the inconveniences of the weather (Rappaport 2014; Arnout 2014). Combining a wide and even pavement with a roof and splendid architecture, the arcade was even more conducive to leisurely perambulation than the best of London's eighteenth-century shopping streets. Because it was reserved for those on foot, shopping could no longer be done from a carriage. If it was built in the right location – in between two commercial streets – the arcade had all the ingredients to stimulate *flânerie* [Figure 2.2] (Geist 1983: 62-64; Gillet 2014: 184)

Accelerated urban improvement works in cities all over Europe and provincial England further stimulated the development of shopping as perambulation. Central streets were paved and lit. Footpaths were constructed. Trapdoors were increasingly forbidden, or their use was more strictly regulated. Building alignments were decided upon and enforced and building codes stipulated the degree to which windowsills, doorsteps and scrapers could protrude onto the road. Also conducive to the development of shopping as a pedestrian activity were new spatial ideas regarding the street. In many Western cities, municipal authorities developed what Patrick Joyce termed a “liberal rule” geared towards a more “efficient” and restricted use of the street (Joyce 2003; Kenny 2014: 6-9, 200-211; Toftgaard 2016: 380-383). Where it had been home to a myriad of activities in the past, the street was now seen as a space that needed to be reserved for circulation. [Figure 2.5] Urban governments started to ban all activities that could impede the smooth flow of vehicles and



pedestrians. They moved open-air markets into buildings and issued regulations that prohibited hawkers and peddlers from displaying their wares on the open road. Though the displays did add to the growing congestion of busy streets, there was more to this operation than simply organizing space efficiently. Street selling itself was increasingly perceived as offensive to middle and upper-class eyes, who saw the vendors, their “coarse” manners and lowly customers, as offensive and unbefitting of the fashionable central shopping streets they had continued to operate in. (Stobart 2008: 118-119; Deutsch 2010; Rappaport 2014: 76).

Place figure 2.5 here

In cities like Paris, Vienna, Washington D.C., Tokyo and in colonial cities such as Calcutta more drastic interventions followed (Schorske 1979; Farrar 2008; Sorensen 2002; Basu 2016). Rationalized networks of straight streets and lanes replaced jumbles of sinuous and narrow streets that had dominated city centers before. Most cities did retain some or much of their old structure, but nearly everywhere the boulevard made its entrance. In Paris, public works “encouraged strollers to abandon the interior of the arcades” in favor of the wide boulevards, with their fresh “air and trees” (Gillet 2014:189). With a spacious pavement, rows of shop windows, cafés and entertainment venues, the boulevards offered the continuous opportunity of people-watching. They were places where the social classes met one another and where class and gender distinctions could be played out (Cowman 2001; Gunn 2001; Rappaport 2002). Together the regulations, footpaths, alignments, building codes, arcades and boulevards made for streets that were better suited to the development of window shopping. This showed in the contemporary press, which increasingly styled their overviews of shopping attractions in the form of urban promenades or “walks through town” (Rappaport, 2000; Stobart 2008: 153; Arnout 2018a: 234-238; 252-253).

The ambulatory component of shopping was increasingly extended indoors too. Though the arcade could be seen as the first indoor shopping space to be so explicitly imbued

with a sense of movement, the strolling was not done inside the shops themselves.

Department stores internal organization was explicitly geared towards keeping people moving from one counter to another, or as architect Victor Horta put it for his Brussels department store building:

It was of remarkable simplicity, the program for the construction of A  
l’Innovation: to capture the attention of the passer-by from the outside and turn  
him into a buyer and then, once inside “the cage”, force him to pass and stop  
before every single piece of displayed merchandise (Horta 1985: 103).

The passers-by were drawn in through multiple entrances. The revolving door facilitated the continuous flow of people into the building. Elevators and escalators sped up circulation inside the stores (Leach 1993: 72). Like in the exhibition halls, counters and displays seem to have been expanding “profligately in every direction possible” (Richards 1990: 27). The department store represented a new momentum in the (re)development of shopping as an essentially mobile practice.

### **Spectacular Cultures**

Though people started moving about the store more than in eighteenth-century shops, the old emphasis on comfort and luxury continued and was built into new shopping spaces.

Authorities claimed that the market hall would benefit consumers and vendors alike because it protected them and their products from the rain, dirt and heat of the ordinary marketplace (Rappaport 2014: 74-76). Roofs had the added bonus of muffling any unpleasant sounds produced in the surrounding city. The department store offered the consumer a one-stop shopping space, equally sheltered from the inconveniences of the weather and the bustle of the streets. Its restaurants, tea rooms, restrooms, reading rooms and offered services were specifically added to enhance the comfort of the – mostly female – customers (Benson 1986:

82-91; Rappaport 2000; Belisle 2011: 92-95). [Figure 3.2] Department stores cultivated their reputations of “providers” and claimed that their institutions “protected” consumers “from the sensual assaults of the street, the open-air market, and the small shop” (Rappaport 2014: 71). Services and comforts were thus deployed to target bourgeois female customers, boost reputations, and ward off social and political criticism.

Middle-class and higher-end shopping spaces were not just comfortable but also luxurious sensory environments. For example, in the French provincial town of Besançon classic wooden or wicker chairs were replaced with upholstered ones. Mirrors, paintings, carpets, engravings, frames, trinkets, clocks, cases and other precious objects started to pervade the shops (Gillet 2014: 200-201). The level of luxury similarly increased in late nineteenth-century American department stores. Materials that had previously been reserved for residential use or for high-end luxury stores were now being “democratized” in the middle-class consumer palaces. Iron and plain wooden decorations were replaced with bronze and mahogany. Marble and carpets replaced and covered wooden floors. Mirrors sparkled on columns and walls. High-end specialty shops were also confronted with new standards regarding luxury. Erika Rappaport has for example shown how London’s Regent Street, designed in the early nineteenth century, had lost all of its “sensual appeal” by the 1880s, when its shops were seen as “shabby, dark, and smelly.” The mahogany counters and glittering shop windows, she argues, no longer made up for low ceilings, bad lighting, and insufficient ventilation (Rappaport 2002).

Shopping engaged with all the senses, but it has been the visual aspects of shopping culture that have received the most scholarly attention (Rappaport 2014). Inspired by Walter Benjamin’s reading of arcades and department stores as “dreamscapes of bourgeois desires,” scholars have argued that these shopping spaces increasingly engaged commodities in a spectacle of visual splendor (Leach 1993; Hahn 2009). As “monuments for the commodity”,

exhibition halls functioned as both “a market and a museum” and drastically impacted advertising practices (Richards 1990: 17, 19). The abundance and variety of goods on display in the Crystal Palace in 1851 was completely unparalleled. The enormity of the building and the collection was impossible to take in at one glance and presented “a massive phenomenal assault on the senses of the consumer” (Richards 1990: 35). Thomas Richards has identified the Great Exhibition as “the first outburst of the phantasmagoria of commodity culture” (1990: 18). Like the arcade and the department store, the architectural form of the exhibition hall molded the gaze of the consumer, bringing objects under visual scrutiny in the public realm and commodifying visual experience (Friedberg 1993; Rappaport 2014). The architecture of spaces such as the exhibition halls, the arcades, boulevards and department stores, the sheer quantity of goods and the way these were displayed all contributed to a visual spectacle that now became paramount in the sale of goods.

Shopping streets – and not just the fanciest ones – decluttered. Plate-glass windows created a barrier between the consumer and the goods. This added to the theatrical effect but it also took away the opportunity of casually touching goods on the streets. Shoppers thus turned into spectators first (Leach 1993: 39-70). Changing fashions in window displays reflected this growing taste for the theatrical. Early windows often had just one example of what was on sale or stacked a bunch, but the more intricate displays that appeared at the turn of the century – oftentimes animated using new technology – made for real show windows. In large stores, the windows assumed the proportion of a spacious family room. In them were imaginative tableaux with life-size mannequins – or real-life models. In 1908 the Washington police was for example called in to intervene at a window with “living mannequins wearing revealing gowns” because a crowd had “jammed” and a man refused to move away (Leach 1993: 66). The spectacular approaches did not limit themselves to the big cities. In 1890s South Dakota live mannequins advertised products ranging from diamonds to strawberries by

wearing them during a “gorgeous Carnival” (Leach 1993: 58). Contemporaries would often talk about windows as sights and as visual spectacles – especially when they were lit up at night (Hahn 2009; Furnée 2014: 214-222).

### **Social spaces**

As both Furnée and Charpy’s chapters make clear shopping was a critical space which produced and seemed to disrupt class, gender and other social identities. In the nineteenth-century the anxiety over the uncontrolled mixture of diverse men and women meant that debates over shopping became entangled with narratives of sexual danger. In both London and Berlin, emotions ran high following stories of respectable women arrested by the police as presumed prostitutes while window shopping (Walkowitz 1998; Prestel 2017: 75-105). As the intensely mediatized debates over mistaken identities, street harassment and street walking in London’s West End illustrate, moral codes and societal conventions limited women’s access to the shopping streets – even if they were technically accessible. Even if there was an ideal of access, most nineteenth-century shopping spaces were socially exclusive in some way or other. Though department stores and their free entry policy did open their doors to larger groups of consumers, security guards nonetheless policed users.

Privately owned arcades were often closed at night and fenced off, and in some of them an entry fee discouraged certain groups from passing through. The Burlington Arcade even had its own police force. Its beadle famously kept (and keep) visitors from running, singing and whistling among other things and could refuse entry. Class and gender norms also structured access and feelings of comfort in other shopping spaces. In the early nineteenth-century, American open-air markets were socially mixed, but going to the market was seen as a male activity. Middle-class women were not expected to visit them (Tangires 2003: 53-55). Elsewhere, open-air markets were usually and increasingly – though not exclusively – working-class spaces. Those with money employed servants to go to the market for them or

had goods delivered at home (Cieraad 2008). In the late nineteenth century, British market halls were important spaces of entertainment for the working classes on Saturday nights, when the performers were of greater appeal than the food stalls (Schmiechen and Carls 1999: 165-168).

On the streets, shop windows had the potential of attracting different social groups at the same time, especially at night and at special occasions, like at Christmas in London or before the feast of “Sinterklaas” in The Hague (Hosgood 1999; Furnée 2003). Inside the stores, there was a different dynamic. Despite their reputation of having opened up consumption to the masses with their low profit margins and free entry policy, department and similar stores mostly targeted specific social groups, from the upper and middling to the upper working classes (Crossick and Jaumain 1999b). The inclusive stores could apply their own tactics of social and racial segregation. African-American customers were always second in line to be served and they could hardly ever make use of fitting or lunch rooms in American department stores (Weyeneth 2005: 24). Plenty of department stores also had bargain basements, which were far less lavishly decorated than the other floors and often had a separate entrance too. Clé Lesger similarly stresses that the big stores in late nineteenth-century Amsterdam had all sorts of mechanisms to segregate clients according to class lines (Lesger 2003: 293-295).

A wide variety of actors, including architects, retailers, managers, policy and opinion makers built, fought over and gave meaning to shopping spaces and practices. Shoppers were part of this process, but their perspective has primarily been studied by proxy of public opinion in newspapers, magazines or through fictional literature. Using more personal sources, such as diaries and letters, Donica Belisle has argued that Canadian department stores were spaces with multifarious meanings for the people that used them. She was able to demonstrate, for example, that twentieth-century female customers were far less overwhelmed

by the splendor and the wealth of goods than one might think. They might experience joy, pleasure, comfort or excitement, but often found the stores, its managers and assistants frustrating as well. (Belisle 2011: 145-156).

We know even less about working-class experiences than we do about middle and upper-class ones. In fact, our knowledge of lower-class shopping spaces is still relatively limited. According to Jon Stobart's (2008) account of English working-class shops, these had already turned away from the street and had installed shop windows by 1800 – though this was not the case in Amsterdam (Lesger 2013). Research on window displays of Canadian and Belgian grocers has shown that the precise appearance of a shop front and its interior was dependent on its location. In turn of the century Canada, working-class shops often used windows for storage rather than for display (Walden 1989). Branch stores of the Belgian grocer Delhaize always had ornate windows in middle and upper-class neighborhoods, while branches in working-class neighborhoods and in villages were often installed without much adaptations to the outward structure. All branch-holders were nevertheless instructed on how to display their wares (Teughels 2014). Co-operatives also kept up with the times in their advertising strategies and with their shop design. [Figure 1.6] They always adopted the architectural, organizational and display strategies of regular stores and by the later nineteenth century, they too constructed purpose-built consumer monuments that were reminiscent of contemporary department stores (Kelley 1998; Furlough and Strikwerda 1999; Scholliers 1999; Morrison 2004:145-155). One also continued to find peddlers – usually associated with the lower classes – on elegant shopping streets (Bluestone 1991). In nineteenth-century Beijing's multifarious shopping landscape, modern shops sat next to street sellers and performers (Trentmann 2016: 190-191). In most cities, more modest and more luxurious shopping spaces could sit in small proximity to one another, but how different social groups experienced their own and other shopping spaces remains unclear. How much of the shopping

culture was shared across the population and how much of it was not is a question that has yet to be answered.

### **An urban pursuit?**

As one can see from the above discussion, nineteenth-century shopping has been conceptualized as a distinctly urban practice. Victorians saw shoppers as “urban pleasure seekers” and “shopping,” Erika Rappaport argues, “meant a day ‘in Town’” (Rappaport 2000: 5). The nineteenth century was a period during which more and more people participated in this “urban pursuit” – not just in terms of social class, but also in geographical scope. Though people living in the countryside had been shopping in smaller towns, villages and in bigger cities before, the development of railways made travelling into the center of town easier. We are only beginning to answer the question of how this changed both urban and rural shopping – and what – if anything – characterized the difference. In a very recent article, Jon Stobart and Lucy Bailey (2018) have argued that English village shops had much in common with “small back-street shops in town.” Village stores were actually dynamic shops that were well-adapted to the needs of their clientele. They used display, stock and selling techniques that resonated with strategies used by urban retailers, but local shops were also central to village life, with windows used for advertisements and notices for local events. The services they offered – ranging from “killing livestock,” “mending baskets” or “mangling clothes” differed greatly from those offered in upscale urban shops and department stores (Stobart and Bailey 2018).

Research for contemporary Upper Canada confirms that most of village stores took the form of “general providers” with a varied and up-to-date offer that ranged from the necessary to the luxurious and always included imported goods too. There were quite a number of them and rural shoppers often shopped in more than one local store, bought goods from itinerant



traders and made the occasional trips to nearby and far-away (market) towns (Coopey and Porter 2003; McCalla 2015). As in other frontier settings, rural shoppers often other people “proxy-shop” for them or ordered from store catalogues (Walsh 2006; Miller 1981: 61-64). General stores in the American West were often masculine spaces in which both white settlers and indigenous people shopped. [Figure 2.6] We know little however about the class, racial and gender dynamics of such shopping spaces. Zooming in on the experiences of shoppers would offer a productive way of comparing and contrasting shopping cultures in cities, towns and villages internationally. Place figure 2.6 here.

Since many of the nineteenth century’s shopping spaces spread across the globe, international comparisons are crucial. So far, scholars have ventured outside the West to study “Western” forms such as the department store and the arcade as forms of cultural transfer. Western department stores were famous for their oriental displays and advertisement and the departments selling carpets or furniture often appealed to the late nineteenth-century fashion for orientalism. Architectural historians have drawn lines between oriental sooks, bazaars and the nineteenth-century arcade (Geist 1983: 4-12). More importantly, colonial products started to flood shop floors, bringing the empire into people’s daily lives. It also altered shopping spaces and practices. Through the establishment of tea rooms and the introduction of afternoon tea, imperialist endeavors, for example, helped to remold both the spaces of urban shopping and the social and gender relationships that were forged in them (Rappaport 2017: 163-169).

Many of the arcades and department stores established outside of Paris came with the explicit reference to Parisian culture, and for those established outside the West, this reference was part of larger processes of Westernization. This was for example the case in the Saint-Petersburg Arcade and in Tokyo’s Mitsukoshu department store (Dianina 2003; Tamari 2006). Even so, as has been argued more broadly elsewhere, global comparisons between

urban infrastructures and cultures benefit from taking “conceptual appropriation” as seriously as “conceptual innovation” (Prestel 2017: 11). There was always more to these shopping spaces than their Western association. They too functioned within an existing urban and commercial landscape with which they interacted in ways similar – and perhaps different – from their European or American counterparts (e.g. Trentmann 2016; Harada 2016). In his study of Japanese department stores in Korea, Hong has furthermore rightly argued that there was intercultural exchange within Asia as well (Hong 2016). Paris might have been the capital of the nineteenth century, but it was not always at the heart of every development. Jon Stobart and Lucy Bailey rightly pointed out that scholarship on retailing and shopping has long been biased by an over-concentration on the department store, the urban high street and the big Western metropolises (2018: 415). Research has nonetheless slowly but successfully widened its scope over the past few decades, both thematically and geographically. Its results show how valuable comparisons are for a more precise understanding of how shopping space was construed, how it was used, what it meant and why it was important. In their precise form, configuration and fate, in the way they were used and the meanings they carried, shopping landscapes and spaces could be similar, but they could also differ greatly. Market halls flourished in Southern Europe whereas they turned into monumental failures in many northern European and American cities. (Fava et al 2016; Arnout 2018a: 123-135) Window shopping was something different in early nineteenth-century London, Paris and Amsterdam because of different material contexts. Detailed and broad comparisons offer unique possibilities to address this problem – especially in a field that has been absorbed by the question of continuity and change. What better way to pinpoint how and why the infrastructure and culture of shopping changed, who and what motivated the changes and what they meant to whom, than by contextualizing individual urban and rural stories in a broader and global development? After all, consumers, concepts, architects, policy makers,

managers and the goods that circulated in the shopping spaces they created together, all travelled the world to some degree or other.

