

REALITY, EXPECTATIONS AND FEARS: WOMEN SHOP ASSISTANTS IN LONDON,
1890-1914

by

Kellie K. Bradshaw
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of
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Committee:

_____ Director

_____ Department Chairperson

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Humanities
and Social Sciences

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by

Kellie K. Bradshaw
Master of Arts
University of Charleston, 2001
Bachelor of Arts
The George Washington University, 1992

Director: Dina Copelman, Associate Professor
History

Spring Semester 2019
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my daughters Kimberly and Amanda.

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I would like to thank the many friends, relatives, and supporters who have made this happen. I would first like to thank my advisor Dr. Dina Copelman for her support, encouragement and guidance during this process. She has been a strong supporter of my work over the many years it has taken me to finish this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Yvette Jordan and Dr. Sun Young Park for their advice and support. I would like to thank Dr. Marion Deshmukh, who, although no longer with us, was an early supporter of this project and my research. In addition I would like to thank Sebastian Wormell, archivist at Harrods, I greatly appreciated his assistance and suggestions while working in the archive at Harrods. I would also like to thank James Mitchell, Curator, Rare Books and Music Collections at the National Library of Scotland for his assistance, James Goddard from the Trade Union Congress Library Collections, Dr. George Oberle from George Mason University Libraries, and Joshua Wells from Germanna Community College Library. I am thankful to my grandparents, who although no longer with us, financially supported my graduate studies in the beginning. Thanks also go to my mother and father for their support over the years. My friends and colleagues have listened for many years about my shop assistants, but special thanks go to Preston Simms and Dr. Jamie Lennaham for their support. Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to thank my husband Vernon. He has been an equal partner over these years and regularly took on my half of the housework so I could finish this project. Thank you for listening and learning more about Victorian and Edwardian shop assistants than any engineer needs to know.

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LIST OF DEPARTMENT STORES

Debenham, Son & Freebody, founded 1851
Debenham & Hewitt, founded 1876
Debenhams Ltd., founded 1905
Derry & Toms, founded 1853
D.H. Evans, founded 1879
Harrods, founded 1849
Harvey Nichols, founded 1831
Liberty Ltd., founded 1875
Selfridges, founded 1908
Swan and Edgar, founded 1896
Waterloo House and Swan and Edgar, founded 1886
William Whiteley Ltd., founded 1863

LIST OF ACTS OF PARLIAMENT

Shop Hours Regulation Act, 1886	Limited the hours of work for people under the age of eighteen. The hours of work are limited to 74 per week, including meal times
The Shop Hours Act, 1904	Early Closing Day – 2/3rds of shop owners must agree to make this order.
The Shops Act of 1911	Allows half day holiday during the work week
The Shops Act of 1912	Consolidates Shops Regulation Acts 1892 – 1911 -Half Holiday -This day can be different for different employees -Regulated meal times -Fines for violations
The Shops Act of 1913	Amends The Shops Act of 1912 to include places that sell refreshments

ABSTRACT

REALITY, EXPECTATIONS AND FEARS: WOMEN SHOP ASSISTANTS IN LONDON, 1890-1914

Kellie K. Bradshaw, Ph.D.

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Dina Copelman

Reality, Expectations, and Fears: Women Shop Assistants in London, 1890-1914 examines the lives of London's shop assistants between 1890 and 1914. This was a crucial period when, alongside existing types of shops, new department stores were opening or expanding and employing staffs of thousands. Many of the approximately 60,000 women shop assistants in 1914 worked in department stores. These stores, mostly located in the West End, London's shopping and cultural center, were part of London's growth and global identity as a cosmopolitan center. Department stores changed the city's retail landscape and simultaneously transformed a previously skilled occupation – being a seller in a diverse array of shops – into an unskilled one. While department stores windows were packed with the latest consumer goods, inside shop assistants, standing behind their counters, were both part of the display and working hard to serve their employers and customers.

Though shop work was considered respectable and easy work, the reality was long hours for low pay. Women shop assistants dealt with harassment from male customers and rude women

shoppers. Jobs for shop work often required shop assistants to live in company dormitories where assistants had no control over their living conditions, roommates or meals. Stores had strict rules and a curfew for the assistants living in store housing. Shop owners also tried to discourage shop assistants from exploring the city for entertainment by offering amenities and supervised social and sport activities. Public street entertainment, pubs and music halls represent just some of the temptations feared by shopkeepers and reformers.

Nonetheless, women shop assistants were eager to take advantage of the vibrant metropolis around them, and this dissertation argues that, despite many obstacles, they developed a complex understanding of their work and how they wanted to live their lives. They joined reformers and union activists when they sought to change their difficult conditions of work. However, they stood apart from those groups when their understanding of their needs differed.

This project relies on archival sources including newspapers, union tracts, novels and government papers to examine the work life and living conditions of London's women shop assistants at the turn of the century. Especially important was having access to a previously unknown set of employee records from Harrods department store, which allowed me to create a profile of the average age, wage, work and educational background of Harrods' women shop assistants.

Understanding London's women shop assistants allows for a better understanding of the changing opportunities for women workers, and how, in the decades before World War I, these women sought to both make a living and shape meaningful lives.

CHAPTER ONE

In 1887 a young woman named Maggie was offered a chance to become an apprentice at a shop in Bristol. As the tenth of eleven children from a poor family that struggled financially, Maggie “eagerly grasped this opportunity” that came with room and board. She was happy to learn the trade of shop work, earn money and live in the city. Although the work was hard, Maggie described her time at this shop as “lovely” with memories of the owner who treated the assistants like family. After the death of the shop owner, Maggie moved to a new store in Brighton and discovered the quality of accommodations and food depended on the owner of the shop. After five years she was able to save £5 and move to London. Maggie had a difficult time finding employment as a shop assistant in London, but when she did, she discovered the conditions in the store in Brighton were typical. She realized shop work entailed long hours and low wages with little hope of advancement or change. Maggie decided to join the Shop Assistants’ Union to advocate for change eventually becoming assistant secretary of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks (NAUSAWC).¹ Maggie, known more conventionally as Margaret Bondfield, will appear again in this project because of her importance as union activist and her many articles on issues concerning shop assistants. Maggie was typical of the late nineteenth century woman shop assistant except for her union involvement. This dissertation provides a direct focus on women shop assistants like Maggie, in London between 1895 and 1914.

¹ National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks (NAUSAWC) is sometimes referred to as the Shop Assistants’ Union in contemporary documents.

Introduction

In the nineteenth century the population of London expanded and the number of shops climbed with it. In 1875 there were 295,000 shops and stores in the country. In 1897 the number of shops had increased to 408,840 and by 1907 the number of shops was 459,592. In 1910, 70,000 shops were owned and controlled by joint-stock companies according to Joseph Hallsworth in *The Working Life of Shop Assistants*, (1910). This was one-sixth of all shops in the country. There were also 5,951 co-operative joint-stock shops. Hallsworth notes these joint-stock owned shops only count the main branch of business for the earlier total of shops, meaning the number was likely much higher.² Shops in the mid-nineteenth century were typically small and family owned. Family members helped out the shop owner and he might have a few apprentices as a staff. These apprentices paid for the experience of learning the retail trade with the possibility of opening their own shops after their apprenticeship. There was no large demand for women shop assistants at this time, because there was no large demand for male shop assistants.

Retail shifted in the nineteenth century with the advent of mass production and new inventions.³ The increased demand of growing urban populations for consumer goods overwhelmed the small shopkeepers, many of whom quickly realized “the economic advantages of large-scale operation.”⁴ The change in the retail trade drove the demand for a larger workforce and changed the nature of shop work. Shop work lost its status as a skilled trade when the larger shops developed. In 1910, Hallsworth estimated there were one million shop assistants in the

² Joint-stock companies could include multiple branches of the business including different types of shops. There are no available figures on the number of shops per business. Joseph Hallsworth, *The Working Life of Shop Assistants: A study of the conditions of Labour in the Distributive Trades*. (Manchester: The National Labour Press, 1910), 2 – 4. Peter Scott, “Large-Scale Retailing in Britain: 1850-1914” *Refresh* 24 (Spring 1997), 7-8.

³ For further details on the transformation of retail trade in Great Britain in the nineteenth century see: J.B. Jeffreys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1910: A Study of Trends in Retailing with Special Reference to the Development of Co-operative, Multiple Shop and Department Store Methods of Trading*. Cambridge: University Press, 1954.

⁴ Hallsworth, 105.

United Kingdom.⁵ By 1914, there were at least two million shop assistants in Great Britain and more than half of those were women.⁶

Shop assistants were slow to unionize in comparison with other working groups. Trade unions for workers were well established by the mid-nineteenth-century, however shop assistants only began the process at the end of the nineteenth-century. Advocacy for better conditions and hours in shops began in the 1840s with the Early Closing Associations, but these groups were largely controlled by shopkeepers. Shop assistants left these movements after the failure of a Bill in Parliament that aimed to limit the working hours of shop assistants to seventy-four hours per week. In 1891 representatives from around the country met to form the National Union of Shop Assistants. That same year the Manchester and District Co-operative Employees Associations was formed. There were approximately 750,000 retail workers in Great Britain at that time. After successfully joining with other groups, the more powerful National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks (NAUSAWC) was established in 1898. Union membership remained low and only approximately 2,300 shop assistants joined the union by 1897.⁷ Even though only a small percentage of working shop assistants were members, they began actively campaigning against the living-in system. Women failed to join the Shop Assistant's Union in large numbers. Although the union was open to all shop assistants, the goals of the union represented the demands of the male shop assistant.

Travel books from the period offered guidance to visitors to the city on the best shopping areas. D.H.Evans, a large department store, identified “four principal streets” in its guide book to

⁵ Hallsworth, 7.

⁶ According to Holcombe until 1901 there was no attempt to distinguish shop assistants (workers) from “dealers.” By the census of 1911 dealers distinguished shopkeepers from shop assistants. Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work; Middle Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914*. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973) 205. In 1914, *The Glasgow Record* reported there were 60,000 women shop assistants in the city of London.

⁷ William Johnson, *Shop Life and Its Reform*, (London: The Fabian Society, 1897), 12.

London published in 1908.⁸ These four streets in the West End were Bond Street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly and Regent Street. *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and its Environs*, 1911, expanded on this list of places to shop to include the surrounding streets. It listed The Strand, Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, St. Paul's Churchyard, Holburn and Tottenham Court Road. Outside of the central district of the city, shoppers could find stores on Sloane Street, Brompton Road, High Street, Kensington, Queens Road, and Bayswater.⁹ All of these areas are within a few miles of each other. For example, the distance from Kensington to Oxford Street was under two miles. People could walk these distances but could also use some of the mass transportation options that filled the city streets.

“White collar” working women became part of this urban landscape in the late nineteenth-century as teachers, clerks, typists, barmaids and shop assistants. In 1901, the percentage of women working outside the home was not significantly higher from the previous century, however the types of work women engaged in had changed. Clerical work and shop work increased as new inventions like the telephone and typewriter changed the business world. Jobs opened up in urban areas and women comprised a significant portion of those employed. The growing consumerism and corresponding growth of department stores opened more positions for women in the cities. The shop assistant was part of the new class of working women: lower middle-class or upper working-class women who worked white-collar jobs until marriage instead of domestic or factory work.

My interest in shop assistants began with an assigned book in graduate school on shopping in London's West End. *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (2000) by Erika Rappaport explored “how gender was central to the commercialization

⁸ *Brief Guide to London* (London: D.H. Evans & Co., 1908), 18.

⁹ Frances Sheafer Waxman, *A Shopping Guide to Paris and London* (New York: McBride, Nast & Company, 1912), 38.

of England's capital city."¹⁰ Looking at consumer culture, Rappaport claims the department store and the consuming public were crucial actors constructing the modern streets of London's West End. Rappaport discusses the opening up of the city to women, specifically the upper and middle-class women shoppers. Rappaport notes "the actual grievances shop workers experienced were either ignored or presented as temporary because the shopgirl never remained a worker in these stories."¹¹ It was this statement that provoked my curiosity into the lives of the shop assistants. If the West End was a source of pleasure for upper and middle-class woman shoppers, what was the environment for the shop assistant, the working woman serving her?

My journey to understanding the characteristics of London's shop assistants at the turn of the century began as all historical investigations do, with research. However, my visit to one archive and the sources I found there shaped this dissertation. The German bombing campaign against Britain in 1940 destroyed four of London's major department stores. John Lewis, Selfridge's, Bourne & Hollingsworth, and Peter Robinson were badly damaged or completely destroyed. This limited the archival records for those stores. Harrods department store was spared a direct bomb strike. Fortuitously my visit to the archive was shortly after the employee records from the early twentieth century were discovered during a store renovation and relocation of the archive. These records have not been used in previous scholarship. This is potentially a complete set of employee records for Harrods' shop assistants between roughly 1896 and the late 1920s.¹² Through the information provided in the records, I am able to draw conclusions on the average salary and age of the women working for the high-end department

¹⁰ Erica Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 29.

¹¹ Rappaport, 198.

¹² The department stores of Selfridges, Whiteleys, Liberty and Marks and Spencer do not have similar records for this time period. I am only using records between 1896 and 1914 for this project. There may be employee records missing from this collection since one drawer in the cabinet is missing.

stores. The addresses, traced through the census, reveal the types of homes these women came from. Using these records I am able to create a profile of women shop assistants.

The archive at Harrods department store was located on the top floor with a view of the city. On a small table, with only four days allowed for my work, I examined the forty-seven drawers of employee records. I estimated, by counting part of one drawer, there were approximately 54,000 employee records. Each drawer was tightly packed in the same way and the drawers were arranged alphabetically. The cards inside the drawers were not alphabetical. In those four days, I took over 5,000 photographs of the employee records of women. Multiple records were in each picture. I sorted all 7,872 records and entered 515 records with employee starting dates prior to August, 1914 into a database recording the name, age, address, wage, food, previous employment, education, department(s) worked, reason for departure from the store and place(s) references were sent. Each record received a unique identification code to match the photograph of the original record. All of the women's names from Harrods mentioned in this dissertation were changed to protect the identity of the women, unless her name was used in published materials. The addresses were plotted on a map of London, but no identifying details are included on these maps.

Literature Review

Various literatures contextualizes the work, living and social activities of shop assistants. The topic of London's shop assistants also connects to various areas of scholarship. Retail historians discussed shop assistants as part of the shopping culture examining the large staffs as a necessary part of department stores. Biographies of women who worked as shop assistants at the turn of the century are not common but they have been used in this dissertation to provide first

person accounts of shop work. Historians studied shopping as a leisure activity and although shop assistants appear only briefly in these works, their examination of the environment of the store is essential to studying the working life of shop assistants. Books and articles on the leisure reveal how working women of the period spent their free time and why it is important to understand their explorations of the city. Women shop assistants are part of the new work force in urban histories. These histories place women at the center of the changing city. These works start my examination of shop assistants however my dissertation provides a direct focus on the women shop assistants in London at the turn of the century.

Fictional representations such as George Gissing's *Odd Women* and Charles Pearce's *The Soul of a Shop-Girl* featured shopgirls born into genteel families.¹³ These girls went into shop work after the death of their fathers which caused financial hardship for the family. Typically, a shopgirl protagonist is depicted as a moral young lady struggling to work for the long hours while surviving on a pittance salary. Her co-workers are often cruel, jealous, and shown as immoral allowing their male suitors improper familiarities in order to attend the theatre or eat in a restaurants. While both Gissing and Pearce's characters marry and leave shop work, in the end only one has a happy ending signifying that even marriage will not always bring happiness to the working woman.

Novels, plays and musicals with settings in department stores and shopgirl characters followed a standard prescription for readers. In *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (2006), Emma Liggins argues novelists "turned their attention to the lifestyles of self-supporting middle-class women, those 'poor ladies' forced into the labour market for the first

¹³ The use of the term shopgirls or shop girl is used when referring to the shop assistant as a character in a play, novel or musical, unless it is quoted from the period. Shopgirl was used by many at the turn of the century to identify both the character and the worker. I will use the terms shop assistants and women shop assistants to refer to the real women workers.

time with minimal education or training.”¹⁴ In comparing novelists and social investigators, she concludes the two groups “were intent on mapping the same terrain but deploying their research findings to different purposes.”¹⁵ Authors depicted the shop assistant as the middle-class young woman forced into employment through no fault of her own.¹⁶ Since authors created these characters through investigative research, I will use the characters to further develop the image of the woman shop assistant.

Part of the relevant historiography on shop assistants includes the many fictional representations. The shopgirl appeared as a character in plays in the West End. One popular play, *Diana of Dobson's*, was at the Kingsway Theatre located in London's West End. It opened in 1908 and tells the story of Diana, an overworked shopgirl who suddenly inherits money from a cousin. Diana became a shop assistant out of necessity after her father, a doctor, passed away leaving her with nothing. Rather than use the inherited money to support herself, Diana decides to spend it all on a vacation to Switzerland. When I first came across *Diana of Dobson's* in my research, she appeared to be the stereotype character of a shopgirl. She became a shopgirl because her father died leaving her penniless. She splurges on clothes and a vacation when she has money, but the character of Diana is unique because she speaks out against the terrible work and living conditions of shop assistants. Diana gives her speech on shop work to Mr. Jabez Grinlay, a wealthy shop owner character. Her words affected at least one audience member, Kate Parry Frye, who wrote in her diary after seeing the play: “The play is most interesting and

¹⁴ Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), xi.

¹⁵ Liggins, xv.

¹⁶ These depictions included: Emile Zola, *The Ladies Paradise* (1883); Amy Levy *The Romance of the Shop* (1888); George Gissing *Odd Women* (1893); H.J.W. Dam, *The Shop Girl* (1894); T. Baron Russell, *Guardian of the Poor* (1898), William Babington Maxwell, *Vivien* (1905); Terrick Mayne, *The Pretty Shop Girl: A Complete Story* (1906); Cicely Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson's* (1908); Alice and Charles Askew, *Bess of Bentley's* (1912), Horace W.C. Newte, *Pansy Meares: The Story of a London Shop Girl* (1912); and Charles Pearce *The Soul of a Shop Girl* (1915).

amusing and sad too... It ought to make people think.”¹⁷ The author for *Diana of Dobson’s*, Cicely Hamilton, an important feminist, received advice and recommendations from the Shop Assistant’s Union to create a realistic story of shop work and the living-in system. The popular play combined the lurid innuendo about a shopgirl, a setting in a beautiful department store and the reality of shop life for shop assistants. Authors like Gissing, Hamilton and others did research into the work life of their working class characters. They consulted with union officials and interviewed working women to form their characters and story arches.¹⁸ These novels and plays are used in this dissertation to provide insight into the working life, living conditions and leisure activities of the women shop assistants who left few personal accounts of their experiences.

Popular cultural depictions of shop assistants were complex. Lise Sanders examines the popular literary stereotype of the shopgirl in *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920*. She argues the shopgirl was constructed by and embodied a set of assumptions about class and gender “through the language of domesticity, feminine propriety, and virtue.”¹⁹ Sanders’ work demonstrates the different concerns many people had over women’s perceived invasion of male professions at the turn of the century. She also examines the fascination with the unique construction of a character “based on commodity consumption and display” combined with “the fantasy structure of the romance.”²⁰ Popular romance novels about shopgirls attempted to bridge the gap between the reality of hard work and romantic fantasy.²¹ These novels are used in this project to fully visualize the work life, living conditions and leisure options for women shop assistants.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Crawford, “Kate Frye’s Suffrage Diary: Two Days in April 1908,” *Woman and Her Sphere*, comment posted October 16, 2012, <https://womanandhersphere.com/tag/diana-of-dobsons/> (accessed October 12, 2018).

¹⁸ Liggins, XV.

¹⁹ Lise Shapiro Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 1.

²⁰ Sanders, 4.

²¹ Sanders, 5

Two early works on shop assistants indicate the different topics to be considered when studying their lives. In *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914* (1973) Lee Holcombe discusses the significance of retail work for women, arguing that the development of department stores provided new opportunities for women searching for white-collar work. Holcombe successfully uses census data to prove an increase in the number of women working in retail and refers to the work as unskilled since assistants needed only a basic education. Wilfred Whitaker's *Victorian and Edwardian Shopworkers: The Struggle to Obtain Better Conditions and a Half-Holiday* (1973) focuses on the efforts of the Early Closing Association in the 1840s. This association of shop keepers and shop assistants attempted to gain shorter working hours and better conditions for shop assistants. Whitaker provides the history of the early legislative attempts to improve working conditions for shop assistants.

Susan Porter Benson's book *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (1986) was a significant influence on this project. Examining relationships within the department store community, Benson argues American shop assistants created a new space for themselves in the store dealing with management and customers. Her work represents one of the first efforts to combine labor, social and women's history. Benson's work places shop assistants as a central group within the American department store.

Shop assistants are part of Barbara Harrison book on women's work. In *Not Only the Dangerous Trades: Women's Work and Health in Britain, 1880-1914* (1996), Harrison focuses on social problems that developed because of women's work. In the section on shop assistants, Harrison concludes women assistants who lived-in worked longer days and it "increased the

likelihood that they could be called on to work excessive hours.”²² Christopher Hosgood’s “‘Mercantile Monasteries’: Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain” (1999) also considers the potential conflicts shop work might produce. Using articles and editorials from *The Shop Assistant*, the union newspaper, Hosgood claims the paternalist employer-employee relationship lowered the status of shop assistants, “who were also hobbled by their adherence to notions of middle-class gentility.”²³ The increasing percentage of women working in department stores emasculated the male shop assistants.²⁴ Hosgood argues shop work provided respectability to lower middle-class workers but the workers failed to recognize the paternalist environment would compromise their adulthood.²⁵ Harrison and Hosgood provide an insight into the working lives of shop assistants which I will expand upon.

Two recent works on shop assistants survey British shop work over time. In *Behind the Counter: Shop Lives from Market Stall to Supermarket* (2015), Pamela Horn discusses the lives of shop workers from the early nineteenth-century through the 1960s. Horn looks at both male and female shop assistants in their work and leisure activities. She claims women shop assistants had limited leisure options due to the potential damage to their reputations. Horn briefly examines the insinuations that shop assistants were prostitutes who needed the extra money as a surplus for their low wages. Pamela Cox and Annabel Hobley’s book *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter* (2014) presents an overview of female shop assistants from the Victorian period through the 1960s. Cox and Hobley assert “the story of Victorian shopgirls is

²² Barbara Harrison, *Not Only the Dangerous Trades: Women’s Work and Health in Britain, 1880-1914* (London: Francis & Taylor, 1996), 113.

²³ Christopher Hosgood, “‘Mercantile Monasteries’: Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, (July 1999): 324.

²⁴ Hosgood, 336.

²⁵ Hosgood, 326.

inseparable from the story of Victorian sex work.”²⁶ The lives of shop assistants, managers, shop keepers and even fashion designers frame her retail history. While Horn, Cox and Hopley examine the lives women shop assistants, their books span a century in scope. This dissertation will focus on the pivotal period after the rise of the department store and before World War I when women worked in managerial positions left open by men fighting in the war.

Other works on independent women working in cities influenced my research on shop assistants. These scholars discuss the challenges met by women who were attempting to forge new identities. Kathy Peiss, Deborah Nord, Dina Copelman, Joanne Meyerowitz and Nan Enstad all look at class, gender, and the new independent woman.

In *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (1986), Peiss finds working women in New York sought out entertainment and leisure activities in their free time. She asserts “frivolous amusement” was a reaction against the discipline, drudgery, and exploitative condition of labor.”²⁷ In “‘Neither Pairs nor Odd’: Female Community in Late Nineteenth-Century London” (1990) Deborah Nord considers middle-class women who rejected bourgeois family life and lived in London for “intellectual, political, or professional engagement.”²⁸ Nord asserts these women alone in the city were often regarded as sexually available.²⁹ Her work relates to the shop assistants who lived-in company dormitories in the city. Their jobs forced them to engage in conversation with male customers adding to the belief they were sexually available. It is “their experience of singleness and vulnerability in the

²⁶ Pamela Cox and Annabel Hopley, *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter*. (London, Hutchinson, 2014), 52.

²⁷ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 45.

²⁸ Deborah Nord, “‘Neither Pairs nor Odd’: Female Community in Late Nineteenth-Century London,” *Sign*, Vol. 15, No. 4, (1990): 734.

²⁹ Deborah Nord, 734.

city [that] inspired a new urban vision, with woman struggling to become subject and observer rather than object and observed.”³⁰

There are three works in particular that examine lower middle-class women for the same period as my dissertation. In *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (1988), Joanne Meyerowitz uses the term ‘women adrift’ to describe those who lived and worked away from their families in urban areas. She finds these women “shared certain experiences that limited the possibility of genuine and comfortable independence.”³¹ Women in early twentieth-century Chicago formed relationships with both male and female peers to share housing, food and fuel and they came together in social and other clubs.³² Meyerowitz claims the community monitored the behavior of working women by shunning women who lived above their means.³³

In *London’s Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930*, (1996) Dina Copelman examines the class ambiguity and inter-class connections of teachers in the late nineteenth-century.³⁴ Teachers had employment advantages such as pensions. Teaching was considered a way for women to develop personal identities though their work with the poor. Copelman claims teachers participated in their urban environment while “traversing the Metropolis.”³⁵ Examining their lives at work and outside of it Copelman, finds teachers may have felt “a right to a public life and culture.”³⁶ Teachers were active in the teachers union, supported suffrage, traveled and went to the theatre which suggested that lower middle-class women and their families held different models of feminine respectability.

³⁰ Deborah Nord, 736.

³¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1924* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), xviii.

³² Meyerowitz, xviii.

³³ Meyerowitz, 41.

³⁴ Dina Copelman, *London’s Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996), 45.

³⁵ Copelman, 130.

³⁶ Copelman, 134.

Looking at immigrant working women, in *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Century* (1999) Nan Enstad discusses fashion as a symbolic representation of a woman's status as a worker. Hats had special significance for working women who considered them essential commodities. Hats symbolized "women's status as workers who earned their own money" and displayed American style, separating them from their immigrant families and linking them to more affluent women.³⁷ Although middle-class women criticized workers who wore elaborate fashions, Enstad argues workers' displays of fashion "undermined middle-class efforts to control the definition of 'lady'."³⁸

A recent work on working class women is *Working Girls: Fiction, Sexuality, and the Modern* (2016) by Katherine Mullins. Mullins describes the emergence of "young women of the working, lower-middle, and precariously middle classes" in urban occupations. The focus of her study is the cultural and literary depictions of three distinct occupations; telegraphists and typists, shopgirls, and barmaids. Shop work was "genteel yet fundamentally unskilled" and considered lower than telegraph or typewriting work.³⁹ Bar work was even lower and attracted a lower class of worker. Mullins calls these young women workers 'working girls' and those who worked in shops, 'shop-girl' as their contemporaries referred to them. These 'working girls' mainly lived in cities and were self-supporting between school and marriage. She was "ambiguously economically emancipated, liberated – in relative, contingent ways – from the constraints of

³⁷ Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 9.

³⁸ Enstad, 10.

³⁹ Mullins, Katherine, *Working Girls: Fiction, Sexuality and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

family and domesticity.”⁴⁰ These independent women lived in lodging houses, shared apartments or workplace dormitories and “she aspired to that marker of impence, the latchkey.”⁴¹

Historiography for the last twenty years examines shopping as a leisure activity for women. Shopping was a pleasurable activity for middle-class women, but for working-class women shopping for work clothing was a necessity. Women who worked in the service sector - clerks, shop assistants, teachers, waitresses and barmaids - all “needed to buy and maintain a wardrobe suitable for working under the critical eyes of customers, employers, co-workers and themselves.”⁴² Gail Reekie argues in “Decently Dressed? Sexualized Consumerism and the Working Woman’s Wardrobe 1918-1923,” stores marketed essential clothing items to the working woman and “effectively tutored her in her new role as customer.”⁴³ Krysta Lysack’s *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women’s Writing* (2008) adds to the discussion of the woman as a consumer. Using women’s fashion periodicals, advertisements, and shopping guides, Lysack examines the relationship Victorian women had with consumption. Focusing on the woman as a shopper, she traces the development of the woman shopper “from the transgressive domestic spender to aesthetic consumer.”⁴⁴

Although department stores created new spaces for women, single women traversing the city streets faced hostility and even harassment. Mariana Valverde, Elizabeth Wilson and Judith Walkowitz highlight women’s sexual vulnerability. In her article “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse” (1989) Valverde asserts that many people assumed that some female shop assistants worked as occasional prostitutes;

⁴⁰ Mullins, 2.

⁴¹ Mullins, 2.

⁴² Gail Reekie, “Decently Dressed? Sexualized Consumerism and the Working Woman’s Wardrobe 1918-1923,” *Labour History* No. 61 (Nov., 1991): 43.

⁴³ Reekie, 43.

⁴⁴ Krysta Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women’s Writing* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 12.

reformers and novelists often claimed they sought additional income to indulge their desires for the commodities they sold. Since styles of clothing presumably identified prostitutes, employers encouraged working women to avoid finery and fancy dress. In her book *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), Walkowitz claims male pedestrians saw a single unescorted woman and sometimes got confused whether she was a prostitute or not.⁴⁵ The prostitute was part of the urban spectacle for the urban male gaze; but the 1888 Whitechapel “Jack the Ripper” murders made fear of being mistaken for one a more tangible threat. Evidence affirms shop assistants appear in literature and social investigations in these conflicting images. Newspapers condemned the harassment of women according to Walkowitz in a later article, “Shopping, Street Harassment and Street Walking in Late Victorian England” (1998). Despite public discussion and condemnation, Walkowitz concludes harassment on the street was still considered a women’s fault.⁴⁶

One particularly influential article is Peter Bailey’s “Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype.” His examination of the Victorian barmaid provides an example of women who were both workers and potentially consumable objects, a duality they shared with shop workers. Like the glittering bottles behind them, barmaids were displayed for the male clientele. It is this sexual presentation that Bailey terms parasexuality, a sexuality “that is deployed but contained, carefully channeled rather than fully discharged.”⁴⁷ Images and

⁴⁵ Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 20-24. In her book *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (1995) Deborah Nord argues middle-class women moving through the city streets had to accept “a woman’s place in the well-established literary tradition of urban description” which commonly viewed woman in public as prostitutes. Deborah Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 12.

⁴⁶ Judith Walkowitz, “Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment and Street Walking in Late Victorian England,” *Representations* No. 62 (Spring 1998): 7.

⁴⁷ Peter Bailey, “Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype,” *Gender & History* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1990): 149.

representations of service workers were sexually charged in ways similar to the barmaid. In the case of shop assistants, the parallels were especially striking.

Michael Miller's work provided a framework of the work environment of shop assistants in *The Bon Marche: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (1994). Using sources overlooked by business historians, including pictures, public relations materials and items from the store's internal social networks, Miller examines the relationship between management and the work force in the shadow of the developing store.⁴⁸ Miller's use of sources provided me with ideas for uncovering the work lives of London's shop assistants.

Although department store histories do not examine shop assistants, they do provide background into the work places of London's department store shop assistants. William Lancaster offers the department store as the key ingredient in the growth of consumerism in *The Department Store: A Social History* (1995). Although he discusses department stores in London, Lancaster also provides a basic overview of stores in Paris and America and compares the development of the different stores.

The publication of department store histories offer evidence from store archives opening new avenues of research for historians. While these store histories often offer management's view of the store's history, they provide a unique view the store played in the urban area. Sean Callery, Gordon Honeycombe, Michael Moss, Maurice Corina and Alison Turnton wrote histories of the major department stores in Great Britain. These books examine the history of the store from the foundation of the first store to the modern period. All of these works look at the founders, management, the buildings and the workforce. The authors of these books conducted

⁴⁸ Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 77.

interviews with former staff members on their experiences in the store which are useful for this project. They offer first person accounts of working in the store.⁴⁹

In Meredith Clausen's article, "The Department Store" (1988), stores are an urban structure integral to the growth of the modern city.⁵⁰ The Bon Marche, opening in Paris in 1868, was the first store designed as a department store. The Bon Marche was designed with an elaborate exterior facade to attract the status-conscious bourgeoisie, while the interior contained impressive glass windows reminiscent of the Crystal Palace of 1851. These windows allowed for a great deal of natural light, contrasting the store with the multitude of poorly illuminated small shops that populated Paris. The Bon Marche, with its grandiose lavish interior was designed to encourage customers to spend hours inside, it was a "building designed as a stage set, an elegant theater for the public."⁵¹

The study of leisure in the nineteenth-century also encompasses both entertainment and education. Historians have examined entertainments at Earl's Court, the popularity of roller skating and bicycling and sports. Peter Bailey's *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control* (1978) discusses the development of the new modern leisure culture of the nineteenth-century. He argues "leisure was one of the major frontiers of social change."⁵² In *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution: c.1780 – c.1880* (1980), Hugh Cunningham continues the discussion of leisure in the nineteenth-century asserting there

⁴⁹ See Maurice Corina, *Fine Silks and Oak Counters: Debenhams: 1778-1978* (London: Hutchinson Benham, 1978); Gordon Honeycombe, *Selfridges: Seventy-Five Years: The Story of the Store, 1909-1984* (London: Park Lane Press, 1984); Michael Moss and Alison Turnton *A Legend of Retailing: House of Fraser* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989); and Sean Callery, *Harrods Knightsbridge: The Story of Society's Favorite Store* (London: Ebury Press, 1991).

⁵⁰ Meredith Clausen, "The Department Store" *Encyclopedia of Architecture: Design Engineering and Construction, II* (1988): 204-222.

⁵¹ Meredith Clausen, "The Department Store: Development of the Type," *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 39, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985): 24.

⁵² Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the contest for Control* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 5.

was “vigorous growth of popular leisure and commercialization of it”⁵³ Another form of public entertainment is displayed in a digital history project entitled “London’s Silent Cinemas” by Chris O’Rourke (2016). His project includes a map showing the rapid expansion of the cinemas in London. This project was influential for my own maps locating the home addresses of shop assistants.

Leisure time for shop assistants could be spent in educational or religious activities. Stanley Meacham charts educational programs in *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880-1914* (1987). He argues educational classes offered at Toynbee Hall aimed to impose middle-class values on the working-class participants. Department stores also offered educational classes to their shop assistants for a similar reason. Overall, education expanded in the nineteenth-century causing a rise in literacy. “Between 1896 and 1911, the size of the reading public grew dramatically” but it is difficult to determine how these groups were affected by the literature they read.⁵⁴

Church attendance was a concern of shop assistants, shopkeepers and union officials for different reasons. However, the increase in entertainment options coincides with a concern in the decline of church attendance. Hugh McLeod examines rates of church attendance in London, Berlin and New York in *Piety and Poverty: Working-class Religion in Berlin, London, and New York, 1870-1914* (1996). Using the religion census, he agrees the working-class attended church less frequently but contends this did not indicate they were irreligious.⁵⁵

⁵³ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780 – c.1880* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 9.

⁵⁴ Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees, *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34. For further information on the reading habits of the working class see Jonathan Rose, *Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-class Religion in Berlin, London, and New York, 1870-1914* [Europe Past and Present Series] (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), xxiii.

There are limited first person accounts of women shop assistants between 1895 and 1914. The most famous woman shop assistant from this period was Margaret Bondfield whose autobiography and biography provide an understanding of the work life and living conditions of shop assistants in London. After working as a shop assistant, Bondfield became assistant secretary of the NAUSAWC in 1898. Her role as a union official involved writing articles for *The Shop Assistant*, the official newspaper of the union. Bondfield wrote extensively about issues concerning women, housing, and union organization. She reviewed entertainment and leisure activities for shop assistants and nearly always recommended a union meeting instead of entertainment. Another first-person account comes from Olive Christian Malvery who went undercover as a working woman for a series of articles in Pearson Magazine in 1905. Her book *The Soul Market*, 1907, is based on those articles. Within Malvery's articles was information on the work life and leisure habits of the working-class women with whom she worked. Author H.G. Wells reflected on his experiences as a shop assistant in his autobiography published in his 1934 autobiography. Hannah Greig provides an important first-person perspective on work as a shop assistant. In *My Life and Times. Being the Personal Reminiscences of Mrs. David Greig*, 1940, Grieg, wife of grocery shop owner David Greig, recounts her work as a shop assistant for her father during her youth and later with her husband in his grocery store.⁵⁶ The collection of oral history interviews entitled, "The Edwardians: Family Life and Work Experiences Before 1918," by Paul Thompson included women shop assistants. These Edwardian interviews provided information on the differences between small shops and large department stores.

Authors included shop assistants in general articles and books on women workers. In 1894 trade union activists Amy Bulley and Margaret Whitley co-authored a book entitled

⁵⁶ Grieg's husband opened his first grocery shop in 1888 and the business expanded rapidly. At its height it was a chain of 220 grocery stores.

Women's Work and denounced shop work in London for the unsanitary conditions. In the same year "The Royal Commission on Labour: The Employment of Women" asserted shop assistants received low wages because the work was viewed as genteel.⁵⁷ Wages were so low for shop assistants they suggested it be referred to as a "starving wage" rather than a living wage.⁵⁸ Clementine Black, Mostyn Bird and Gertrude Tuckwell offered criticism of labor practices and living conditions for shop assistants in *Sweated Industry and Minimum Wage* (1907), *Women at Work: A Study of the Different Ways of Earning a Living Open to Women* (1911) and *Women in Industry: From Seven Points of View* (1908). Social activists feared what women would do if they lived at or near poverty. They inferred low wages for working women led to prostitution.

This dissertation builds on the work of Holcombe, Harrison, and Hosgood by providing and in-depth study of women shop assistants in London at the turn of the century. I will expand on the analysis of the period briefly examined by Horn and Cox and Hobley and challenge the sensationalist claims of the past. This dissertation adds to the work of Rappaport by providing contours of the shop assistant who worked in the stores the middle-class and upper-class woman shopped in. Chapter Two examines what shop work entailed for women shop assistants. From the hiring process through employment, the chapter looks at the work environment of women shop assistants in London. Using the employee records from Harrods department store, this chapter contains an analysis of the average wage and ages of those elite women shop assistants. It looks at their previous education and provides details on the apprentices in a high end department store.⁵⁹ Some women began their careers in the shop as an unpaid or low-wage apprentice or learner. The chief work complaint among shop assistants were the long hours of

⁵⁷ Foley, Caroline. "Royal Commission on Labour: The Employment of Women" *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 13 (March 1894): 188.

⁵⁸ Foley, 189.

⁵⁹ There were no employee records of store managers, department managers or buyers.

standing. During these long days, shop assistants interacted with customers, floorwalkers, shopkeepers and other assistants. These interactions shaped the work place for assistants. Chapter Three analyzes the domestic arrangements of shop assistants. It considers both the shop assistants who lived in the company housing and those who lived-out or on their own. There was support and criticism for the system that required shop assistants to “live-in” company dormitories. Using archival evidence, I conclude many women shop assistants preferred the living-in system. Food was yet another controversy of shop work during this period. Food was part of the salary for shop assistants who lived-in and lived-out. This chapter addresses why food caused contention among shop assistants, union officials and social reformers. Chapters Four and Five consider women shop assistant during their leisure hours. Chapter Four addresses the controlled activities a worker might have participated in. These are the activities arranged by an employer, a church, or official events of the union. Chapter Five looks at the activities and environment women shop assistants encountered in the metropolis using diaries, memoirs, advertisements and souvenir booklets. Throughout this dissertation, I examine the lives of shop assistants in London. I will follow the examples of feminist historians by going beyond their work environment to also consider their home, leisure and personal lives. The shop assistants examined in this dissertation were a complex and diverse group of women and they worked in a variety of different types of shops and stores in London. Shop assistants fit into the history of working women in cities before 1914. Despite the concerns of shopkeepers, union officials and social reformers, shop assistants worked, lived and explored the city of London at the turn of the century.

CHAPTER TWO

Counter Tales: Women Working in Shops

“Greet your customers with a smiling face; treat them courteously at all times.”⁶⁰

-“Opportunities in the Drapery Trade”, *The Draper*, 1905

Fictional shopgirl Pansy Meares felt selling costumes to customers at Mowker and Bleet’s was “hard and unsatisfactory work.”⁶¹ Pansy and her coworkers had to lie to customers to persuade them to make purchases. Her boss, Mr. Bleet, was known for being overly friendly and for kissing the young women shop assistants. Pansy avoided him whenever she could. When rumors started about the shop losing business, Pansy worried because on both occasions when she had to search for work, she “all but starved,” and she did not want to go through that again.⁶²

In 1911, the census estimated two million people in the United Kingdom worked as shop assistants or behind shop counters and more than half of those assistants were women. Books and articles written between 1880 and 1914 describe shop work in contradictory terms. Assistants worked long hours filled with tedious monotony and one author called it “sweated” work, similar to factory work.⁶³ Yet this same author also called the work “light, clean, easy and pleasant.”⁶⁴ Despite the long hours and low wages, the illusions of status proved difficult to overcome. The union’s attempt to recruit members as members of the working class was unsuccessful as

⁶⁰ *The Draper*, Summer 1905.

⁶¹ Horace W.C. Newte, *Pansy Meares: The Story of a London Shopgirl*. (New York: John Lane Co., 1912), 188.

⁶² Newte, 190.

⁶³ M. Mostyn Bird, *Women at Work: A Study of The Different Ways of Earning a Living Open to Women* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1911), 12.

⁶⁴ Bird, 63.

Copelman argues the lower middle class desired “to remain distinct from the mass of the working class.”⁶⁵ This chapter examines the work environments of women shop assistants in London. I will discuss obstacles women encountered in their search for work including the dichotomy between the reality and popular representations of shop work.

The Structure of the Shop

Peter Scott in “Large-Scale Retailing in Britain 1850-1914,” examines the significance in the growing number of shops. He states that rising living standards and mass produced goods combined with advertising as the reason behind the growth in retail. Even though department stores had staffs of thousands, “total retailing activity was still dominated by small-scale traders.”⁶⁶ Using the 1911 census data, Holcombe contradicts Scott arguing there was a decline in the number of small shops.⁶⁷ In the second half of the nineteenth century many shop owners watched as smaller retail shops grew into larger stores eventually becoming department stores with large sale volumes. In *Behind the Counter: Sketches by a ‘Shop Assistant’* (1888) the new owners of shops are described as “energetic” and “enterprising” men who revolutionized trading with the masses.⁶⁸ These new stores with larger staffs changed the close relationship between shop worker and employer. Assistants and union activists described owners as tyrants, with their assistants behaving like subjects who lived in fear.⁶⁹

Within department stores and shops women worked in a hierarchical structure. The hierarchy depicted in *Pansy Meares: The Story of a London Shop Girl* and in examples from *The*

⁶⁵ Copelman, 43.

⁶⁶ Scott, 7. Harrods staff in 1914 was approximately 6,000 and Whiteley’s staff in 1914 was 4,000.

⁶⁷ Holcombe, 209 and Scott, 8.

⁶⁸ *Behind the Counter: Sketches by “a Shop Assistant.”* Reprinted from the “Cardiff Times” (Aberdare: George Jones, 1888), 1.

⁶⁹ *Behind the Counter*, 2.

Shop Assistant dictated that the “first sales” woman had the choice of possible customers and therefore the highest salary.⁷⁰ “Selling was the province of the first, second, third, and fourth hands, the showroom assistants who carried ‘books’ to record customer purchases.”⁷¹

Apprentices helped the showroom assistants but even the apprentices were organized hierarchically. At Debenhams, an apprentice was selected to carry and use a salesbook, but her sales required the supervision and signature of a shop assistant.⁷²

Near the top of a store’s hierarchy was the floorwalker, department manager and store manager. Shop assistants expected difficult customers but some found real difficulty with floorwalkers and managers. Pansy’s manager would drop and leave a small piece of string on the floor and “rage” at an assistant if she failed to notice the string. This fictitious story has some truth to it because if Harry Selfridge found dust in the store, he would trace his initials in it as a warning to the staff.⁷³

Unlike similar department stores, Harrods began as a grocery store, not a draper’s store. Its food halls today are a reminder of that past. In 1891, with a staff of two hundred, Harrods listed six departments on their receipts. By 1902 this list expanded to ninety-one departments including drapery, lace and fancy goods, ladies undergarments, and toys and games to name but a few. Department structure at Harrods was “rigid” and “each department had its own operational structure, headed by the buyer, and was set individual sales targets.”⁷⁴ Promotions were within the department a shop assistant worked. It was rare to be promoted to a different department.

⁷⁰ Newte, 184.

⁷¹ Corina, 82.

⁷² Corina, 82.

⁷³ Lindy Woodhead. *Shopping, Seduction & Mr. Selfridge*. (London: Profile Books, 2007), 62.

⁷⁴ Callery, 96.

Getting The Job; Doing The Job

Shop assistants found jobs through the conventional means of the day including newspaper advertisements, employment registries and agencies. In novels, assistants looking for work found their employment through these traditional methods but also through familial or friendship connections and it is logical to conclude that these connections helped real assistants also. Some novels avoided the topic and the characters just suddenly have jobs without searching for them. Although Pansy and Diana both have jobs without effort, their efforts to change jobs are futile. Finding work in late Victorian London was a time-consuming process. Applicants often traveled to present themselves in person for a position. Job descriptions for shop assistants described successful candidates as both “polite and obliging in manner.” He or she should be a good judge of customer’s character and maintain a cool temper even when “receiving the insults of the ignorant”⁷⁵ In her autobiography, future union leader Margaret Bondfield described her three-month search for a position in 1892 London as “the shadow of a nightmare.”⁷⁶ According to the store history, when Selfridges opened 10,000 people applied for the 1,200 jobs available.⁷⁷

Pamphlets and stories warned readers about women who encountered advertisements for fictitious jobs. One author alleged it was common practice to advertise for assistants even if none were needed in order to make it appear the store was profitable. “I have known cases when personal applications have been made at nine o’clock in the morning of the first appearance of the advertisement, and the applicant has been gruffly informed that the vacancy was filled.”⁷⁸ The Shop Assistants’ Union disapproved of false advertisements because unemployed assistants spent time and money traveling to present themselves for positions that did not actually exist.

⁷⁵ *Behind the Counter*, 2.

⁷⁶ Margaret Bondfield. *A Life's Work*. (London: Hutchinson, 1948), 27.

⁷⁷ Honeycombe, 181.

⁷⁸ *Behind the Counter*, 1.

Reformers and activists used stories about fake positions as warnings about the corrupt city or to advertise the need for a traveler aid society. The stories depicted the advertisements as hiding malicious intent to harm young women. The advertisements might seem legitimate to “an inexperienced country girl” but proved to be false after investigation.⁷⁹ In *Toilers of London*, readers were told the story of a young girl who applied for and accepted a position after sending in a photograph.⁸⁰ The position was in Vienna and the young woman received the position without needing references. The authors, suspicious of the correspondence alleged they saved the young woman from “a fate worse than death” after investigation.⁸¹ These types of warnings also appeared in novels. When searching the newspaper advertisements for a new position, shopgirl Pansy, “took idle pleasure in determining which were traps for the unwary (no difficult matter for one with her experience).”⁸² Unfortunately, even with her experience, one position Pansy applied and interviewed for, turned out to be a trap. Stories such as these served as warnings of the dangers cities posed for a young woman if she was not careful.⁸³

Shop assistants lucky enough to obtain an in-person might be asked personal questions. One assistant recounted the interview where the employer asked about his alcohol consumption habits. Bondfield was told in an interview she was too short for shop work. These personal questions and pronouncements placed potential assistants in an inferior or subservient position to the shopkeeper.⁸⁴

Many shops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century still used the tradition of the apprenticeship system left over from previous centuries. The apprentice system provides an

⁷⁹ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, *Toilers in London: Inquiries Concerning Female Labour in the Metropolis* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 137.

⁸⁰ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 137.

⁸¹ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 137.

⁸² Newte, 329.

⁸³ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 137-138.

⁸⁴ *Behind the Counter*, 1.

example of the stark difference between the reality and perception of shop work. Since shop work was a desirable position many parents, hoping to increase the status of their child, paid for six-month learning apprenticeships for their daughters or sons. Stores referred to these positions as learners, improvers, apprentices or junior assistants. Cicely Cotton's family paid Plummer Roddis Limited in Kent £25 for her apprenticeship.⁸⁵ Selfridges had a store manager recruit directly from schools in London "to ensure a continuous supply of the right material." The new employees had a trial month and then entered into a two-year training course.⁸⁶ Managing director at Harrods, Richard Burbidge, denied having any apprentices in his testimony to the Truck Committee in 1907. "We never take apprentices" he claimed. The store identified assistants in positions without pay as learners or improvers. It is unclear how the work between apprentices and learners or improvers differed.⁸⁷ Fifty-five young women between the ages of fifteen and seventeen are identified as learners on their employee record.⁸⁸ At Harrods the majority of the young women learners received no paid salary for their work but their meals were included with their employment. Only twelve of the young women identified as learners earned a small salary, 2/6 per week, in addition to receiving meals. The amount of time a woman was called a learner varied from one month to one year. If management determined the assistant was "satisfactory", she would start to receive a salary. After seven years of school, Janet O. started at Harrods as a learner cashier. She spent two months on probation and then received a salary of five shillings per week.⁸⁹ Janet's experience was typical of women working in other large stores. Adela Hill earned 2/6 when she started at Selfridges in 1909. She remembered that as an

⁸⁵ Corina, 80.

⁸⁶ Honeycombe, 182.

⁸⁷ Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts, Report of the Truck Committee, Parl. Papers, 1908, LIX, Vol. III, 15438. The Truck Committee was a Committee of Parliament investigating violations of the Truck Acts.

⁸⁸ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15437. Burbidge is correct, since Harrods does not refer to the new young assistants as apprentices.

⁸⁹ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

apprentice, “I was the lowest form of animal life, a junior to wait on the seniors and hopefully learn salesmanship.”⁹⁰ The apprentice job was meant to include training, but little actual training occurred.⁹¹ Cicely Cotton had a different experience and remembered her apprenticeship as hard but educational. For three years she received a salary of one shilling per week.⁹² She was offered a job as a shop assistant at the end of her apprenticeship for £30 per year but instead moved to another store where she earned £60. “The apprenticeship was hard, but something of which I was later very proud,” she explained. “The thoroughness with which we were taught all manner of things, including how to sell and give service with courtesy, really fitted apprentices with skills for life.”⁹³ Since apprentices were normally young, they, more than other employees, worked under the parental authority of the floor manager or shop owner. Cotton’s apprenticeship contract had specific rules dictating her behavior as a parent might dictate the behavior of their child. She was prohibited from playing cards and dice. She was not allowed to attend plays or be in a tavern. Her contract mandated she could not “absent herself from her said Masters’ service day or night unlawfully...she shall behave herself towards her said Masters and all theirs during the said term.”⁹⁴ This relationship left them powerless to protest long hours, bad working conditions or bad living conditions especially since they hoped for either a permanent position or a reference necessary for any other position. Bondfield argued against the apprentice system. In a speech to shop workers in 1899, she told them apprentice boys in previous centuries were “full of spirit” because they knew they had a fair chance of becoming a master one day. Bondfield herself served as an apprentice when she started work in 1887, but the retail industry had

⁹⁰ Honeycombe, 191.

⁹¹ Johnson, 2. The shop assistant’s union reminded its readers in 1898 that apprentice shop workers in Germany are paid from beginning and their apprenticeship lasts three years. In Austria, apprentices serve for two years and generally go through a special commercial school training before starting an apprenticeship. In cigar shops in Austria, women and girls hold the majority of assistant positions. *The Shop Assistant*, June 1898.

⁹² Cicely Cotton’s apprenticeship was between 1917-1920.

⁹³ Corina, 80.

⁹⁴ Corina, 80.

changed. Many things sold in stores were machine made in factories and the skill level for the occupation had fallen. She tried to convince her audience they would never rise to the position of shop owner. “For the great majority of you there is no small shop on the distant horizon; you will always remain in the position of employee.”⁹⁵

The Shop Assistants’ Union and activists’ pamphlets alleged there was little hope for advancement for women shop assistants, however Bird asserted there were opportunities for women to advance in shop work. “There are good chances of promotion in large houses; a clever woman finds her opportunity there, and quickly passes from the counter to the showroom, and her weekly ‘book’ is always a large one.” Evidence from Harrods indicates there was one woman who rose to a very senior position prior to World War I. Miss Ida Fowle began at Harrods in 1885 as a clerk and rose to a position supervising hundreds in the ledger department.⁹⁶ Although she was not as senior as position to the level of Miss Ida Fowle, Lily D. was a floorwalker at Harrods and supervised other shop assistants.⁹⁷ Prior to the war women did not work in certain departments and did not have the same opportunities for advancement. Bird asserted a woman could save her money and use the experience of working in a large shop to her advantage if she opened her own drapery or dressmaking shop. However, even Bird recognized few women were able to save money on the wages shop assistants received. Those assistants forced to live on their wages “dependent only on their own earning, will never save enough for that shop of their own, and as their years creek on, and hard work and worry and bad conditions sap their strength and spoil their appearance, they will drop out of the mill.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *The Shop Assistant*, December. 1899.

⁹⁶ Honeycombe, 95.

⁹⁷ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

⁹⁸ Bird, 76.

In 1913 Harrods department store and the Boots Chemist Shop publicly indicated new programs to train young women to become shop assistants. The Boots program invited fifty young women from an unspecified college to undertake a six-month apprenticeship, while Harrods offered twelve positions for young women educated at Girton College, Cambridge. Harrods offered the smaller number of positions claiming they already had numerous women from regular colleges. However only one assistant from my sample, Victoria W., attended a college before starting at Harrods. *The Shop Assistant* editors remained critical of Harrods' scheme to train and hire "Girton girls" and found themselves in agreement with the manager of staff training at Harrods who doubted Girton girls could manage the subservient behavior necessary in a shop assistant. The program started apprentices in unpaid learning positions for six-months. During this time, as typical of apprentices, the new learner would be "learning the routine" and "gaining knowledge of the goods to be sold."⁹⁹ She would receive her meals from Harrods during this six-month period. Her next step in the process was working in the different departments for a small salary and commission to "gain sufficient confidence to inspire a customer with confidence in her."¹⁰⁰ The Harrods program predicted a first-class assistant could earn "into four figures", an amount *The Shop Assistant* found implausible even for a highly educated Girton girl.

The Harrods employee records offer a unique insight into the wages of shop assistants at the turn of the century. Since Harrods did not provide living arrangements for their staff, salaries were higher to cover their living expenses. My sample of employee records indicates there were forty women who started at Harrods in 1913 with a salary. The salaries ranged from a low of 2/6 per week to a high of 25 shillings per week with an average of 14 shillings per week. This total

⁹⁹ *The Shop Assistant*, October 4, 1913.

¹⁰⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, October 4, 1913.

does not include any women learners, piecemeal workers, or those on scholarship. The seven women who started at higher salaries, over 20 shillings per week, all had previous experience. Zoe H., age 24, had less one year of experience in a shop on Oxford Street before joining Harrods and her starting salary was 21 shillings per week. Josephine G., age 24, had four years of experience at a shop in Sloane Square and her starting salary was also 21 shillings per week. The highest starting salary belonged to Elizabeth S., age 40, who earned 25 shillings per week. Elizabeth S. had less than one year of experience listed on her employee card. All three women worked as shop assistants in the Costumes Department.¹⁰¹ The Union's estimate for an experienced shop assistant of £50 per year was accurate at a high-end department store according to the employee records at Harrods. In 1913, 20 shillings per week equaled £52 per year.

The wage earned by a shop assistant reflected her experience and the prosperity of the store. Between 1895 and 1914, Harrods (a high-end store) paid their shop assistants an average of 12 shillings per week. This salary was sometimes included food ("Dinner and Tea") and sometimes without ("No Food").¹⁰² Some assistants earned a commission with their salary. The employee records indicate every assistant who was paid a commission with her salary also received her food as part of her benefits. Forty-six percent of the women shop assistants from the sample received food as part of her salary. This was typically both dinner and tea. The highest wages went to women between the ages of 25 and 35 and the lowest wages went to the young girls identified as learners or improvers. Wages also depended on the department or position a woman worked in. A hairstylist earned 20 shillings per week in 1908, while Lily D., a "Lady Shopwalker", earned 35 shillings per week.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹⁰² Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹⁰³ A shopwalker was a senior employee who supervised other sales assistants. Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

Shop work was believed to be glamorous and easy work but the reality for most women shop assistants was low wages in a difficult atmosphere. Union materials note assistants complained when companies fined them for failing to make a sale to each customer. In one store, if a customer left without making a purchase and the assistant failed to bring this to the shop walker's attention, assistants were fined one shilling per incident. Some assistants even reported the threat of dismissal if they did not make a sale. "Some shops there is a rule that a girl must introduce at least two things to the customer's notice that she has not asked for" or face a fine.¹⁰⁴ The deduction of fines could seriously undermine a shop assistant's weekly wage. By 1911, Bird described the fine system as "less general and oppressive than it was ten years ago."¹⁰⁵ Many stores changed to a premium system, awarding assistants for achieving sales goals. Harrods used a commission system for some of their shop assistants. The commission system paid the shop assistant a wage and a commission based on how much she sold. One hundred and two women in the sample from Harrods worked on commission but not everyone at Harrods liked the system. "The commission system is thoroughly pernicious and should be abolished" wrote one assistant. She believed it "fostered a spirit of envy, hatred and greed."¹⁰⁶ While the system in use in 1911 sounds positive, critics claimed it prevented higher wages. Rules to obtain premiums or higher wages varied from store to store. Some stores paid assistants low wages to encourage higher sales. Another plan offered a higher wage if an assistant emptied a basket of items on the counter. Newspapers and articles shared stories from shop assistants of how they negotiated the difficult selling room. Miss Jones, a sales assistant in 1894, shared the story of her failure to sell furniture fringes to a customer as the store buyer requested. Jones was unable to sell the furniture fringes because the store did not sell them and she was unable to say this outright. "I showed her

¹⁰⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, April 23, 1910.

¹⁰⁵ Bird, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Callery, 101.

everything I could think of,' she said, 'and kept her there until I saw the buyer move away, when I whispered hastily, 'We haven't got any furniture fringes.'"¹⁰⁷ The fines and threats of dismissal based on sales and customer interactions created an environment where sales assistants "cajole or worry the customer into buying."¹⁰⁸ Honesty was something most shop assistants could not afford. In one fictitious shop, Pansy's salary and job security depended upon her sales. All of the characters knowingly lie to customers about the quality and appearance of the goods they are selling in order to make a sale.¹⁰⁹ Pansy's fictional work environment had elements of fact woven into it probably and was meant to serve as a warning to anyone considering a career in shopwork. Additionally, the hierarchy of the shop and the highly competitive employment field prevented the shopwalker or department manager from taking pity on an assistant who failed to achieve her sales goal. If the floor or department failed to meet sales goals, he too would be dismissed.

Evidence indicates shop assistants commonly lost their jobs for violating one of the many rules. Errors in sales calculations, lateness, or insubordination all resulted in dismissal. Store owners and floorwalkers had the right to dismiss any assistant at any time and for any reason. "Every assistant subject to instant dismissal, or instant resignation, for breach of regulations, *or at the employer's will*" read the rules of a store in 1898.¹¹⁰ The Shop Assistants' Union recorded one assistant was "dismissed for being ill one day" while another was dismissed because she "ate a plum."¹¹¹ At Whiteleys' store, managers posted a "late list" with the excuse shop assistants gave for being late. William Whiteley himself added comments either warning the assistant to be

¹⁰⁷ Bulley, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Bulley, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Newte, 189.

¹¹⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, September, 1898.

¹¹¹ USDAW 125 Years Strong, 1891-2016, p9

more careful or ordering a dismissal.¹¹² When Selfridges & Co. department store opened in 1908, it had a staff guidebook warning staff: “Those who conduct themselves in a manner not in keeping with the rules and spirit of the House will be called to account.”¹¹³ Harrods’ shop assistant Dorothy M. was dismissed for “slackness” after one month of work in 1909. Mrs. Lucie M. was dismissed for “gossiping” in 1910. Management dismissed Lucy P. after she was late to work three times in one week. Employment cards also indicate that employees at Harrods lost their jobs due to staff or department rearrangements as indicated on the employee cards. Twenty-eight women in my sample lost their jobs at Harrods due to “changes” or “reduction of staff.” Others left Harrods or lost their jobs due to “illness.”¹¹⁴ It is unclear whether these women left voluntarily or the store dismissed them. Lena, the fictional shopgirl friend of Pansy, worked while she was sick to avoid being dismissed. Finally, many of the women who left employment at Harrods were identified as temporary or seasonal workers. These women returned to Harrods to work the next sale or holiday season. One of these, Sarah S. worked at Harrods for the Christmas season every year between 1907 and 1911 as an assistant in the French Confectionary Department.¹¹⁵

One concern activists and shop assistants had was the loss of job and home for those living-in. The employer, as her landlord “renders her homeless and foodless at the very moment she becomes out of work and in most need.”¹¹⁶ In comparison, domestic service tradition required the master to give the servant one month’s notice or a month’s wages upon dismissal. In the late nineteenth century, shopkeepers kept an assistant’s first two weeks of wages as something to give an assistant when they left the service of the shop on their own or after

¹¹² USDAW 125 years Strong, 1891-2016, p12

¹¹³ Honeycombe, 180.

¹¹⁴ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹¹⁵ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹¹⁶ Bird, 66.

dismissal.¹¹⁷ However this scheme relied on the honesty of the shopkeeper. In *Guardian of the Poor* when Edie is fired late in the evening (for refusing the advances of the shop's owner) she did not receive her two weeks pay. Edie only received her pay after an inquiry to the shop owner by a male co-worker.¹¹⁸

The Shop Assistant's Union alleged shopowners dismissed older assistants because of their age. In an editorial in 1899, the union reminded readers it was there to protect them from employers who replaced older assistants with younger cheaper workers.¹¹⁹ Harrods employee records support the allegation that shop work was for younger women. The average age for starting employment at Harrods department store was twenty-three with the median age of twenty-one. The youngest new hire was fourteen and the oldest new hire was fifty-eight. Forty-three women out of 438 list their starting ages as thirty-five or older.¹²⁰ Even today, asking a woman her age is a delicate matter. Some women feel uncomfortable revealing their real age. In 1907, Mrs. Amy P. deducted five years from her age when she began work at Harrods, while another woman, Mrs. Marjorie F. said she was forty when she began work at Harrods in 1910 but census records reveal she was really forty-five years old. Perhaps reducing the age listed on the employment records aided women in maintaining their employment for as long as they were able. Harrods pensioned two of the women from the sample, but neither their ages nor their address are listed on their employment records.¹²¹

Maintaining a good standing at work was essential for shop assistants. Shop assistants needed a positive reference from a previous employer to obtain employment. Evidence in the

¹¹⁷ Johnson, 3.

¹¹⁸ T. Baron Russell, *Guardian of the Poor*, (London: John Lane, 1898), 175. The character is called Edie but her full name was Edith.

¹¹⁹ *The Shop Assistant*, December 1899.

¹²⁰ The employee records for 62 women have no age listed.

¹²¹ Harrods Archive, Employee Records. Without an age or address I was unable to positively locate these women in the census.

Harrods cards and *The Shop Assistant* indicates some assistants began a new job before their reference was confirmed. Rose T., Mrs. Majorie F. and Mrs. Amy P all lied to management at Harrods risking dismissal and losing their good character reference. Harrods terminated the employment of new assistants whose references came back “unsatisfactory.”¹²² If a store closed or reduced staff, an unemployed shop assistant relied on their employer for a reference.

Bondfield alleged some shopkeepers who laid off workers due to financial difficulty withheld references to disguise the store’s business problems. She told the story of a twenty-nine year-old married shop assistant who lost his job when the store laid off its employees. The store refused to supply the assistant with a reference and without a reference he was prevented from finding another job.¹²³ Bondfield and other union leaders believed examples like this displayed the unfair power a reference held over workers.

The dispute over the power shop owners had over staff was most apparent in the restrictive contracts some staff signed. Some shopkeepers required assistants to sign agreements or contracts prohibiting their work after leaving the employ of a specific company. Stories and newspaper articles report assistants often received the contracts only after they began a new job, leaving them no choice but to sign or immediately lose the job. The Fabian Tract, *Shop Life and Its Reform* (1897), explained why assistants signed the restrictive contracts. “He dare not risk his situation or prospects of obtaining a situation, by non-compliance with regulations, though these may hamper him in his business career.”¹²⁴ Typical contracts were for a specific number of years such as five or ten and prevented an assistant from working within a specific radius of the store

¹²² Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹²³ Grace Dare, “Women’s Page”, *The Shop Assistant*, July 20 1902.

¹²⁴ Johnson, 3.

or in any store owned by the company.¹²⁵ There is no evidence Harrods had restrictive contracts and assistants left Harrods to work at other stores within London.

Newspapers and union tracts reported on stores that legally prosecuted assistants who violated restrictive contracts. In one extreme case from 1903, a shopkeeper brought a young woman to court for violating her contract. The young woman left the employment of the shop to get married to another shopkeeper and stood accused of helping her husband in his business. The young woman's employer was able to obtain an injunction preventing her from helping her husband, something she appealed in court. *The Draper* reported on the appeal: "For the lady it was pleaded that the agreement was too wide and unreasonable, that she had received no consideration for making it, and that the Judge had no jurisdiction to grant an injunction where no damages are claimed."¹²⁶ The injunction was overturned, and the woman was allowed to continue helping her husband in his place of business. The article noted one concern with the wording of the contract and expressed surprise the Court did not recognize this problem. The agreement "bound the defendant for 'all time,' and not for a limited term of years."¹²⁷ Although the article and newspaper did not elaborate further on this contract, it represented a real concern for assistants who attempted to change jobs. The Shop Assistants' Union aided shop assistants who were caught in restrictive contracts. In 1910 the union appealed to an unnamed store chain to eliminate their employee agreement. The company heard the union's appeal but continued to use the agreement but with reduced restrictions. Any former employee was prohibited from working within five miles for one year, when previously it had been twenty miles for three

¹²⁵ *Behind the Counter*, 2.

¹²⁶ *The Draper*, February 7, 1903.

¹²⁷ *The Draper*, February 7, 1903.

years.¹²⁸ In the Minutes of Sub-Committee Meeting in 1910, the union noted the beginning of a legal case on behalf of another assistant who was transferred to a position that fell within the radius of his previous job's agreement. He had been threatened with legal action and applied to the union for help.¹²⁹ The Shop Assistants' Union regularly aided members caught in restrictive agreements.

Shop assistants found many shoppers to be "exacting" and "fault-finding" according to Olive Christian Malvery. Malvery was a journalist who investigated women's work. In her undercover experience as a sales woman, she discovered assistants faked their smiles and humor when dealing with difficult customers who were usually women.¹³⁰ Store policies commonly held to the old adage 'the customer is always right' while shop assistants bitterly resented that policy.¹³¹ *The Draper* advised readers in 1905 to "Greet your customers with a smiling face; treat them courteously at all times."¹³² *The Harroddian Gazette*, the in-house magazine for shop assistants at Harrods, reminded staff customers were to be treated as guests. In order to be courteous, staff was warned to "not talk loudly, laugh or discuss personal or even business matters in the lifts or otherwise in public." Another tip reminded staff to "listen with interested respect" to customers. When providing directions, courtesy dictated speaking in clear and slow manner to prevent confusion.¹³³

A bad or difficult customer could get an assistant dismissed and ruin a shop assistant's work reference. Shop assistants complained male customers behaved rudely towards them. This

¹²⁸ National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks. *Shop Assistant's Union Minutes. 1910-1911*, "Minutes of the First Meeting of the Newly Elected Executive Committee" Author's Private Collection.

¹²⁹ National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks. Minutes of Sub-Committee Meeting, Held at Central Office, August 3, 1910. Author's Private Collection.

¹³⁰ Olive Christian Malvery, *The Soul Market: with which is included "The Heart of Things"* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1907), 158.

¹³¹ *Sketches Behind the Counter*, 3.

¹³² *The Draper*, Summer 1905.

¹³³ *The Harroddian Gazette*, March 6, 1913 March, 6.

behavior is displayed in *The Shop Girl* musical from 1908. The shopgirls sang about the married men who behaved inappropriately to them, “They all make eyes at the Shop Girl...oh, how they stare.”¹³⁴ Other customers could be impolite to assistants. Margaret Bondfield recounted an experience with a bad customer when she worked as a shop assistant in the West End. The customer, a “fine lady” was “very rude” to Bondfield, but as the shop assistant she recalled, “I was not in a position to answer back; I just looked at her.” The customer left Bondfield but returned to make a purchase. What astonished Bondfield was the woman acknowledged her bad temper, something other customers had not done. The customers at the fictional Borlase & Sons department store in *The Guardian of the Poor* are described as women who are “deliberating, vacillating, complaining” as they touched numerous items of cheap finery. During the summer months, when the store became hot and stuffy, “ill-tempered” customers took their frustrations out on the assistants.¹³⁵ Eve, the main character in *A Pretty Shop Girl*, 1906, was forced from her position by a conniving customer. In an unrealistic plot, Constance Maybould, a rival for the affections of the shop owner’s son, pretended to be an unsatisfied customer in an effort to get Eve fired from the store. The exchange between Constance and Eve was false because Constance pretended to be a genuine customer, however the exchange represents what could happen to a shop assistant after a customer complaint.

Sales women recognized the influence and power customers had over their lives. Customers dictated the hours a shop remained open through the hours they shopped. Whitaker asserts shops in upper and middle-class districts in London closed early because their customers did not shop in the late evening, while mid-size or smaller shops stayed open late to

¹³⁴ H.J.W. Dam. *The Shop Girl. An Entirely New and Original Musical Farce*, (London: Hopwood & Crew, 1908), 11.

¹³⁵ Russell, *Guardian of the Poor*, 208.

accommodate their customers.¹³⁶ Research in the Harrods archive indicates this is not accurate. Richard Burbidge reduced closing hours to 7:00 p.m. weekly in 1891. Harrods remained open until 8:00 p.m. on Fridays but also reduced hours on Saturday to close at 9:00 p.m. instead of 10:00 p.m. According to *Harrods Knightsbridge: The Story of Society's Favorite Store*, Burbidge did this for the staff not the customers.¹³⁷

The Long Hours

Shop assistants themselves consistently complained about the long hours of work to the Shop Assistants' Union and other activists. "There was no common understanding among shopkeepers as to a general hour of closing and each sought to attract more customers and do more business by staying open later and later into the night, a practice now possible with the introduction of gas lighting."¹³⁸ The advances in town life, such as shops, theaters, railways, trams and other urban amusements had town residents remaining out in town longer than they had in the past, according to Fabian Society author Sidney Webb. "Sixty years ago artificial lighting was neither so good nor so cheap as it has become now, and the day could not be so easily lengthened." He believed gas lighting and plate glass lengthened the day of the shop assistant, forced to remain behind the counter to cater to the town residents out on the town in the evening hours.¹³⁹

The voices of small shop owners provide a window into the working lives of their employees. In works like *Death and Disease Behind the Counter* (1884), small shop owners highlight some of the problems found in smaller shops. These owners declared their assistants

¹³⁶ Wilfred B. Whitaker, *Victorian and Edwardian Shopworkers: The Struggle to Obtain Better Conditions and a Half-Holiday* (Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 1973), 134-136.

¹³⁷ Callery, 39.

¹³⁸ Holcombe, 108.

¹³⁹ Sidney Webb, *Labor in the Longest Reign: 1837-1897* (London: The Fabian Society, 1899), 14.

unhappy with the long hours. One shopowner reported, “My assistants all grumble about long hours” and another complained, “My assistants have suffered and none but exceptionally strong and healthy men can endure the work.”¹⁴⁰ Managers and owners used the word “suffer” when referring to their employees and the long hours of standing yet none changed the conditions of their employees. All reported their inability to close early due to competition from other shops. Augustus, a shop walker in north London, believed shop owners desired change but assistants and shop workers needed to “look to our legislators and statesmen” for legal action¹⁴¹.

In her memoir, Bondfield recalled the small number of customers served in the late evening hours when she worked as a shop assistant. Bondfield’s employer would send her out onto the street in the late evening hours “to scout around and see if the shops over the way showed any signs of closing; if they did, we, too, would hastily and gladly put up the shutters.”¹⁴²

Church leaders decried the effect of late shopping hours on the shop assistants and people of London. The “gaslit shops render the pavements very attractive to loungers” and there is “sauciness and immorality of the pavement among young girls.”¹⁴³ After shops closed late shops assistants went out into the city either for leisure or to travel home. The late hours of stores caused the public to believe shop assistants behaved badly because they were out late at night.¹⁴⁴ Social investigators argue vaguely the problems caused by long hours needed to be solved by those “who boast of progress and science.”¹⁴⁵ These people who can make changes are never mentioned by name and efforts to regulate store hours by legislation were unsuccessful.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Sutherst, *Death and Disease Behind the Counter* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1884), 50-51.

¹⁴¹ Sutherst, 52.

¹⁴² Bondfield, *A Life's Work*, 62.

¹⁴³ Sutherst, 56.

¹⁴⁴ Sutherst, 59.

¹⁴⁵ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 195.

For a shop assistant, late evenings after work hours represented the only leisure time she might have during the day. Walkowitz asserts that the working women “who entered the center for work and pleasure” created a “new social mix” where mistakes could be made.¹⁴⁶ Miss Elizabeth Cass, the shop girl falsely arrested for streetwalking, used her long hours as a defense for why she was out on the street so late. Her employer testified to her good character, but the judge still felt she should not be out that late at night.¹⁴⁷ Shop assistants complaining about the late hours of store work cited the inability to walk in the city at night a reason stores should close earlier. It was not harassment but respectability that was at stake: “it would not be considered respectable for young girls to stroll about the streets alone” at that hour.¹⁴⁸ Draper’s assistant Emily, age twenty-five confirmed this by declaring, “No respectable girl cares to go out between 10 and 11 at night.”¹⁴⁹ As an aspiring actress, Kate took walk on parts with an acting group that took her to venues all over London late into the evening. The late nights often had her rushing to catch the last train or bus home and then walking from Notting Hill Station to her house. The parents of other women in the acting group did not allow their daughters to take some of these roles because of the late night travel. Crawford notes “for a young woman of her class, Kate was experiencing a considerable degree of freedom.”¹⁵⁰ This is fascinating because for a woman shop assistant, walking home after the late closing hours for a small shop was not something that could be avoided. Working women often had no choice to be out late even though it was not considered respectable.

¹⁴⁶ Walkowitz, “Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment and Street Walking in Late Victorian England,” 4.

¹⁴⁷ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 128-130.

¹⁴⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, Aug 1900.

¹⁴⁹ Sutherst, 136.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Great War: The People’s Story - Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*. Chapter 1, Location 885.

Larger stores in the wealthier parts of town, including Harrods, closed their doors by 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. every day and regularly allowed their assistants a half-day holiday. Most of these assistants probably ended their workday by 8:00 or 8:30 p.m. on a normal day, allowing for the natural duties of an assistant to clean up after closing. Mid-size or smaller shops had much longer hours. In 1901, a cartoon in *The Shop Assistant* displayed the contradiction between shopping hours and working hours. Speakers outside the shop announce the freedom of the British worker from enslavement, reminding readers workers were not slaves. Inside the shop, assistants are working under a large clock that reads 10:30 p.m. and a sign indicating the shop closed at 7:00 p.m. The assistants, all male, look haggard, thin and exhausted. Standing off to the side is the rotund shopkeeper watching the assistants. The cartoon itself is called “Overtime-Gratis” and draws attention to the contradiction between shopping hours and work hours. Shop assistants were not paid for their work after the store closed.¹⁵¹

Unpaid overtime hours represented one of the clear contradictions between the public’s understanding of shop work and the shop assistant’s reality. *The Working Life of Shop Assistants* (1910) by Hallsworth and Davis, recounts the trial of a “well-known large London firm” for violations of the Shop Hours Regulation Act (1886).¹⁵² Employing 4,000 to 5,000 staff, the court convicted the store for having the assistants under the age of eighteen working over seventy-four hours per week. The unnamed female inspector and the court proved the store employed young assistants seventy-nine to ninety-four hours per week. Hallsworth and Davis argued the real problem this case and others like it displayed was “the nominal shop hours of opening and closing are no indication of the actual hours of labour.”¹⁵³ The law protected young assistants from excessive hours, but a store could employ assistants over the age of eighteen for ninety

¹⁵¹ *The Shop Assistant*, June 1901.

¹⁵² The Shop Hours Regulation Act prohibited assistants under the age of 18 working over 74 hours per week.

¹⁵³ Hallsworth and Davis, 74.

hours per week. Union officials complained assistants worked overtime late into the night or early morning hours during the holiday season with no pay added to their weekly salary. “The assistants are kept within until 12 and 1 - sometimes 2 and 3 o’clock in the morning - and all this without adding one penny to their meagre remuneration.”¹⁵⁴ When comparing the work of shop assistants to other workers, assistants received criticism from union activists for working overtime without pay since “any other laborer in England would claim wages for overtime.”¹⁵⁵

Activists mistakenly believed the problem of long hours did not apply to those assistants working in “better stores”. Although the court case discussed by Hallsworth and Davis indicated it could be a problem in larger stores as well.¹⁵⁶ Emphasizing a distinction between better department stores and small shops, in *Death and Disease Behind the Counter* (1884), Thomas Sutherst claims to have visited the former.¹⁵⁷ In these houses, shop assistants received amenities including “well-stocked libraries and reading rooms; swimming, music, cricket, football, and other clubs.” He described the hours these assistants worked as “reasonable” with a weekly half-holiday. He declared, in a clear case of class bias, exceptional stores of a better class were not the stores requiring Parliamentary intervention. As other documents indicate, store size had little to do with the quality of work life for the employees.

All sources agreed the problem of long hours was normal for the assistant in the small store shop. The majority of shops had less than fifty assistants, and those assistants needed shorter hours. Ninety percent of the women who responded to the Shops Hours Labour League question on the number of employees in their shop, reported working in a shop with fewer than

¹⁵⁴ *Behind the Counter*, 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Behind the Counter*, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Although this store is unnamed, with 4,000 assistants, it was likely a department store and therefore considered one of the “better” stores.

¹⁵⁷ Sutherst, 83.

twenty assistants, supporting Sutherst's conclusions.¹⁵⁸ Smaller shops serving the working class could not close earlier. An assistant in a small shop saw her peak business hours between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. "It is no uncommon thing to walk down such a street (the Kilburn High Road, for instance), and find shops only just closing at midnight."¹⁵⁹ Hannah Grieg, who worked in her father's grocery shop in the late nineteenth century, recalled her mother closing up the shop in the early hours of Sunday morning. "It was sometimes difficult for us, all going as hard as we could, to cope with the pressure of customers."¹⁶⁰ Shop assistants reported workdays ending at midnight to the Shop Hours Labour League. A young woman named Amy, who worked in Kings Cross, London, at a shop with twenty assistants averaged sixteen-hour days. Another assistant, Emily, age twenty-five, worked eighty-six hours per week on average. She told the Shop House Labour League her workday ended at 10:00 p.m. during the week and midnight on Saturday. She was never able to get outside for a walk in the fresh air because of her late hours.¹⁶¹ Fifty-nine percent of the women who are portrayed in *Death and Disease Behind the Counter* report working on Saturday until 11:00 p.m. or later.

The smallest shops with only a few assistants or less remained open the longest hours. In *The Pinch of Poverty* (1892) a small shop owner was both the proprietor and only person who worked in a shop.¹⁶² The interview confirms the small shop in a working class neighborhood stayed open late hours to meet the demands of their customers. Small shops that served the working classes made it difficult for legislators or the union to negotiate early closing days or restricted hours. A small shop was typically a family shop. In her oral history, Susan Alice Field

¹⁵⁸ Sutherst, 133-141.

¹⁵⁹ Bird, 72.

¹⁶⁰ Greig, 6.

¹⁶¹ Sutherst, 136.

¹⁶² Thomas Wright, *The Pinch of Poverty: Sufferings and Heroism of the London Poor* (London: Isbister and Company Limited, 1892), 158.

(nee Pratt), born 1886, explained how she worked for her brother-in-law's shop at the turn of the century. There were four shop assistants at the store and on Saturdays they opened at 8:30 in the morning but did not close until 1:00 a.m. that night. "Never no half days shut you know" she stated. Her half day off was spent emptying the window displays and loading them with new merchandise.¹⁶³ These shops catered to a crowd of workers that received their pay at day's end and sometimes only received pay if they found work at all. The busiest time in those shops was after other workers finished their workday.¹⁶⁴

In 1899, *The Shop Assistant* newspaper wondered why customers, who themselves were "working men" gave no thought to the shop assistant who was a "white slave" obligated "to stand for 10 or 14 hours a day on her feet attending the business of shop-keeping."¹⁶⁵ Shop assistant Emily resented the customers who walked at night arriving at the last minute to shop when the assistants are "pale and fit to drop." She believed many women waited until the beer house closed on Saturdays to do their shopping, presumably after their husband came home with what remained of his wages.¹⁶⁶ Some believed if Parliament forced stores to close early, "there would follow an outcry because the working woman couldn't do her marketing, or go shopping with her man after the day's work is done."¹⁶⁷

Shop assistants were afraid to complain about the long hours and stories of what happened to those who complained served as a warning to current shop assistants or those interested in the career. One story related a shop assistant who reported working after the store closed night after night with no increase to his wages. His day stretched to over fourteen working hours per day. After the assistant accidentally overslept one day, the shopkeeper asked the

¹⁶³ *Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918*, Susan Alice Field, QD1/FL WE/69 J1 & J2.

¹⁶⁴ Wright, 161.

¹⁶⁵ *The Shop Assistant*, June, 1899.

¹⁶⁶ Sutherst, 136.

¹⁶⁷ Bird, 73.

assistant what the problem was. When the assistant replied he was tired, the shopkeeper allegedly said “Tired, bah? What are young men made of? What do you mean?” The assistant reminded his employer he had been standing over fourteen hours a day for a full week and said “I am tired and worn out.” The employer immediately threatened to fire the assistant, “If my hours don’t suit you, leave in a month’s time.” The assistant told Sutherst, “After that curt reply, to prolong arguing with such an unreasonable person would be worse than folly.”¹⁶⁸ Olive Christian Mackirdy believed the greatest difficulty she faced while working undercover as a shop assistant was the long hours of standing. MacKirdy’s employer followed the limits set by the Shop Hours Regulation Act, but she noted this meant standing ten or more hours per day for those under eighteen and longer for those over. During her short time as a shop assistant, she discovered the work was monotonous as she spent hours “uselessly arranging and rearranging the stock.”¹⁶⁹

It is difficult to clarify exactly how many hours defined ‘long hours’ because of the variation in store size and location. Some general conclusions can be drawn through evidence submitted to the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Early Closing, (1901). Evidence indicated stores with smaller numbers of assistants worked longer hours than those stores with larger numbers of assistants. Eleven shops employing one hundred fifty-six assistants reported working between fifty-five and sixty hours per week. Forty-eight shops employing three hundred and four assistants reported working between sixty and sixty-five hours per week. One hundred and thirty shops employing four hundred and ninety-four assistants reported working between sixty-five and seventy hours per week. Sixteen shops with thirty-six assistants reported working between seventy and seventy-five hours per week. Nineteen shops with thirty-nine assistants reported working over 75 hours per week. Evidence presented to the committee indicated

¹⁶⁸ *Behind the Counter*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Malvery, 158.

grocers, butchers and fruiterers all worked eighty hours a week or more.¹⁷⁰ One small shopkeeper noted, she remained open late into the night because her customers were “cas’alty people” who “have to wait until they get home after a day’s search for work, and compare notes as to what ‘luck’ they may have met with before they can decide, firstly, whether they can have supper at all, and if so, secondly, what kind of supper it shall be.”¹⁷¹ The quest for a limited workday for shop assistants did not end with the Shops Act of 1912 or the Shops Act 1913. In *Shop Slavery and Emancipation* (1912), assistants and activists still advocated for shorter hours. Author Paine advocated for an eight hour day and no more than 44 hours per week. “We want time to swim and box and wrestle, time to walk and run, and time to learn to ride a horse and handle a gun.”¹⁷²

Identifying the Shop Assistant

Who were the young women who went into shop work and why did they choose that career? One author alleged women went into shop work to keep their hands clean and soft instead of the chapped skin or broken nails they might get from factory work.¹⁷³ Most shop assistants were from comfortable working-class homes or lower middle-class homes. Pamphlets and other accounts note the “uncertainty of the shop girl’s class and geographic origins.”¹⁷⁴ Lee Holcombe asserts this uncertainty was cause for derision by members of the working class. “The upper and middle classes considered shop workers to be about on a level with the servant class, while the working classes sneered at their pretensions to respectability, derisively calling them ‘counter-jumpers.’” For those in the upper working classes, the respectability of the shop was a

¹⁷⁰ Whitaker, 204.

¹⁷¹ Wright, 161.

¹⁷² Paine, *Shop Slavery and Emancipation*, 1912, 116-117

¹⁷³ Bird, 64.

¹⁷⁴ E.F. Evans “‘Counter Jumpers’ and Queens of the Street’: The Shop Girl of Gissing and his Contemporaries” in Spiers, J (eds) *Gissing and the City* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 110.

step up while the lower middle class considered shop work respectable. Shop work held the illusion of genteel work and as one character described it, “Miss Tilly prefers shop work with its long hours and low wages over domestic work because of the ‘stigma’ attached to domestic work.”¹⁷⁵

A basic education was common among shop assistants, but where they went to school, and for how many years, differed. Being a shop assistant was appealing because very little formal education of the business was required. A shop assistant only needed “good manners, pleasantness of appearance, and accuracy and quickness in simple arithmetic.”¹⁷⁶ The 1870 Elementary Education Act required school boards to be elected in order to expand education and establish requirements for children. For those born in the 1870’s, five years of education was required.¹⁷⁷ Out of the 500 Harrods women shop assistants sampled, only sixty-two listed school as their previous employment. Fourteen-year-old Barbara W. joined Harrods after nine years of schooling in London’s Sleaford Street School which opened in 1874.¹⁷⁸

Fictional representations such as George Gissing’s *Odd Women* and *The Soul of a Shop-Girl* by Charles Pearce had shop girls born into genteel families while social activists like Bird believed shop assistants came from working class families. The previously unused employee records from Harrods provide a better picture of what types of homes shop assistants came from before they started working. The records from Harrods include the home address and age of the women. Using the census and the information on the employee records, a profile can be created of Harrods’ female employees. This information includes with whom a shop assistant lived with at home with and the employment status of each member of the household. Maud F. was a

¹⁷⁵ Newte, 100.

¹⁷⁶ Bird, 64.

¹⁷⁷ Lees and Lees, 219. By 1880’s this was raised to six to seven years of education.

¹⁷⁸ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

millinery assistant who started working for Harrods when she was sixteen in 1911.¹⁷⁹ She lived at home with her parents and siblings, and her father worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum according to the 1911 census. Younger siblings were all listed as being in school as of 1911, except one brother who was already working. Margery M. lived with her parents and siblings in Chelsea when she started working for Harrods in 1904 at age eighteen. Her father did not work and listed his employment as private means. In March 1909, she had her reference sent to Selfridge's Department Store, indicating a new employment. She married later that year and, by the census of 1911, was no longer working. Rose T. was an orphan before she started working as a shop assistant. In 1901, when she was thirteen years old, census records indicate she lived at the London Orphan Asylum. Prior to that, she lived with family, including one older sister.¹⁸⁰ Through the archival evidence at Harrods, it is clear shop assistants came from the full spectrum of upper working-class and lower middle-class backgrounds.

Marriage and the Shop Assistant

For women shop assistants, marriage typically meant they no longer had to work outside of the home. Marriage was a desired status and was considered a “release” from the monotony of shop work.¹⁸¹ *The Shop Assistant* quotes a shop assistant who would “marry anybody to get out of the drapery business.”¹⁸² It alleged that assistants jumped at any marriage to leave shop work. “Most of us get married when we are offered the chance, and sometimes we are not very particular what the chance is like.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ All names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

¹⁸⁰ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹⁸¹ *The Shop Assistant*, Feb 28, 1914; *The Shop Assistant*, July 1897.

¹⁸² *The Shop Assistant*, July 1897.

¹⁸³ Sutherst, 92.

Barbara Drake, writing a report for the Women's Industrial Council, believed young women accepted jobs in tea shops with low wages and long hours because "it offers a better chance of marriage than, for example, domestic service or life in a factory."¹⁸⁴ Her argument can be applied to shop assistants who also interacted with customers. Bondfield believed "shop work accented the desire of most shop girls to get married." She argued the long hours and living-in system "deprived them of the normal companionship of men in their leisure hours."¹⁸⁵ Even though discussions of marriage for shop assistants appeared regularly, in a column entitled "Advice to Shop Girls" one author recommended young women should avoid becoming assistants to meet members of the opposite sex. He advised, "A true man will find out a true woman, no matter where her lot may be placed" and warned against shop assistants who "trapped a man with her best business smile."¹⁸⁶

It is probable that women over thirty-five who left shop work and did not return to it were married. In *The Working Life of Women*, 1911, B.L. Hutchins argued "marriage is still the most important and extensively followed occupation for women." Using the census from 1901 and statistics given in the *Statistical Journal*, June 1909, Hutchins analyzed data on marriage, women and work. Twenty-seven out of one hundred women age twenty to twenty-five were married. The number of women married increased as their age increased. Sixty-four out of one hundred women age twenty-five to thirty-five were married and seventy-five out of one hundred women age thirty-five to forty-five were married.¹⁸⁷ The numbers indicate marriage was the reason women over the age of thirty-five were not found working in stores. Hutchins concludes the

¹⁸⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, April 12, 1913.

¹⁸⁵ Bondfield, 36.

¹⁸⁶ *The Shop Assistant*, Dec 21 1901.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth Leigh Hutchins. *The Working Life of Women* (London: The Fabian Society, 1911), 12.

number of working women decreases as their age increases. Out of one hundred women age twenty, fifty-six of them worked, but at age thirty-five only twenty-three of them work.

Union officials worried women workers, including women shop assistants, did not view themselves with any sense of permanency. Marriage was the path most women followed, “therefore she will inevitably look upon any work she does between leaving school and going to the altar as something of a temporary and stop-gap nature.”¹⁸⁸ In an 1890 speech on working women, Clara Collet asked “On what principles is a girl’s career determined?” Her answer addressed the belief a young woman would stay in her job only a few years. “Parents take it for granted that she will be married in a few years.”¹⁸⁹ She believed parents felt providing work training or education for girls was unnecessary and a waste. Authors supported the idea that marriage was the natural conclusion for women after a short career. Eva from *The Pretty Shop Girl* assumes she will stop work after marriage and Kitty from *Diana of Dobson’s* looks forward to stopping work at Dobson’s when she marries. Pansy noted most of the women she worked with saw “a husband as a permanent means of escape.”¹⁹⁰ For a woman worker “in the vast majority of cases her marriages means cessation of work” at least working outside of the home for wages.¹⁹¹

The Shop Assistants’ Union claimed shopkeepers fired assistants for getting married or prohibited marriage without prior approval.¹⁹² The story of a shop assistant who was fired for getting married without permission was related on The Women’s Pages, a regular feature page of *The Shop Assistant*. Another tale alleged shopkeepers withheld permission for marriage as long as possible for the male shop assistants because the men would be eligible for higher wages once

¹⁸⁸ Bird, 2-3.

¹⁸⁹ Clara Collet, *The Economic Position of Educated Working Women*. (London: E.W. Allen, 1890), 209-210.

¹⁹⁰ Newte, 99.

¹⁹¹ Bird, 2.

¹⁹² *The Shop Assistant*, Sept 28, 1901.

they married and lived-out. Cicely Cotton's apprenticeship contract from 1917 specifically prohibited marriage during the three years of her apprentice contract.¹⁹³

Marriage was a significant issue for shop assistants and women workers. Evidence from the union and activists indicates few women shop assistants stayed employed once they were married, but the employee records at Harrods indicate the truth was more complicated. Six of the four hundred and eighty-three women in the sample listed "marriage" as the reason they were leaving work at Harrods. Martha J. listed marriage as her reason for leaving Harrods, but census records indicate it was her sister who married. Martha lived the rest of her life with her sister and husband, but it does not appear that she ever married. Fifteen women were already married at the time they started working at Harrods and their employee records identified them as "Mrs.". Mrs. Amy P. was married with children but listed her marital status as deserted in the 1911 census. Her daughter Clara also worked at Harrods. Two married women Mrs. Agnes A. and Mrs. Vera F. worked a short time at Harrods and both had children after leaving employment. Investigation into the names on the employee cards, makes it clear that ascertaining the true number of married women is difficult. Rose T. is one such case. According to the census she was married before her first Christmas seasonal employment in 1910 but did not identify herself as married to Harrods management and continued to use her maiden name. Rose T. returned to Harrods for permanent employment but during her time away from the store, she gave birth to a daughter. She remained employed at Harrods until 1913.¹⁹⁴ According to the Canadian Census of 1921, Rose T., her husband and daughter immigrated to Canada in 1913. They went on to have two more children, but there is no indication Rose T. ever returned to work. Rose is unusual because not only was she married but she also had a child. While other women noted they were married or widowed,

¹⁹³ Corina, 80.

¹⁹⁴ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

Rose's use of her maiden name on her employee record infers she never told management of her marriage. Her story exemplifies the complex truth of the personal lives of shop assistants. There may have been others who were married without the knowledge of the store. Marriage, at least for Rose T., did not mean an end to working as a shop assistant.¹⁹⁵

Public Perception

Jokes, musicals, plays and stories depicted shop girls as having questionable morals. "Jokes of the period also interpreted female shopping as morally dubious" notes Walkowitz.¹⁹⁶ The punchline of many jokes was the dressing and undressing women did while shopping. As shopping was morally problematic, the shop girl in the store is also morally questionable. Plays depicted shop assistants as worldly and sophisticated surrounded by luxurious goods. "The Bad Girl of the Family" played at the Elephant and Castle Theatre in 1909 and was mentioned in *The Shop Assistant* in April of 1910 during its long production at the Aldwych Theatre, London.¹⁹⁷ This popular play by Frederick Melville dealt with shop life and the dangers of the urban environment. The performance marketed the shop girls as part of the show's display. Author Sos Eltis in 2013 argues that a dormitory bedroom scene allowed "invasive voyeurism" on the part of the audience that "was emphasized by the added male presence in the dormitory of Snooze, a sweetheart of one of the girls who has been smuggled in in drag."¹⁹⁸ In one titillating dorm room scene, the women shop assistants undressed in front of the disguised male visitor. The play "was marketed on such sexual knowingness, advertised as a self-styled 'Bedroom Drama' with not one

¹⁹⁵ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

¹⁹⁶ Judith Walkowitz, "Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment and Street Walking in Late Victorian England," 6.

¹⁹⁷ The play ran for 250 performances in 1909-1910.

¹⁹⁸ Sos Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on the Stage, 1800-1913* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 200.

but two bedroom scenes.”¹⁹⁹ The “bad girl” was the shop girl who had lost her virginity to the son of the shop owner she worked for, however she is also a sort of heroine of the play who rescues another character.

Shop assistants were in a unique position to be part of the urban landscape as workers but also as part of the store’s display. The shops and department stores with glass, windows and gas lighting created an elaborate presentation of consumer goods. Shop assistants were part of this display. They stood behind the counter in their black dresses appearing clean, neat and pressed. They were required to smile and speak freely with customers which made them appear forward or flirtatious. Historian Peter Bailey describes barmaids from this period in a similar fashion. Behind the bar, barmaids were in front of the glittering glass bottles and seemed to be on display. This is similar to shop assistants who also stand behind counters in front of merchandise for sale. The myth that shop girls were promiscuous and their seeming availability through their work requirements, led to their harassment on the street. As previously discussed, their long hours put them out on the street late at night, also leading to the conclusion they were sexually available. Music hall and theater culture from the period supported this stereotype by presenting shop assistants as “self-sufficient, street-smart, and worldly.”²⁰⁰

The trope of the worldly, sexual shop assistant promoted the belief that shop assistants turned to prostitution. *The Shop Assistant* wrote a persistent stream of propaganda concerning the effect of low wages on working class women in an effort to raise wages. One legal proposal to make alcohol illegal for people under sixteen was met with a suggestion from a Guardian of the Poor to instead make shop work illegal for young girls.²⁰¹ Shaw asserted each year “The ‘white

¹⁹⁹ Eltis, 200.

²⁰⁰ Mullins, 6.

²⁰¹ *The Shop Assistant*, August 1900.

slaves” are “recruited largely from the ranks of female shop assistants.”²⁰² Prostitution was growing, he argued, due to the increasingly large numbers of women in shop work who displace male labor and accept lower wages. “Everything tends to drive the girls away from the paths of virtue, and it speaks volumes for the heroism of those thousands of girls who live ‘straight’ clean lives.”²⁰³ One journalist for the union argued the wages of shop assistants were so low “one could not be surprised if girls fell victims to temptation.”²⁰⁴ However the union was unwilling to declare outright that shop assistants had turned to prostitution to survive and would only assert women were in danger of becoming immoral due to their low wages. Research does not indicate any evidence that shop assistants turned to prostitution to acquire consumer goods, however shopgirl characters do accept gifts as part of relationships. Shop assistant Ella, in “Harry’s Career at Yale” accepted money from a man moments after meeting him. He offered her money after she complained, “I have so many things I need. I wish I had some new gloves for the ball.” Ella then agreed to go to a dance with him. Ella was corrupted because of her desire for consumer goods and entertainment.²⁰⁵ Union officials did claim women shop assistants encountered employers who implied to their assistants there were other ways they could earn the money, inferring they expected their assistants to turn to prostitution to make ends meet.²⁰⁶ Once again, the claim is that women “desire to lead a clean healthy life,” but when faced with starvation women turned to other means of earning money.²⁰⁷ “Their wages are low, owing to the fact that there are in London too many of them, and slack times force them to do things they would prefer

²⁰² *P.I.P. Penny Illustrated Paper*, April 11, 1911.

²⁰³ *P.I.P. Penny Illustrated Paper*, April 11, 1911.

²⁰⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, May 31, 1913.

²⁰⁵ Wood, John Seymour. “Harry’s Career at Yale” *Outing: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Sport, Travel and Recreation* October 1892, 248.

²⁰⁶ *The Shop Assistant*, May 31, 1913.

²⁰⁷ *The Shop Assistant*, May 31, 1913.

to leave undone.”²⁰⁸ Pansy starts a relationship with a married man when she finds herself unemployed and hungry. Her life choices violate respectable values and her fate is clear from the moment she enters that relationship. Her melodramatic death from a fall serves as a warning to readers on the fate of young women who behave badly. Shopkeepers and trade officials worried the union’s talk of low wages and immoral behavior would cause parents to “hesitate to send their sons and daughters into shopdom.”²⁰⁹ In fact, *The Shop Assistant* editors wanted parents to do just that with one editor declaring “I want parents to keep their children out of shop life.”²¹⁰

Conclusion

Though there were considerable variations among the estimated sixty thousand assistants, some things are clear. Most women employed in London worked long hours filled with tedious work. The popular belief in the genteel nature of shop work led to a high demand for positions behind the counter. Shopkeepers used the large number of unemployed shop assistants to maintain a strict work environment, low wages and long hours. The value employers placed on the reference instilled a level of fear in assistants and prevented any advocacy on their own to improve conditions. The Shop Assistants’ Union and other activists lobbied government on behalf of the beleaguered shop assistants for better working conditions, shorter hours and defined meal breaks with little success.

²⁰⁸ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 192.

²⁰⁹ *The Shop Assistant*, May 31, 1913.

²¹⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, May 31, 1913.

CHAPTER THREE

***“Lodgers without freedom of choice”*: The living conditions of shop assistants**

We have met Maggie and Pansy, one destined to become a shop workers' union leader and the other frozen in time as a fictional character but they both had experiences with the living-in system. When fictional shopgirl Pansy Meares moved to London from her country home to find work in a shop, “her imagination was aflame with the excitement of life in barracks in the chief garrison town.”²¹¹ Shop assistant Maggie was required to live in company dormitories as a condition of her employment.²¹² She shared her bedroom with two or three other women over the years and described the women as, “not roommates of one’s own choosing.” Her accommodation in the staff dormitory was similar to other stores nearby. None of the other store’s dormitories had bathing facilities and Maggie’s access to water depended on the housekeeper. “Some housekeepers allowed a jug of hot water and foot-bath once a week,” she recalled. Maggie and a few other assistants made up their minds to have a bath “at all costs” and “used to dash from the shop the moment the shutters were down” to get to the bath house before it closed. The young women had to “run at full speed for about half a mile” in order to have fifteen minutes to undress, take a bath and dress again before the bath closed.²¹³

²¹¹ Newte, 84.

²¹² “Maggie” is the nickname of Margaret Bondfield. Referred to as Maggie in her biography and contemporary childhood sources. See Cicely Hamilton. *Diana of Dobson’s: A Romantic Comedy in Four Acts*. Ed. Diane F. Gillespie and Doryjane Birrer. (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, reprinted 2003, originally published 1908), 38.

²¹³ Margaret Bondfield, *A Life’s Work*. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1949), 25.

In 1899, preparing for an article on the living-in system, union activist Margaret Bondfield selected six shops in London she felt “fairly represent the conditions under which the majority of London shop assistants work.”²¹⁴ It is telling that all of the shops she selected for her article for *The Economic Journal* required their assistants to live in company dormitories. According to Bondfield’s biography Mary Agnes Hamilton, the majority of London’s shop assistants lived in at the time of her investigation. Hamilton described the “Living-In” system at the turn of the century as “universal in England.” She further declared “living-in meant a total want of freedom, out of business hours as well as in them.”²¹⁵

The living-in system declined in popularity and practice over time, but at the turn of the century there was heated debate over the legality and legitimacy of the system. The Shop Assistants’ Union and later the NAUSAWC actively lobbied and argued against the living-in system. Some shopowners and a few larger department stores had no requirement for staff to live in. Parents of shop assistants reportedly approved of the system. At the center of the living-in debate were questions of power and control. Some shop owners supported the living-in system because it offered control over the lives of the workers in their stores. Other shopkeepers asserted parents preferred the living-in system because it offered control over their children who were living in the city away from home. Male shop assistants wanted an end to the living-in system in order to have power over their own lives. However, women shop assistants wanted the system to continue because they also wanted control over their own lives. They preferred the living-in system because of the independence they gained when living away from their parents. This chapter explores the contradictions the living-in system presented at the turn of the century. It

²¹⁴ Margaret Bondfield, “Conditions Under Which Shop Assistants Work,” *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 34 (Jun., 1899), 277.

²¹⁵ Hamilton, 42.

offered protection and control over employees to parents and shop owners while representing both freedom and confinement to the shop assistants who lived-in.

Origins of the Living-In System

Though living in may have originated in medieval apprenticeships, by the mid-nineteenth century apprenticeship was less prevalent, yet many workers still lived in company housing. The explosion of stores in the nineteenth-century meant thousands of shop assistants in London lived under the rooves of the shopowners or store management. The accommodations shop assistants and apprentices received became institutionalized because their numbers had expanded so quickly. The living conditions of shop assistants attracted attention from labor activists, authors and journalists in the later years of the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth century.

The debate on the living-in system was not confined to shop assistants on one side opposing living-in and shopkeepers and managers on the other in favor of the system but was composed of diverse opinions from people within those groups. The union newspaper, *The Shop Assistant* as well as other London and national newspapers ran articles, testimonials and editorials to sway readers to one side of the debate or the other. In 1908, the summary of the Report of the Truck Committee caused considerable debate, since the committee members decided not to legislate the living-in system.²¹⁶ It revealed politicians in Parliament were uneasy about changing the living-in system, because they believed the evidence they had heard represented problems in the past. Some assistants testified to the Truck Committee and several newspapers that their employers offered benefits, amenities and good food. Lastly, the summary

²¹⁶ The Truck Amendment Act, 1887 and The Truck Act of 1896 were legislative acts designed to protect workers from abuses in connection to the payment of wages. Shop assistants were not included in the Truck Acts. Part of the Truck Committee work was investigating whether shop assistants should be included under the Truck Act because of the Living-In System. See Sanders, 41 and Clementina Black, "Report of the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts," *The Economic Journal* Vol. 19, no. 74 (June, 1909): 315-319.

report indicated the Committee was not convinced “the evils alleged to exist were either so serious or so widespread as had been represented.”²¹⁷

A Necessary System

Part of the security and protection offered by the company dormitories included a curfew and a locked front door. Exterior doors to the dormitories locked at curfew prohibiting many assistants from fully exploring the city.²¹⁸ The rules posted at H.W. Hammond, a mid-size London store, in the 1880s read, “All lights to be out and doors locked at 11 o’clock prompt.”²¹⁹ All staff in residence had to obey this curfew or risk being locked out at night.

The house door is closed at eleven p.m.; on Saturday at twelve p.m. The gas will be turned out fifteen minutes later. Anyone having a light after that time will be discharged. For coming in five minutes late at night, one shilling fine; if a quarter of an hour late, no fine but shut out for the night.²²⁰

Even though the locked door was to protect the women, if they returned to the dormitory too late, they had to spend the night out on the street. John Lawrie, General Manager of Whiteley’s, defended the tradition of the locked door as “necessarily strict,” implying it was for the protection of the inhabitants.²²¹ Young women were considered especially susceptible to the temptations in the city. A director of two drapery stores in London, Mr. Henry Marden, approved of living-in for assistants because it forced the young shop assistants to have a curfew.²²² “I don’t think the eleven o’clock locking up rule deals hardly with anybody. . . . I strongly disapprove of

²¹⁷ *The Draper* Jan 9, 1909.

²¹⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, June, 1901.

²¹⁹ Rules from H.W. Hammond, The House of Fraser Archive.

²²⁰ Jones, 7.

²²¹ Jones, 3.

²²² Draperer is the term for a store selling dry goods but not groceries.

apprentices and junior assistants being out till twelve o'clock at night. They are not fit for business next day, besides the moral risk they run."²²³

Shop owners asserted that not only did the young women shop assistants want to stay in the living-in system, they needed to stay within the company dormitories. One manager of a London firm, who himself had lived-in as a young assistant, reported to the *Manchester Courier* that he was generally opposed to the living in system except for "young girls who required a lot of looking after and for girls from a distance who could not get home at night."²²⁴ The shop owner of Daniels and Co. believed the living in system was necessary for the health of the assistants, who needed to be "fed well and in proper health" to work in the store.²²⁵ Edwin Jones remained opposed to his assistants living-out because he was "fearful of the girls going wrong if they are left to arrange their own time."²²⁶ Without dormitories, young women assistants would rent rooms in the cheapest areas of the city and be tempted, "succumbing to the evil conditions which surround them."²²⁷ Chairman of the Drapers' Trade, Mr. B.B. Evans, told the Truck Committee the living-in system assured shopowners, managers, parents and the general public that shop assistants "lead something like respectable lives."²²⁸

Shopowners and managers acted as symbolic heads of household controlling or monitoring assistants' housing and food, often claiming their parental role was for the benefit of the shop assistants. The rules shopkeepers created for their assistants attempted to keep their employees dependent and under control similar to a parental relationship. Shopkeepers imposed "a social code that stressed female adolescent dependence" because there was a desire to protect

²²³ *Methodist Times*, February 14, 1909.

²²⁴ *Manchester Courier*, January 6, 1909.

²²⁵ *The Daily Mail*, July 13, 1907.

²²⁶ *Church Family Newspaper*, April 4, 1907.

²²⁷ Jones, 16 and Whitaker, 9.

²²⁸ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 14362.

working-class young women and control their sexuality.²²⁹ Stores attempted to control the conduct and monitor the behavior of the assistants in the dormitories. The rules for behavior and dress display an effort to transform assistants into a work force that would appeal to upper- and middle-class shoppers. Staff dormitories often had the same rules the women might have encountered at home restricting their autonomy. The “heightened concern over emergence of a degenerate and unsupervised urban culture” resulted in the containment of the young and an obsession on where they slept.²³⁰ Walkowitz asserts shopkeepers and their middle-class code was out of step with “the lived reality of the exposed and unsupervised daughters of the laboring poor who were on the streets.”²³¹

The living-in system continued because it had the support of parents who expected their children to receive accommodation as part of their learning experience. In 1908, parents of seventy-six young women employed at Swan and Edgar protested at the proposed end of the living-in system at the store. The store felt compelled to accommodate the young women who worked in the London store. Swan and Edgar’s established a new and separate living-in dormitory house for them near the store.²³² Other stores feared similar reactions from parents if they ceased to provide housing for assistants or if Parliament passed restrictions on the system. “From the parents’ point of view the system provides a security without which they might be unwilling to let their children come to the towns.”²³³ James Stacey asserted at the Living-In Conference at Toynbee Hall in 1907 that, “forty percent of the employees in London houses are the sons and daughters, nephews and nieces of country proprietors.”²³⁴

²²⁹ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 133.

²³⁰ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 125.

²³¹ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 133.

²³² *Londonderry Sentinel*, February 13, 1908.

²³³ *The Draper*, January 9, 1909 and Report of the Truck Committee, 199.

²³⁴ *Christian Family Newspaper*, October 4, 1907.

Some storeowners believed they recruited from a better class of assistants with the living-in system. Selfridges had no living in requirement but recognized the need for some type of company housing. The store offered a hostel for workers who came from far distances.²³⁵ Mr. Edward Daniels, of the store Messrs. C. and A. Daniels, told the Daily Mail, “We could probably get cheaper labour if the girls slept out, but it would not be such a good class. We should not get the farmers’ daughters and the daughters of provincial tradesmen and professional men.”²³⁶ As the oldest department store in London, Whiteley’s required their shop assistants to live in company houses. John Lawrie, General Manager of Whiteley’s Limited, asserted the living-in system was “the best” system.²³⁷ He like other shopkeepers was convinced parents would not let their daughters come to London if they were required to find their own lodgings. Further, he also believed “if the assistants had to live out they would probably get the cheapest apartments possibly in side streets, very likely where questionable characters congregate.”²³⁸ Richard Burbidge, the managing director of Harrods, felt the system served a purpose, despite having managed a store where none of the assistants lived in. “I think that if there was no place where young fellows and young girls who come up from the country could live in, there would be a dearth of respectable young people.”²³⁹ He doubted parents would permit their children to come to the city from the country without living-in because “there is such difficulty in getting lodgings.”²⁴⁰

The living-in system represented security for those traveling to positions in the city because, “It provided some initial security, friendship and pocket money.”²⁴¹ Security was one of

²³⁵ Honeycombe, 182. The Selfridges hostel remained open until 1955.

²³⁶ *The Daily Mail*, July 13, 1907.

²³⁷ T. Spencer Jones, *The Moral Side of Living In*. (London: Shop Assistant Publishing Co., Ltd., 1907), 3.

²³⁸ Jones, 3.

²³⁹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15400.

²⁴⁰ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15400.

²⁴¹ Corina, 56.

the appeals of jobs with living-in requirements. The Travellers' Aid Department, was one of many societies aimed at meeting female travelers and escorting them safely to their destinations. Girls arriving without living-in positions could stay at lodging houses known to the societies and avoid the perceived threat of kidnapping and forced prostitution.²⁴² When shopgirl character Pansy arrived in London, she was approached at the train station by what appeared to be a wealthy woman who had an offer of employment if only Pansy would come go with her. Pansy was rescued from the scam due to the timely arrival of an Aid Society member. The story of a young middle-class woman nearly kidnapped served as a warning to readers to have housing ready before arriving to the city.

What Do Women Shop Assistants Want?

Shop owners and managers asserted there were a multitude of reasons why shop assistants, particularly the female assistants, preferred the living-in system. One reason, according to storeowners, was that living-in allowed them to save money on room and board. Mr. Edwin Jones, storeowner and President of the Drapers' Chamber of Trade, answered questions at the Living-In Conference at Toynbee Hall in 1907 on the economical advantages his assistants had by living-in. "The employees saved money by it," he replied to a question on the reasons assistants preferred living-in. He estimated the board and lodging costs per year for assistants was valued at £25 and brought their total salary to £73 pounds per year.²⁴³ Another business reported "None of the young ladies desires to live out. They realize what a difference it would mean to their pockets in the long run."²⁴⁴ Another employer noted living out would incur extra costs for assistants because "more outdoor clothes would be required" due to exposure to

²⁴² The "British Weekly" Commissioners, 100.

²⁴³ *The Church Family Newspaper*, 6 Oct. 1907.

²⁴⁴ *Western Mail*, 12 Oct. 1907.

the weather as they traveled to work.²⁴⁵ Presumably the shop assistants at this store spent little time outside if the shop owner believed they could save money by not needing “more outdoor clothes.”²⁴⁶

There were women who preferred living-in and were not shy about reporting this to the Truck Committee or the newspapers. The *Daily Express* reported the women assistants at Swan and Edgar’s were “in the depths of despair” because the store decided to convert the living-in system dormitories into public business space. The girls, the newspaper reported, “refused to live out” and the store’s decision “brought them to the border of mutiny.”²⁴⁷ Miss Margarite Oliver, shop assistant in the silk and silk robes department at another draper in London was not in favor of living-out. Testifying before the Truck Committee in 1908 she said, “To live out you see you would have to restrict yourself in a great measure to one or two small rooms. You would have no society.”²⁴⁸ She lived out at a previous store and noted, “There is certainly the independence of living-out, but it counterbalanced by a lot of unpleasantness.”²⁴⁹ One assistant preferred company dormitories instead of her nearby home because, “when I go home, I am obliged to assist my mother in domestic duties, but here I can rest in my spare time.”²⁵⁰ Other managers reported the women found living-in so “comfortable” they asked to live-in even when their homes were close to the store. One assistant declared the system allowed for socializing they would not have in “lonely lodgings.”²⁵¹ Margarite believed, “Among the young ladies of the better class and the

²⁴⁵ *Western Morning Express*, 12 Oct. 1907.

²⁴⁶ *Western Morning Express*, 12 Oct. 1907.

²⁴⁷ *The Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1908.

²⁴⁸ Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts, Report of the Truck Committee, Parl. Papers, 1908, LIX, Vol. I, 18378.

²⁴⁹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. I, 18379.

²⁵⁰ The assistant shared this with her employer who relayed it at a Living-In Conference. *Christian Family Newspaper*, October 4, 1907. The newspaper described Jones as a fair and generous employer.

²⁵¹ *Manchester Dispatch*, 5 Jan. 1909, *The Church Family Newspaper Sunday Chronicle*, 3 Jan. 1909.

more experienced hands, there is a very strong feeling against the living-out system.”²⁵² A preference for living-in implies the young women intended to be independent from parental supervision and stores with the option of living in company housing gave them that opportunity. This desire for independence may also explain the resentment many shop assistants had to the long hours of work and rules of the living-in system.

At public conferences and meetings organized to debate the merits of the living-in system, storeowners and managers asserted the amenities the stores provided for assistants were another reason assistants preferred the living in system over lodging houses. Swan and Edgar owners insisted their women assistants wanted to stay living-in because the amenities created a home atmosphere. Their assistants enjoyed a sitting room with a piano and recreational activities they would not get in a lodging house. W.A. Sargent, manager of a Peter Robinson store, told the *Daily Express* in 1909, “advantages enjoyed by the assistants” at his store included a piano, a billiard room (for men only) and a library. In 1907, Robinson’s department store employed over 700 assistants, who shared that one billiard room and one library. Due to the size of the staff, it is unlikely the entire staff ever had a chance to play billiards each week.

The shop girl and her business girl peers, either living out or living in with a latchkey, represented independence from parental supervision and many envied her for this freedom. The latchkey given to some assistants by the shopkeeper offered the shop girl independence but represented too much freedom to reformers and union officials. These parties were concerned that shop assistants given a latchkey could not responsibly exercise their independence, and would only give in to desires that conflicted with middle-class morality. In Gissing’s *Odd Women*, Monica’s employers were described as “generous” and all of the shop assistants were given latchkeys. It was problematic for Monica because her roommate abused the privilege by

²⁵² Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 18452.

coming in at one o'clock in the morning.²⁵³ It was this independence and freedom that led some to oppose the living-in system.

The living-in system declined in popularity and practice in the early years of the twentieth century but housing in the city remained a concern for women workers. Indeed for the single woman worker in the city, the main question was where to live.²⁵⁴ Women in general had a harder time finding acceptable accommodation because women's occupations paid than men's.²⁵⁵ The National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, established in 1909, addressed the affordable urban housing concerns of working women in their publication *Where Shall she Live?*, (1910).²⁵⁶ *Where Shall She Live*, written by Mary Higgs, focuses on the housing problem for working women, and also addresses the reformers concerns about the problems in the city. They alleged women lived in poor or "unrespectable" lodging houses women due to the lack of better available options. "A single woman cannot always obtain a bed," because lodging houses had limited single beds.²⁵⁷

Opposition to the Living-In System

Criticism of the living-in system remained nearly consistent before World War I. One author published three nearly identically pamphlets in 1896, 1907, and 1912, condemning the living-in system. William Paine, author of *Shop Slavery and Emancipation* (1912) is a

²⁵³ George Gissing, *Odd Women* (1893; repr. London: Penguin Classics, 1994), 102-103.

²⁵⁴ Emily Gee, "'Where Shall She Live?': Housing the New Working Woman in Late Victorian and Edwardian London", in *Living, Leisure and Law: Eight Building Types in England 1800-1941*, ed. Geoff Brandwood (Reading: Spire Books, Ltd., 2010), 90.

²⁵⁵ Mary Higgs and Edward E. Hayward, *Where Shall She Live? The Homelessness of The Woman Worker* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1910), 125.

²⁵⁶ The National Association for Women's Lodging Homes was active between 1909 and 1912. Association members visited lodging homes and distributed tracts encouraging working women to attend church. For further information see Peter Gordon and David Doughan. *Dictionary of British Women's Organizations: 1825-1960*, (London: Woburn Press, 2001), 98.

²⁵⁷ Higgs and Hayward, 117.

pseudonym for William Anderson, Member of Parliament, author of *The Counter Exposed* (1896) and *The Servitude of the Shop* (1907).²⁵⁸ The introduction for *Shop Slavery and Emancipation* was written by H.G.Wells, who recalled his own boyhood apprenticeship in a shop. In the introduction, he wrote about his bad living conditions and his escape from shopwork. Anderson relies on his personal experiences, published newspaper articles and the series on shop life, published by *The Daily Chronicle* in 1898. In 1907, the National Union of Shop Assistants published *The Moral Side of Living-In* and opposed this belief directly condemning the living in system. Author T. Spencer Jones, argued the mandatory living-in system was direct cause of the perceived moral lapses of shop assistants.

The Moral Side of Living In denounced the supposedly parental supervision shop assistants received under the living-in system. West End department stores had their company housing on back streets near the stores. Jones asserted those staff homes had no supervision and were on streets “where a certain class of women who have made this part of the West End notorious have their homes.”²⁵⁹ The influence of “questionable characters” is presented as one of the reasons the living-in system failed young shop assistants. John Lawrie, managing director William Whiteley Ltd, had over 1,500 shop assistants living in at the time his interview was published in the union pamphlet. Lawrie refers to the assistants of men and women by ranges of a hundred: “Whiteley’s have living in between 500 and 600 men and from 800 to 1,000 young women.”²⁶⁰ Jones asks his readers how a system this large with such a diverse population could maintain parental control if they didn’t even know the exact number they were supervising? The

²⁵⁸ William Anderson was a Member of Parliament, Independent Labour Party 1914-1918. The identification of William Paine as William Anderson was made by Callum James, www.callumjames.blogspot.com/2009/01/william-paine-anderson-erotic-socialism.html Accessed 2/12/2017. Paine notes in the introduction his work was previously published under the title *Counter Exposed* and cites his indebtedness to W.C. Anderson for his work *The Servitude of the Shop*.

²⁵⁹ Jones, 6.

²⁶⁰ Jones, 3.

union emphasized the possibility of contamination through association with prostitutes who allegedly lived on the back streets. Corruption could also come from roommates of bad character. The union asserted these were the dangers facing respectable young women living in the staff dormitories of West End department stores.

The Shop Assistants Union and journalists contradicted the concept of store supervision of assistants, using stories from shop assistants that depicted a lack of the control stores claimed to have over assistants. Bondfield told the Truck Committee the protection the living-in system offered, was of “a very dubious kind” since “there is absolutely no kind of supervision.”²⁶¹ An investigation by the *Penny Illustrated Paper* in 1911 alleged employers allowed assistants to sleep out on Saturday or Sunday nights without permits. The manner in which the author tells these facts implies the women are sleeping out to have sexual relationships. It does not mention the possibility women went home to visit families or were traveling as reasons the women might be sleeping out on the weekend. One woman explained her employer did not keep records on the assistants’ location at night. “They don’t know if we are in or out, as long as we remember to strip the bed in the morning...”²⁶²

Union publications presented numerous instances of young women, late in returning to their dormitories, being locked out of their homes. The young women remained locked out for the night staying on the streets, with friends or if they could afford it, finding a hotel for the night. When Edie, from the novel *Guardian of the Poor*, was locked out for the night, she “wandered aimlessly” through the city during the night.²⁶³ The locked door represented a barrier to the security the living-in system promised. Bondfield testified that some assistants refused to ring the bell if they were late because they feared being reported to the shop owner. In the book,

²⁶¹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 13211.

²⁶² Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 13211.

²⁶³ Russell, 32.

Eddie did not ring the bell because she knew it was not allowed. The young women relied on their absence not being noticed by store management. The MPs were outraged the absence of the young women could go unnoticed, but Bondfield assured them it was very possible. She recalled the windows in her living-in quarters were large and facing the street “so that one could step into the street from the window, and back into the room from the street, without going through the door at all.”²⁶⁴ Bondfield shared the story of one young woman who found herself locked out, but rang the bell to be let in late. The housekeeper, under store management orders, refused to let her in. The young woman “ran the streets all night; she was terrified; she had no money, and she simply kept running.” This young girl, reported Bondfield came from “a fairly good family” and returned to the shop the next morning “ill from sheer exhaustion.” However, this young woman’s story has an interesting ending. She was not fired from the store and wrote to her “fairly good family” explaining what had happened. Her family came to the city and “there was a frightful row about the whole business.” After the family visit, the head of the store gave instructions that the front door was to be unlocked no matter how late an assistant arrived at the dormitory. There was great concern about the dangers young women faced as they wandered the street, exposed to things “young women ought not to be exposed.”²⁶⁵

Critics argued the living-in system treated women like children. Charles Derry, of Derry and Toms department store, said living-in ruined women assistants because they did not learn responsibility.²⁶⁶ “They are denied the experience of home catering” and when they get married have no knowledge of cooking.²⁶⁷ Even assistants who learned to cook before they came into shop work might lose that knowledge since young women living in “pay much more attention to

²⁶⁴ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 13216.

²⁶⁵ *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1873.

²⁶⁶ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 17821.

²⁶⁷ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 17821.

dress than to anything else.”²⁶⁸ Women shop assistants, he believed, spend all of their money on consumables and living-in prevented women from learning how to prepare a budget. Derry further argued the system harmed the nation, “We are making bad citizens if we deprive young people of a proper sense of responsibility.”²⁶⁹

Accommodations for shop assistants remained unchanged between the 1890s and 1910, however the type and size of the shop determined the quality of the room. A shop on the high street could have significantly different accommodation than a shop on the outskirts of the city. London storeowners commonly housed staff in row houses or upper levels of a building converted into dormitories. Seaman, Little and Company, a drapers in Kensington, had 150 shop assistants living-in at the store.²⁷⁰ Some staff rooms were described as “small, badly lit, without heat and poorly ventilated.”²⁷¹ Visiting a staff home, one journalist described her experience going into a bedroom.

The staircase was pitch dark, although it was broad daylight outside. Once upstairs we got into the bedroom. The ceilings were quite black, the walls ditto, beds were crammed about wherever room could be found for them - poor beds and poor bedding. Windows were small, ventilation very slight. Some of the apartments were low-ceilinged garrets, with sharply cut-off walls. They had been empty during the day, but even now the stench that paraded them was horrible.²⁷²

Assistants reported sharing rooms with multiple people and complained when they were forced to share a bed. Margarite Oliver believed shared beds was “being done away with” but they did still exist. In “all good houses,” she insisted to the Truck Committee the assistants had single beds. In *Sketches from Behind the Counter*, the author described a typical living-in arrangement in 1888. Sitting rooms were “uncomfortable rooms with a few chairs and a table”

²⁶⁸ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 17821.

²⁶⁹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 17824.

²⁷⁰ "Kensington High Street, south side: Kensington Court to Wright's Lane," in *Survey of London: Volume 42, Kensington Square To Earl's Court*, ed. Hermione Hobhouse (London: London County Council, 1986), 77-98. *British History Online*, accessed February 24, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol42/pp77-98>.

²⁷¹ Higgs and Hayward, 125.

²⁷² Jones, 11.

while the decorations were framed advertisements of items sold in the store.²⁷³ The air in the sitting room was filled with the smells from the washerwoman's tub. The bedroom itself was a "long barrack-like apartment containing typically five or six beds."²⁷⁴ The bedroom for the shop assistants in the play *Diana of Dobson's*, first produced in London in 1908, is described in the script as "bare" with "everything plain and comfortless to the last degree."²⁷⁵ On stage, the room itself was just five beds lined up against one plain wall. Clementina Black and the "Life in the Shops" series confirmed the scene from Dobson's, describing real dormitories as "bare and unhomelike."²⁷⁶ The bedroom had no rugs, no chairs, and no chest of drawers in which the assistants could place their things. Assistants kept their box of personal belongings under the bed. On stage the women of Dobson's each keep their box at the foot of the bed. Research confirms the image presented in the play. Rule 28 at an unnamed store declared "Assistants allowed one large box and one bonnet box only."²⁷⁷ This was all the personal property a shop assistant could have in the room that served as her home.

Stores commonly prohibited assistants from keeping personal belongings on display in the bedroom. In one store, rules prohibited decorations of any kind including flowers, personal pictures or wall hangings. Stores even prohibited assistants from doing needlework in their bedrooms.²⁷⁸ One store posted rules in the bedrooms about cleaning: "Any clothing, boots, &c, left about the bedrooms will be taken away." For each article of clothing confiscated in violation of the rule, the fine was 3d. The rule did not indicate if the item would be returned. Noises and loud disturbances such as laughter or talking earned assistants fines or even dismissal, while

²⁷³ *Behind the Counter*, 5.

²⁷⁴ *Behind the Counter*, 5.

²⁷⁵ Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson's*, Act 1. Margaret Bondfield was asked by author Cicely Hamilton to check the play for accuracy before it was produced.

²⁷⁶ Clementina Black. *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage*. (London: Duckworth & Co., 1907), 48.

²⁷⁷ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 13168.

²⁷⁸ This was probably due to the fear of fire and candles being left unattended. It may also have been propaganda to emphasize the lack of home life in the company dormitories.

visiting other assistants in bedrooms resulted in instant dismissal regardless of the gender of those involved. Stores also prohibited visits to other store dormitories and forbade socialization on the shop floor.²⁷⁹

Overcrowded rooms, narrow staircases and locked doors could potentially create a tragedy if fire broke out, so one sensible rule prohibited candles and matches in bedrooms. On the night of 20 December 1909, a fire broke out at the large Arding and Hobbs department store in South London. The fire destroyed the storerooms, shop and staff dormitories. Nine people died while over 400 employees were left homeless and temporarily jobless.²⁸⁰ The people who died in the fire were mainly women shop assistants. *The Shop Assistant* reported the number of casualties might have been higher if the assistants had already been asleep in their bedrooms, they would not have been able to escape quickly. One assistant recounted her near escape from the blaze while working in the store late that afternoon, telling the journalist, “Had the fire broken out a quarter of an hour later I am afraid many of us would not be alive to tell the tale, for we should have been at tea when the fire broke out and probably would not have been able to escape.”²⁸¹ Another large fire at John Barkers of Kensington department store in 1912 killed five waitresses who jumped from the fifth floor.²⁸² Department store fires were large enough to be covered by major London newspapers. City newspapers did not focus on the plight of the shop assistant but instead focused on a probable cause of the fire and the overcrowded nature of stores. Union officials used the fires to continue their opposition to the living-in system.

²⁷⁹ Jones, 8 and 12.

²⁸⁰ The employees were all laid off the day after the fire only to all be rehired once the store reopened. Arding and Hobbs paid them all a week’s salary.

²⁸¹ *The Shop Assistant*, January 1, 1910.

²⁸² "Kensington High Street, south side: Kensington Court to Wright's Lane," in *Survey of London: Volume 42, Kensington Square To Earl's Court*, ed. Hermione Hobhouse (London: London County Council, 1986), 77-98. *British History Online*, accessed February 22, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol42/pp77-98>.

Bathing facilities were an uncommon amenity in company dormitories before 1914. “Basins and cold water are provided in dormitories as a rule” reported the Daily Chronicle in 1898. A woman, only identified as Miss X testified she shared a basin of water each day with fifteen other women. Assistants who wanted hot water in their rooms in the evenings had to fetch it and carry it themselves. Bondfield and Miss X offered testimony and complaints that shop assistants had to fetch their own hot water. The fetching of water was normally a job for a housekeeper. Larger dormitory rules commonly restricted baths to a specific day of the week, meaning if an assistant missed her assigned day, she waited until the following week. Miss X, testified she shared her dormitory with 40 other women shop assistants. There were no bathing facilities in her company dormitory and the assistants had to use the public baths. Shopkeepers who limited water access also limited a young woman’s ability to maintain cleanliness. Whether this was true for all shop assistants or not, the claim that female shop assistants were unable to maintain hygiene was offensive to the middle-class readers these complaints were written for. The inability to access hot water was a common complaint in living-in protest literature.

Maintaining their living quarters posed a particular problem since assistants required to live-in were not allowed time to clean their own quarters. Complaints from assistants described dirty walls and windows with sheets unwashed for weeks and even months at a time.²⁸³ Housekeepers or house attendants required the rooms to be shut and unoccupied during the business day and on Sundays preventing the assistants from cleaning their rooms during the day. Stores fined assistants for entering their bedrooms during the workday. If an assistant wanted to clean her room, she could carry extra cold water upstairs but only do so in the evenings after the workday was finished. Cleaning was the job of the housekeeper, but testimony and other sources indicate the lack of cleanliness was a serious concern for some assistants.

²⁸³ Jones, 17.

Some stores required the assistants to contribute to the amenities shared by the group. In one department store's accommodations, the one piano for use by assistants cost each assistant one shilling per month.²⁸⁴ For a company with 50 assistants, the piano was paid for several times over the course of one year. Whether or not assistants availed themselves of these particular services, they had to pay fees for libraries and medical care. Baths and hot water were commonly considered luxuries.²⁸⁵ Peter Robinson's did not charge extra for bathrooms, but the manager considered bathrooms an advantage of the living-in system. Sitting rooms were considered unnecessary by many stores since assistants worked in the shop until late each evening.²⁸⁶

Medical care was an amenity provided by shopowners. Shop assistants paid a monthly fee for access to a doctor regardless of whether they used the doctor's services. The health of shop workers was used by the union to lobby for change. Ill health or sickness of shop assistants was cited as a reason shops needed restrictions on how many hours they could stay open or why the living-in system needed to end. In 1901, William Church testified in a Parliamentary investigation on the Early Closing of Shops. Church, President of the Royal College of Physicians, told the committee he believed the long hours of work caused "anæmic condition" since assistants did not get enough fresh air or sunlight.²⁸⁷ Regarding women shop assistants, William MacCormac, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, told the committee he believed long hours "must have an influence on their offspring." MacCormac felt women would be more affected by the long hours since, "Men are capable of greater effort in various ways than

²⁸⁴ *P.I.P. Penny Illustrated Paper*, Mar 25, 1911.

²⁸⁵ *USDAW 1891-2016: 125 Years Strong*. Trade Union Congress Archive.

²⁸⁶ Whitaker, 11.

²⁸⁷ Parliamentary Papers House of Commons and Command, Reports from Committees "Early Closing of Shops" Session 23 Jan 1901-17 Aug 1901. 2309.

women. If a like amount of physical toil be imposed upon women they suffer in a larger degree.”²⁸⁸

The long hours of standing without respite may have caused real illness and physical hygiene issues. Women inspectors reported locked bathrooms and places of employment where there were no bathroom facilities of any kind. While there were employers who asserted they could not hire women because they lacked proper sanitation facilities for them, this was not true for department stores. Department stores offered rest rooms to their women shoppers and it seems logical they also had rest rooms for the staff. Using the rest rooms may have been more challenging for women shop assistants, since there were stores with specified break times and fines for assistants who violated those rules.

Author and New York social worker Mary Cranston called London’s living-in system “the ‘slaving-in system’” and argued the rules placed the shop assistant under “the absolute control of her employer.”²⁸⁹ The socialist Fabian Society published *Shop Life and Its Reform* in 1897 declaring living-in was once “very advantageous” for the assistants who lived far from home, but called assistants who now lived-in “lodgers without freedom of choice.”²⁹⁰ Even with the best conditions assistants living-in lacked the ability to decide what to eat, whom to room with, who to visit with, and even what time to go to bed. These criticisms persisted in union publications and union newspapers over the next decade.

²⁸⁸ MacCormac refers to the children the young women will have in the future. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons and Command, Reports from Committees “Early Closing of Shops” Session 23 Jan 1901-17 Aug 1901. 2467 and 2470

²⁸⁹ Mary Rankin Cranston, “London’s Living In System”, *Outlook*, 76 27 Feb 1904, (New York: Outlook, Co., 1904), 516.

²⁹⁰ Johnson, 8.

Living Out: The Evidence from Harrods

Harrods employed a staff of over 4,000 in 1907. Harrods preferred their staff to be from London due to the lack of affordable and respectable housing. Richard Burbidge, Managing Director of Harrods, told the Truck Committee in 1907 the assistants at Harrods had never lived in. He estimated the store had approximately 1,500 women shop assistants in 1907.²⁹¹ The store hired assistants “whose homes are somewhere near”²⁹² and would “hesitate” to hire a woman who said she preferred living in lodgings.²⁹³ Burbidge believed living close to the store was important “especially for girl assistants, and counting house clerks.”²⁹⁴ The store preferred assistants “who are living at home” or are “suitably housed.”²⁹⁵ He insisted the store would not hire a young assistant if they did not live nearby. Evidence from the employee records at Harrods supports his claim. The addresses and census records indicate the majority of Harrods female staff did live with family, although “nearby” remains a matter of interpretation. The map of home addresses of the sample of women shop assistants starting at Harrods between 1906 and 1910, indicates some women were living nine miles from the store. (See Map B) Victoria W. started working as a cashier at Harrods when she was fifteen years old. She lived at home with her parents and siblings. Her older sister also worked for Harrods as a typist. The young women lived in Battersea approximately two miles from Harrods. The distance shop assistants lived from the store increased over the next four years. (See Map C) Amanda S. lived just over nine

²⁹¹ This increased to 6,000 by 1914. Scott, 8.

²⁹² Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15414. Burbidge told the Committee that Harrods had conducted an investigation into how far the assistants actually lived from the store. The Committee members asked about this survey but Burbidge was unwilling to explain exactly how far the assistants lived from the store, but the average travel distance and methods of travel will be discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁹³ Sir Richard Burbidge, 1st Baronet of Little Park, 1847-1917. Burbidge refers to living in as sleeping in during his testimony.

²⁹⁴ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol III, 15414.

²⁹⁵ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol III, 15414 and 15415.

miles from Harrods in Walthamstow in the north-east while Karen R. lived ten miles away in Wallington in the south.

Burbidge asserted the store management knew where all of their employees lived. This is supported by the employee records. Nearly all of the records have addresses and a few have multiple addresses with previous addresses lined through.²⁹⁶ Ella A. and Rose T. both moved during their employment at Harrods. Ella, who lived with her parent and four siblings, moved from an address in Kensington to Earls Court. Rose T. moved from one address in Southfields to another with her husband and infant child. As previously discussed, Harrods' management did not appear aware of Rose's husband or child but they did know she moved to a new address. These changes on the employee records indicate management knew when their assistants moved during their employment. Burbidge told the committee when hiring a new assistant "we should want to know something about the lodgings." For women who applied to Harrods without family nearby, perhaps from the country or living-in at another store in London, Burbidge informed the Committee "We generally refer them to some of our own staff who are householders who have larger houses than they want."²⁹⁷

Meals and Mealtime for Shop Assistants

Shopowners controlled an assistant's mealtime, food quality and even the portion of food. Since shopowners and managers believed their assistants would "waste" their wages without strict rules and control, and the limited dinner and tea breaks made it difficult for assistants to return home for a meal, supplying food was efficient for stores. The editor of *The Shop Assistant*

²⁹⁶ Employee cards with a starting date prior to 1905 were most likely to not have an employee address listed.

²⁹⁷ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15415.

noted that because of these difficulties, “it was becoming almost a universal custom to supply the meal on the premises of the workshop - of course at an equivalently lower wage.”²⁹⁸

Jeffrey Pilcher contends quantity of food was related to class and power. In previous centuries, elites holding power controlled how much food the lower classes received and consumed. To be considered wealthy or a member of the elite, a person had to have or receive larger and better portions of food.²⁹⁹ In modern industrial societies he argues, “ruling classes have discovered new means of wielding power through food.”³⁰⁰ By controlling portions and quality, shop managers and owners were further able to emphasize their position of power over their workforce.

The Shop Assistant and other publications, the union consistently reported on the quality and quantity of food assistants were served and the locations where the assistants ate their meals. One store, described as a West End retail business, employed 956 total shop assistants and over 400 of those were women. The assistants ate their meals in a basement dining room lit with electric light and plainly decorated with white-washed walls and plain chairs. The only decoration for the staff was a copy of the house rules.³⁰¹ Another assistant described the staff dining room of a large general store. While her description of the underground dining room was far from glamorous, she offered no complaints on the quality or portions of food. Her real complaint was the ambiance of the dining room.

Imagine rows of tables covered with oil cloth which had once had, perhaps, been white, but is now half hidden by tea and coffee and gravy stains, by the marks of hot dishes and accumulated grease of months. Imagine the coarse, greasy cutlery, the thick cups and

²⁹⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, Aug 10, 1901.

²⁹⁹ Jeffrey M. Pilcher. *Food in World History*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4. Pilcher notes modern consumption relates parsimony or smaller portions and thinness with elite status and larger portions and obesity with lower class and poverty.

³⁰⁰ Pilcher, 5.

³⁰¹ Jones, 18.

plates, and everywhere fumes of gas, the smell of the cooking and the disgusting odor of more than a hundred people huddled together in a badly ventilated apartment.³⁰²

Assistants, perhaps accustomed to a better diet, complained meals were monotonous because stores served the same meal on certain days of the week for years. Assistants knew what dinner there would be any day of the week in that store since the menu never changed. One assistant wrote her shop served rice pudding and apple tart “week in and week out”³⁰³ with no change. Clementina Black described the weekly meal at two different shops in 1907.

Sunday: Pork,
Monday: Beef, hot.
Tuesday: Beef, cold.
Wednesday: Mutton, hot.
Thursday: Mutton, cold.
Friday: Beef, hot.
Saturday: Beef, cold

On Thursday this shop served either a roly-poly pudding or a stewed fruit densely thick with sago. The other store served a similar menu but served fish on Friday instead of meat.³⁰⁴

Complaints about the quantity of food came from assistants at all types of stores. In 1901, a *Guardian of the Poor* wrote to *The Shop Assistant* asserting dry bread and weak tea for two meals per day was “hardly enough to support young people in an exhausting occupation, carried on in an exhausted atmosphere.”³⁰⁵ Ironically, as a *Guardian of the Poor*, the author was also able to inform readers the food served in the workhouse was “more generous and varied” than that served to shop assistants in many large establishments.³⁰⁶ An assistant testifying before Parliament told of a position he held where he was offered food of good quality but it was not

³⁰² Jones, 18.

³⁰³ Jones, 19.

³⁰⁴ Black, 51-52.

³⁰⁵ *The Shop Assistant*, Sep 7, 1901. Letter to the Editor by J.A. Cunnington. Not to be confused with the novel *Guardian of the Poor*.

³⁰⁶ *The Shop Assistant*, Sep 7, 1901.

enough and “his health broke down.”³⁰⁷ Another assistant wrote to the union asking for help in remedying the “fearful” food the assistants were served at her place of employment. The letter, signed by “Down-trodden Shop-Girl,” described the margarine served at breakfast as inedible.³⁰⁸ Breakfast for assistants was typically bread, butter or margarine, and coffee or tea. The poor quality of the butter, margarine, coffee or tea was a consistent complaint of assistants to the union. One assistant complained of breakfast being only “bread and butter and weak tea” while another wrote breakfast was “bread and dripping, with inferior tea.”³⁰⁹

Weak, undrinkable tea or no tea at all was an insult to many shop assistants. Miss X testified she was angry her employer served weak coffee instead of tea for breakfast and then offered tea to the assistants for an extra fee.³¹⁰ Tea was considered such a necessity in another shop that the assistants pooled their money daily to obtain a pot of tea each morning.³¹¹

Novels about shop assistants or department store life included descriptions of food served to shop assistants. These stories emphasized the quality and quantity of the food served. Reports of bad food included soup for dinner made from the things left on everyone’s plate the day before and suppers of water and bread.³¹² Stews made from leftovers was common practice at some stores and vegetables and fruit were scarce.³¹³ After months of shop work in London, Pansy found herself often hungry. The scant meals supplied by her employer were not enough to keep her full. In one position, Pansy describes the food served as “scarcely eatable.”³¹⁴ If she had a shilling to spare, she went to a restaurant popular with young working-women, rather than use

³⁰⁷ “The Shop Hours Question,” *The Lancet*, Vol. I, (April 23, 1892), 941.

³⁰⁸ Jones, 19.

³⁰⁹ Black, 49; and *P.I.P.: Penny Illustrated Paper*, March 25, 1911.

³¹⁰ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 18834-18835.

³¹¹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 18839. and *The Daily Chronicle*, February – March, 1898. For more information on tea see Tom Standage, *A History of the World in Six Glasses*, (New York: Walker & Company, 2005), Chapter 9.

³¹² Jones, 19.

³¹³ *P.I.P Penny Illustrated Paper*, March 25, 1911.

³¹⁴ Newte, 186.

her money for city attractions. There the food was “good and cheap” and the service “clean”. In the novel *Vivien*, the food served to the shop assistants was described as “villainously bad, almost uneatable.”³¹⁵ These fictional accounts of bad food and hunger would ring true to some of the shop assistants reading them.

In any shop, large or small, mealtime could be interrupted by the chime of the shop door bell or delayed by a customer. When Wilfred Whitaker visited his uncle’s small shop in Dorset at the start of the twentieth century, the family ate meals behind the shop. When his uncle, the shopkeeper, heard a customer in the shop, he would interrupt his meal to assist the customer.³¹⁶ London shop assistant Emily reported she was only allowed fifteen to twenty minutes for her meals, but even then was often called away from the table to serve customers. Her food was cold when she returned and sometimes she did not get to eat at all.³¹⁷ The Fabian Society reported stores prohibited shop workers from going to a meal “if engaged with a customer.”³¹⁸ In larger stores, assistants sometimes lost five minutes of their mealtime getting to the staff dining room and another five minutes waiting to be served. In some stores, if an assistant arrived late for the supper meal, they were not allowed to eat. This punishment made one feel like “you were a little boy who had enraged his parents by staying out late.”³¹⁹ More frustrating perhaps was the delay for a meal was often work-related and involved serving a customer.

Smaller and mid-size shops served meals at the same time for everyone, but not everyone ate the same meal. One shop assistant shared her diary from 1905 with a newspaper. It described both her meals and the shopowners and emphasized the discrepancy between the two meals. At breakfast she and the other assistants were fed cold fat ham but no bread or butter while “the

³¹⁵ William Maxwell. *Vivien*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 456.

³¹⁶ Whitaker, 7.

³¹⁷ Sutherst, 135.

³¹⁸ Johnson, 9.

³¹⁹ *Behind the Counter*, 5.

family had frizzled bacon, bread and butter, marmalade etc.”³²⁰ On one occasion, she was served only “roast beef, one tablespoonful of potatoes, 2 brussels sprouts, and gravy. Second course plum pudding, not sufficiently cooked and custard like water.”³²¹ While this young lady’s diet seems to be of better quality and quantity than some of her peers, it was not enough to sustain her. She supplemented her meals with food she purchased outside of the shop. She even kept a secret bank book detailing her extra food purchases which included “butter, marmalade, tea, fish, confectionery and fruit.”³²² Miss X told the Committee her employer ate with the assistants but while the assistants ate bread and margarine, the storeowner ate bacon and eggs.³²³

Storeowners and caterers offered assistants an opportunity to buy extra food to bolster their inadequate diet. Hungry assistants purchased the extra food items at allegedly higher than normal prices because they did not have the time to leave the store for meals. The union claimed there were assistants who lost the majority of their wages purchasing extra food from their employers to add to the meager portions. One author alleged stores shorted their assistants’ food purposely, in order to profit off them.³²⁴ *Behind the Counter* asserted housekeepers had restrictions on the amount they could spend per assistant for food. He described one store cook allocated an adult male, 9d per day, which was the equivalent of £3.73 in 2014.³²⁵ Harrods managing director Burbidge believed assistants in some shops “are provided with the bare necessities which the waiters very often make as unwholesome as they can, dry bread and so

³²⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, May 13, 1905.

³²¹ *The Shop Assistant*, May 13, 1905.

³²² *The Shop Assistant*, May 13, 1905. This shop assistant was fired when her diary was discovered by the shopowner.

³²³ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol III, 18957.

³²⁴ *P.I.P. Penny Illustrated Paper*, March 25, 1911.

³²⁵ *Behind the Counter*, 5. Using MeasuringWorth.com A conversion from 1888 to the decimal system and calculate for retail inflation £3.73 is the value of 9d(or 9pence) would be for the purchase of food.

on.”³²⁶ This encouraged the waiters to make money off the staff. Burbidge felt this still went on in some shops at the time of his testimony.

Shopkeepers and managers recognized the value of a well-fed healthy workforce. The owners or managers of the smaller store Daniels, the middle size store Derry and Toms and the larger department store Harrods all believed assistants needed proper nutrition to be good workers. Daniels used the need for proper food and health as his defense of the living-in system. Derry and Toms fed the assistants who lived-out at the store because “it is the custom of these workers to bring their dinners with them...and the dinners they bring are quite inadequate.” Derry felt the meals provided by the store was “the greatest boon to these workers” and was something they could “never get outside.”³²⁷ Burbidge, director of Harrods, agreed, “The danger we find is with girls and young fellows who go out to their meals, that instead of spending their money on good diet they buy cheap pastry and sweets and do not get the benefit they should from it.”³²⁸ The evidence from the Harrods employee records shows the store provided meals for 46% of the sample of women workers.³²⁹ Harrods had a canteen service for those who did not get meals included in their wages.

The union and activists reported stories of poor, inadequate meals that allegedly caused the death of overworked shop assistants. In a typical story from 1898, Jeannie Deane was described in the newspaper as a “strong healthy girl” both “bright and smart” who attempted to live on the food the store provided. She had no family support to finance supplements to her diet. Over time, “she grew visibly weaker and thinner.” Eventually she became ill and had to resign

³²⁶ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15463.

³²⁷ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 17915.

³²⁸ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 15404.

³²⁹ Harrods Archive, Employee Records.

and return home. The story explained she died shortly after returning home.³³⁰ The unappetizing food combined with a lack of exercise and long hours standing was condemned as “especially fatal to delicate women and girls.”³³¹ This story, like others, served as a warning to assistants about the living-in system and a recruitment call for assistants to join the union whose goal was the end of the living-in system.

Complaints and anecdotes from shop assistants regarding food rules are contradictory. Each shop set its own food rules and what was grounds for dismissal at one shop merited fines at another or no reaction at all.³³² Eva Newman, age eighteen, was dismissed from her shop in London for violating store rules concerning eating outside food.³³³ Accused of wasting food, another shop assistant with bad gums was dismissed when he was unable to finish his crusts of bread.³³⁴ Assistants reported being fined 5s or dismissed for leaving meat on a plate.³³⁵ “However tough the meat, and however ‘high’ the soup, we have been forced to eat it or be dismissed.”³³⁶ Another assistant reported the assistants were afraid to complain about the food that they were required to eat. He reported “men who have been there fifteen years who bring their meat down in a piece of paper daily to throw it in the lavatory.” He alleged his employer had previously been fined by the meat inspector for serving putrid condemned meat.³³⁷ At a conference in Manchester on how to reduce the hours shops were open, one delegate related that previously he worked in a shop for years, but left because he could not eat the rotten potatoes served to the employees. He recounted how he challenged his employer to eat half of the

³³⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, February, 1898.

³³¹ Maurice Corina, *Fine Silks and Oak Counters: Debenhams: 1778-1978* (London: Hutchinson Benham, 1978), 14.

³³² Black, 51.

³³³ *The Shop Assistant*, November 23, 1901.

³³⁴ Jones, 35.

³³⁵ *The Daily Chronicle*, February - March 1898.

³³⁶ Jones, 19.

³³⁷ *P.I.P. Penny Illustrated Paper*, March 25, 1911.

potatoes and he would eat the other half. His challenge was not accepted, and he moved to another position where he was not forced to eat rotten food however, the food served at the new job was awful.³³⁸ Miss X told the Truck Committee her daily portion of soup was less than two spoonfuls and should be called “water colored” instead of soup.³³⁹ The milk in the pudding served to her at most dinners was sour and the meat tainted. Miss X was not forced to finish her food but the shop owner did not like it when assistants left food behind. Shopowners forced assistants to comply with their rules regarding food by using their assistants’ fears against them. It was common knowledge large numbers of women looked for work as shop assistants, and many women were afraid of losing a position and with it, their living-in accommodations.³⁴⁰

Conclusion

In 1911, an advice book for women workers warned readers about shop work. Shop assistants had no choice but to accept the food prepared for them regardless of quality, he explained. If a woman complained about food or unsanitary or comfortless living arrangements, she could lose her job. He warned women about the disadvantages of shop work particularly, “the absolute elimination of any sort of home life.” He claimed stores lacked “any provision or legitimate interest in the hours not spent in the shop” however evidence indicates some stores did provide activities and recreation for their shop assistants. His final comment on shop assistants and the living-in system was a severe denunciation of the system. A shop assistant boarded and lodged by her employer was under his control and “very like his slave.”³⁴¹

³³⁸ *The Lancet*, April 23, 1892.

³³⁹ Report of the Truck Committee, Vol. III, 18843.

³⁴⁰ Bird, 66.

³⁴¹ Bird, 66.

Union and labor activists told stories of shopowners who typically dismissed individual employees who protested bad food or expressed dissatisfaction with the living conditions. However in 1907 twenty-four male shop assistants walked out of Daniels shop in north London protesting the living-in requirement of their employment. The strike presented the unhappy workforce to the public since shoppers passed picketers protesting their living conditions on their way into the store. Daniels' remained open during the strike and denied the existence of the strike to the press. For the women shop assistants at Daniels' there was no strike, they did not want to live out and were not protesting the living-in system. The store's owners refused to make concessions to their striking men for weeks because "Labour is plentiful, and the public has not accepted the appeal of the union not to shop."³⁴²

The Shop Assistants Union and health officials repeatedly called attention to the lack of power and control shop assistants had over their lives if they lived-in. Between 1895 and 1914, shop assistants in some stores experienced overcrowded rooms, bad food and lack of amenities. Although the living-in system was disliked by male shop assistants and the union, it was considered an attractive feature of shop work for women by store owners, many public commentators, parents and a significant portion of women shop assistants. Groups like The Association of Women's Lodging Homes did not outright condemn the living-in system, because "amongst the women, there is considerable support given to its continuance."³⁴³ Bondfield noted many people continued to consider the living-in system essential to providing a parental and moral atmosphere for assistants. Despite newspaper and magazine articles describing the shabby conditions of some rooms, rancid food and oppressive rules, she reported the ladies in attendance at a meeting of the National Union of Women Workers believed assistants were "carefully

³⁴² *The Daily Mail*, July 7, 1907.

³⁴³ Higgs and Hayward, 38.

looked after by employers” and to eliminate living-in would remove them from “the paternal care that now enjoy.”³⁴⁴ Bondfield was angry with these ladies, who had no first-hand knowledge of the living-in system yet felt qualified to condemn many women to continue living in its confines.³⁴⁵

Shopowners recognized the living-in system had flaws but feared they would be unable to hire qualified and appropriate staff without offering the security of board and lodgings for them. Reformers and the union officials noted the existence of some good living-in accommodations for shop assistants, but it was the bad and unacceptable situations that tainted the entire system.

After weeks of negative press coverage over their striking assistants, Daniels’ and Co. Store changed their mandatory living-in policy for male assistants but not female assistants. They continued to live in company dormitories. Other stores followed Daniels’ example including Grose Brothers, Debenhams and Derry and Toms. No legislation was ever passed banning the living-in system and women shop assistants continued to live in until after World War II.

³⁴⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, August 1898. The National Union of Women Workers was not an actual union. They changed their name to the National Council of Women in 1918.

³⁴⁵ Bondfield does not acknowledge the interest in women shop assistants to continue living-in.

CHAPTER FOUR

Controlled Leisure Time

Victorian shopkeepers believed their assistants needed strict discipline and control.³⁴⁶ Public street entertainment, pubs and music halls represent just some of the temptations feared by shopkeepers and reformers. Reformers imagined shop assistants would get into all types of trouble without supervision. Historian Sarah Deutsch argues one problem with the city was how middle-class women viewed it. Her argument in, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940*, applies to urban areas more generally. She argues middle-class women “constructed an urban moral geography that defined city streets, factories, department stores, and almost all spaces except their homes as dangerous spaces for young working class women.”³⁴⁷ Women shop assistants were especially vulnerable to the temptation because their jobs exposed them to the finer consumer goods they sold but could not afford. When Bess, in *Bess of Bentley's*, looked at the clothing she sold her “gaze softened as she looked at those delicious caps, for a woman’s heart always goes out longingly towards the delicate fripperies of the toilet, for inborn, ingrained, in the feminine nature is a deep reverence for the mystic cult of dress.”³⁴⁸

Shop keepers and reformers resisted closing shops early and allowing assistants’ additional free time. One shopkeeper declared “Assistants would waste their time” if they had

³⁴⁶ Whitaker, 8.

³⁴⁷ Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78-79.

³⁴⁸ Alice Askew and Charles Askew. *Bess of Bentley's*. (London: White & Co. Ltd., 1912), 75.

leisure time.³⁴⁹ Another shopkeeper feared it would be worse, since shop assistants “would visit music halls and public houses if they had their evenings to themselves.”³⁵⁰ The “British Weekly” Commissioners worried women shop assistants would turn to men who could “add to the brightness of their lives by tickets for theaters, visits to music hall, novelettes, and gifts of jewelry and dresses.”³⁵¹ With no home or familial comfort “the street or some place of cheap amusement is the only means of forgetting their daily routine.”³⁵² Clubs and charities developed with the express purpose of occupying the leisure time of assistants and preventing them from succumbing to temptation in the city. The Shop Assistants’ Union pressured shopkeepers and politicians to ensure free time for assistants because they believed shop assistants with shorter hours would have “greater opportunities of intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement.”³⁵³ This chapter discusses the efforts and problems of shopkeepers, social reformers and the Shop Assistants’ Union to control the leisure time of women shop assistants.

The Dangerous City

The city offered numerous recreational activities for inhabitants and visitors, but social reformers warned “the city itself was the cause of the general deterioration” of people and culture.³⁵⁴ In *Life and Labour of the People of London*, (1886-1903), Charles Booth’s influential multi-volume study, Booth used school records, parish records, interviews and investigations and concluded the number of people in poverty was higher than previously stated. In other works such as *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*(1883), *The Pinch of Poverty*(1892) and popular

³⁴⁹ Sutherst, 53.

³⁵⁰ Sutherst, 53.

³⁵¹ The “British Weekly” Commissioners, 189.

³⁵² Emma Goldman, *The Traffic in Women and Other Essays on Feminism* (New York: Times Change Press, 1971), 26.

³⁵³ Sutherst, 55.

³⁵⁴ Standish Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880-1914: The Search for Community*. (New London: Yale University, 1987), 40.

novels, the city is described as a dark dangerous place to be feared by young women. The city streets represented a specific danger to women since the murders by Jack the Ripper in 1888 was a recent memory.³⁵⁵ "For Londoners of the 1880s, these perceptions shaped the Ripper murders into not just a story of class conflict and exploitation but also into a cautionary tale for all women, warning that the city was a dangerous place when they transgressed the narrow boundary of home and hearth to enter public space."³⁵⁶

Controlled Leisure

In an effort to control their staff, employers offered activities meant to keep women away from the city's temptations. Reformers believed supervised leisure in a controlled environment would keep young women safe from the lure of prostitution. In 1905, staff at William Pearce Jones' shop had a recreation ground, a large library and organized sports clubs.³⁵⁷ When Bourne and Hollingsworth department store opened a new home for their women assistants, it included many of the comforts of a middle-class home. There was a writing room, a dance room, a library and even storage for bicycles.³⁵⁸ Trade newspapers noted other stores had similar amenities.³⁵⁹ The shop assistants at Harrods, who lived-out, still had their choice of employee clubs including: cricket, rowing, football, rugby, band, dancing, swimming, men's hockey, ladies hockey, ladies physical culture, drama, rinking and tennis.³⁶⁰ Management at Harrods held regular dances at the store for shop assistants and staff.³⁶¹ In 1913, *The Harroddian Gazette* announced an upcoming

³⁵⁵ For further reading on the effect the murders had on the people in London see Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, Chapter 7.

³⁵⁶ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 3.

³⁵⁷ *The Draper*, Summer 1905.

³⁵⁸ *London Evening News*, August 6, 1907.

³⁵⁹ Sutherst, 83.

³⁶⁰ Rinking was either ice skating or roller skating.

³⁶¹ Not all employees at Harrods worked on the shop floor. There were hairdressers, cooks, waitresses, counting house staff, delivery men, doormen, and clerks.

dance for Saturday March 15. The organizers told readers they hoped “to see the same jolly crowd as last occasion.”³⁶² Selfridge’s had a social club called the Arlington Social and Athletic Society. The group performed in a play at the Royal Court Theatre in 1910. Staff also had access to fields at Wembley for sports activities and dances. These types of approved and supervised activities provided assistants with entertainment and camaraderie during their free time and also kept them off the city streets.

Shop assistants developed a sense of community and friendship with the other women they worked with. Assistants at work joked, talked and occasionally joined in a song when working off the shop floor. Staff identified with their department and organized social activities within the department rather than mixing with workers in other departments.³⁶³ In the back rooms of any grocery store “there is a large staff of assistants busily engaged in weighing, wrapping and fixing the fruit, the monotony of which is occasionally relieved by a joke, a conundrum, or (if the coast is clear) a song.”³⁶⁴ Singing was something assistants could do only in the back room, if there were no managers around. Novels with shop women as main characters depicted conflicts between women but also how friendships developed while working behind the counter. In Act One, Diana chats with the other women in their shared room after work and is friendly with Kitty Brant. Pansy’s coworker proves to be a friend and distracts their supervisor just as she was about to reprimand Pansy for being slow. Photographs of women from Harrods in sporting activities and in the staff rooms show women sitting and smiling together.³⁶⁵ Fictional sources and non-fiction sources both support the idea of community and friendship among women shop assistants.

³⁶² *The Harroddian Gazette*, March, 1913.

³⁶³ Honeycombe, 96. The exception to department activities was the sports and social clubs discussed in Chapter Four.

³⁶⁴ *Behind the Counter*, 6.

³⁶⁵ Harrods Archive, *The Harroddian Gazette*, 1913.

The workplace was a place of community but also of conflict. Activities were designed to protect vulnerable women, but women were vulnerable to harassment in these situations. The group activities in the fictional workplace Mowker and Bleets provided store manager Mr. Bleet with an opportunity to initiate games with the female staff. The shopgirls were unable to avoid these company functions and games like “hunt the slipper” or “kiss in the ring” gave Mr. Bleet the opportunity to force his kisses upon the youngest staff members. Although management overlooked his assaults and excused his behavior as an “excess of Christian charity,” Pansy avoids him whenever she can. The shopwalker at Bentley’s, where shopgirl character Bess worked, had a reputation that preceded him: “But oh, his behavior with the assistants! He’s hateful to some of the older women – brutal; but with a pretty girl... You must avoid this fellow as much as possible, my poor child.”³⁶⁶ A member of management at Selfridge’s brought one assistant to tears because he had “certain weaknesses which might be objected to by nice women.” Percy Best reassured the woman she could always turn to Mr. Selfridge if she had cause for complaint. “You will not be expected to do anything that is no[sic] part of your duty to the House.” The young assistant cried tears of gratitude and said “Thank God” according to Best. To the modern reader this is a sad statement on the working lives of shop assistants. She was grateful she could turn to the store’s owner and she would not be required to do anything outside of her job. However the supervisor was still going to be employed even though the store knew of his reputation with women.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Askew and Askew, 16.

³⁶⁷ Honeycombe, 186.

Education

Throughout the nineteenth century various groups including the YMCA, YWCA, Boys' Brigade, Church Lads' Brigade, Working Men's College, the adult school movement, university extensions, and Toynbee Hall, offered educational classes. The teaching offered at Toynbee Hall "reflected the desire to instill social harmony by means of a respect for tradition, order, and authority."³⁶⁸ Residents in the East End could visit Toynbee Hall and experience a wide range of evening educational programs including English, foreign literature, science, economics, and other subjects. The programs "were consciously designed to impose a hierarchy of values upon the pupils for whom they were designed."³⁶⁹ The union and Early Closing Movement claimed long hours prevented shop assistants from participating in educational activities, however Meacham's research indicates shop assistants did attend these educational activities at Toynbee Hall. The university-extension classes attracted "teachers, clerks, shop assistants or foremen."³⁷⁰ Subjects included "physiology, geography, Shakespeare, clay modeling, and carpentry" while lecture titles included things like "The First Four Tudor Reigns" and "Eighteenth Century Music: The Works of Handel." While interesting these were certainly not the topics or skills needed to advance in a shop career.

Department stores offered classes on site for shop assistants in topics related to business. In some cases, the classes aimed to help assistants relate to their wealthier customers. Selfridge's offered sales staff elocution lessons after hours for this reason. An article in *The Harroddian Gazette* in 1913 reported how the store manager visited the classes at Harrods. Arithmetic, spelling and handwriting classes were offered every Tuesday night. The store's goal was to promote successful and determined students to better positions within the store.

³⁶⁸ Meacham, 56.

³⁶⁹ Meacham, x.

³⁷⁰ Meacham, 58.

Shop assistants dreamed of promotion to floorwalker or buyer. In one article in *The Harroddian Gazette*, a buyer of Harrods explained how he used education to rise from shop assistant to his current position of buyer. He encouraged the assistants to take an interest in the products they sold because assistants with knowledge could better inform customers about products. This buyer, only identified as H.C., took credit for the classes offered at Harrods. He claims he encouraged the managing director to start classes similar to those offered elsewhere in London.³⁷¹ H.C. had taken classes every night and on Saturday evenings at a polytechnical school for years when he first started work and credited his hard work as the reason for his success. This path to success was mainly for the male shop assistants. In 1913, women had little opportunity for advancement. Few women became buyers or floorwalkers with the majority never obtaining any type of advancement. One woman staff controller started at Selfridge's in 1909 when the store opened and she was in charge of the women on staff.³⁷²

Department stores offered classes for assistants that promoted the store and benefited the public. For example, Whiteley's started an ambulance brigade in 1897. Harrods offered classes on First Aid and Nursing. A Harrods employee, Miss Hemmings, organized the nursing classes and was among the first to pass her First Aid Certification. The Commandant, medical officer and quartermaster assigned to the group were all presumably men but the rest of the staff and one superintendent were women.³⁷³ Harrods began preparing staff to join a voluntary medical detachment registered to the War Office in 1913. Selfridges started training years earlier and equipping their men for a military force in 1909. All of the men from the Selfridges unit volunteered for war in 1914.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ This claim may be true since *The Harroddian Gazette* was an in-house publication.

³⁷² Honeycombe, 187.

³⁷³ *The Harroddian Gazette*, March, 1913.

³⁷⁴ Honeycombe, 187. Harrods has a war memorial in the store with the names of staff who died in war.

Reading was an educational activity that would appear resistant to criticism, but reading was not without controversy. Shopkeepers and union officials approved of reading for educational purposes, but reading for pleasure was not equally favored. Research shows reading was a popular pastime for shop assistants. Vivian, a shopgirl character in a novel of the same name, uses the public library to read newspapers and to borrow books. She thinks “the public library was truly a haven of peace for her and a hundred other shop-girls.”³⁷⁵ It is the library that offered her “an unrecognized, far-away lantern of kind thought, cheering her, fortifying her, filling her for a little while with a newly discovered consoling strength.”³⁷⁶ Advocates for public libraries “believed that by spreading high culture they helped to forestall disruptive behavior by people who, if left to themselves, were all too likely to deviate from middle-class norms of conduct.”³⁷⁷ Managers and shopowners restricted assistants access to certain newspapers, even fining those caught with the banned periodicals. Other employers called literature “nonsense views,” recalled one assistant. His employer informed him “it would be infinitely better for him to think more of business.”³⁷⁸ In 1907, in her investigative series on working women, Olive Malvery wrote about the reading the women she encountered enjoyed. “I was interested to learn that the reading these girls favored was the novels we known as ‘Penny Shockers.’” Malvery read other works to them including Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, but these types of books were expensive for the working woman who “has not surplus cash to stock a library.”³⁷⁹

Reading material dictated the fate of two shopgirl characters. Vivien, who read Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, and William Makepeace Thackeray, attracted the attention of a doctor. He helped Vivian find a job as a companion for a noble woman. After dramatic difficulties, this

³⁷⁵ Maxwell. *Vivian*, 464.

³⁷⁶ Maxwell, 464.

³⁷⁷ Lees and Lees, 217.

³⁷⁸ *Behind the Counter*, 4.

³⁷⁹ Malvery, 85.

position led to a proposal of marriage from a Duke. Pansy Meares read “cheap novels” which she carried in her bag to read on the carriage on her way home from her shop work. The narrator explains Pansy read the books because they allowed “some of the color, romance, and excitement of which her life was barren from its crudely exciting pages.”³⁸⁰ Pansy is entertained by novels and makes poor choices in her life. Her story ends with her death on the side of the road, in a novel that echoes the themes of cheap novels.

The importance of reading is clear from the emphasis shopkeepers placed on the in-house libraries available to shop assistants. Many assistants paid fees for these in-house libraries even if they did not them. Department stores created in-house magazines capitalizing on the interest in reading. They also used these staff magazines as educational tools. *The Harroddian Gazette*, was a staff magazine for shop assistants at Harrods. First published in 1913, it offered work advice to assistants indicating its function as a management directed newspaper. For example, an article on courtesy reminded readers that the customers were guests. In order to be courteous to the guests, staff should “not talk loudly, laugh or discuss personal or even business matters in the lifts or otherwise in public.” Another tip reminded staff to “listen with interested respect” to guests. Many articles were actually teaching tools for the staff.³⁸¹

Readers did not purchase newspapers, glossy weeklies, and even penny novels to be read only once. People shared reading materials with others and discussed it over meals. There were numerous glossy magazines and newspapers at six pence, half penny and penny price offering a wide range of reading options for the shop assistant. Penny and half penny newspapers had large circulations.³⁸² *The Shop Assistant* cost one penny which was low enough for most shop assistants to afford, but they encouraged readers to share the paper with others. One popular

³⁸⁰ Newte, 109.

³⁸¹ *The Harroddian Gazette*, March, 1913.

³⁸² Macqueen-Pope, W. *Twenty Shillings in the Pound*. (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1949), 350.

tabloid was *The Daily Mail*. It started in 1896 and at ½ penny, it was cheaper than other daily papers. By 1902 it had the largest circulation. Theater historian W. Macqueen-Pope recalled mocked the tabloid, but even so “they read it.”³⁸³ Other inexpensive newspapers that shop assistants might have read included *The Daily News*, *The Daily Chronicle*, *Girl’s Own Paper*, *The Daily Mirror*, and *The Daily Sketch*.

Shopkeepers asserted closing shops on Sundays allowed shop assistants and shopowners to attend church services.³⁸⁴ John Wigley in *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday*, argues middle-class supporters of the traditional idea of a Sunday of worship and rest “were generally property owners who were literate but read mainly the Bible, possessed political influence but exercised authority over their inferiors.”³⁸⁵ They spent their Sundays “in comfort” and their position allowed them “a chance to discipline and to instruct the lower orders.”³⁸⁶ As previously noted in Chapter Three, shopkeepers supported idea of a day of rest because they had the ability to enjoy it. Shop assistants locked out of their dormitories for the day did not have the same opportunities for rest as their employers.

Shop assistants had logistical problems if they wanted to attend church services. New jobs potentially meant new living-in establishments and therefore new parishes. Moving regularly limited a person’s ability to form a strong tie to a church or a minister. Evidence from the Harrods cards indicates shop assistants changed jobs regularly.³⁸⁷ Some pious tradesmen demanded shop assistants spend their leisure hours in prayer meetings or at religious services chosen by the shopkeeper. Shop assistants may have spent their Sundays in a church of a

³⁸³ Macqueen-Pope, 350.

³⁸⁴ Whitaker, 9.

³⁸⁵ John Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 183.

³⁸⁶ Wigley, 183.

³⁸⁷ The employee records indicate when a reference was sent to a new job. There are instances in the employee records where references were sent multiple times. The records also indicate how long an employee remained at Harrods before moving to the new job.

different denomination, further alienating them from their own faith.³⁸⁸ Assistants who missed these required church services received lectures or even fines on Monday morning. The Shop Assistants' Union alleged some assistants lost their jobs after missing church services. Pansy lost one job when she missed the required church service with her employer, even though she lived across town.

Middle-class reformers and activists expressed concern over the church attendance of urban workers. It is alleged that shop assistants, living out as members of the lower middle class or upper working class, had low levels of church attendance. However, church attendance had been on the decline in every European country for years.³⁸⁹ Many urban workers failed to attend any church regularly on Sundays. McLeod contends "In the years around 1900 there was much evidence to suggest that the working class of European cities went to church less frequently than members of other classes."³⁹⁰ A religious census in 1886/7 indicated only 28.5% of all adult Londoners attended any church regularly. This number dropped to 22% in the 1902/3 census.

Oral history and interviews from the late nineteenth century indicate a more complex view of urban workers' religion. Charles Booth interviewed a rector in 1897 who felt clerks were the largest social group in his West Hackney church.³⁹¹ McLeod cites The Daily New 1902/1903 religious census and concludes Bethnal Green had 66 places of worship for 128,000 people. Bethnal Green was the home of numerous shop assistants working at Harrods. Nearby Poplar had an even larger population of 165,000 people and 67 places of worship.³⁹²

Shop assistants claimed they failed to attend church on Sundays due to their long hours of work on Saturday. It is possible church officials and reformers did not blame shop owners for the

³⁸⁸ People could change allegiance from one church to another and McLeod asserts workers did this.

³⁸⁹ Lees and Lees, 156.

³⁹⁰ McLeod, xxiii.

³⁹¹ McLeod, 42.

³⁹² McLeod, 35.

absence of their assistants because owners might be wealthy patrons of the church. Instead religious officials accused the public of “the evil habit of shopping.”³⁹³ With this vague accusation, clerics addressed the problem without condemning the shopkeepers who kept stores open late. One reverend, writing for the Shop Hours Labour League, believed long work hours caused assistants in his church to display signs of “physical exhaustion, inertia and decay, mental stagnation, and stunting, moral cramping, and debasement.”³⁹⁴ Those who did manage to attend Sunday services arrived late and were “listless”.³⁹⁵ One reverend reported the assistants at his church on Hackney Road in North-East London “look pale, haggard, and overdone.”³⁹⁶ Twenty-one year old Agnes specifically blamed the long hours of work on Saturday for her rare attendance at church on Sunday mornings.³⁹⁷ Other assistants blamed their lack of attendance on an inability to move after standing at work the day before.³⁹⁸

These church surveys and testimonies claiming a desire to attend church services are questionable in accuracy. Emphasizing the desire to attend religious services was propaganda for the Early Closing Movement and the Shop Assistants’ Union. The union portrayed the assistants as hard working respectable young women who only desire to attend church services in their leisure time but can not because of their long work hours. This drew attention to the problem of long hours and the working conditions of shop assistants. The general public could not easily criticize young women who wanted shorter hours to attend church. It is unlikely shop assistants would have received any public support if the women stated they wanted shorter hours to attend the theater or a dance hall.

³⁹³ Sutherst, 57.

³⁹⁴ Sutherst, 55.

³⁹⁵ Sutherst, 55.

³⁹⁶ Sutherst, 56.

³⁹⁷ Sutherst, 134.

³⁹⁸ Sutherst, 135.

Shopkeepers, union officials and reformers attempted to create leisure options for working people in the city. Social clubs, mainly catered to the middle and upper classes, however union officials recognized the importance of clubs and healthy activity. Union officials recognized the importance of clubs and structured activities for workers. They believed clubs could brighten the lives of assistants which in turn “would help them shake off apathy and indifference and despair, and induce them to fight all the harder for better conditions of life.”³⁹⁹ Research indicates only a few of such places existed for working class women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Those few clubs, homes and even restaurants each had a wealthy patron supporting the establishment financially.

The union sponsored dances, debates, picnics, biking clubs, and choral concerts, many combined with union meetings. Women were thanked individually and in groups for their participation in these events.⁴⁰⁰ One writer for *The Shop Assistant* believed these events were not good for recruitment, “socials do not make good members.”⁴⁰¹ Other union officials believed social clubs were “the best way to begin working towards option of a common platform and some form of corporate union.”⁴⁰² They urged local branches to reach out to the shop assistants as a community. “Branches have it in their power, and it should certainly be part of their duty, to organize the recreative needs of their members and in this way strengthen the bonds of comradeship, by eliminating the miserable class distinctions which prevail to such an alarming extent in our ranks.”⁴⁰³ It was possible for union recreational activities to lead to increased membership and one branch saw an increase in membership after organizing social activities including concerts, dances and debates. In 1900, the Walthamstow branch of the Shop

³⁹⁹ Lees and Lees, 214 and *The Shop Assistant*, June 13, 1903.

⁴⁰⁰ *The Shop Assistant*, January, 1900.

⁴⁰¹ *The Shop Assistant*, April 28, 1910.

⁴⁰² *The Shop Assistant*, October, 1900.

⁴⁰³ *The Shop Assistant*, June, 1900.

Assistants' Union opted to hold their monthly meeting during a break in the dancing. Since over one hundred men and women assistants from London attended the north London event, officials declared the event a success and decided to hold weekly socials to recruit members.⁴⁰⁴ Many branches opted to continue to sponsor and use activities as recruitment tools to increase their membership.⁴⁰⁵

Participations in these activities did not require union membership and membership in the union remained low overall. In 1912 there were only 22,148 union members at the end of that year. The number of women members remained particularly low. Estimates for women membership in January, 1914 was 14,000-15,000 out of 80,000 members overall. By the end of the year the total membership was of women 42,869. The number of women union members is higher that year because it included the last few months of 1914 when war changed the nature of shop work for men and women. Women replaced men in all areas of the stores when they left for war.⁴⁰⁶

Union leaders believed class differences were a major hurdle to organizing shop assistants. From the early years of the union, officials mentioned this problem in speeches. "Shop assistants view themselves as a superior class, and have isolated themselves from the working classes." The recruitment of women faced specific obstacles. Officials believed respectable young women failed to join the union because of the different class of men they would associate with at meetings. An imagined conversation printed in *The Shop Assistant* has one assistant refusing to go to a union meeting because, "there will be grocer's men from the stores, and I do not want to know them." Another criticism of women shop assistants who failed to join the union

⁴⁰⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, July, 1900.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Shop Assistant*, June 13, 1903.

⁴⁰⁶ National Amalgamated Union of Warehousemen and Clerks. *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1919* (London: H. William and Son T.U. Printers, 1919), 84; Holcolmbe, 5; Hallsworth, 110.

addressed their hopes for marriage. Officials worried too many girls joined shop work because “it was considered a royal road to marriage.” These young women did not see the importance in joining a union for a job they only planned to have for a short period of time. The union regularly urged women to join the union by handing out literature, organizing meetings or giving speeches. Bondfield offered herself as a source of information and encouraged young women to write to her on how they could participate as members.⁴⁰⁷

Shopkeepers offered amenities to their staff to recreate a home atmosphere. These amenities included sitting rooms, libraries and pianos. For shop assistants living-in or living-out, stores offered sports clubs and entertainment clubs. These leisure activities offered shop assistants an escape from their work life but also a chance to bond with their colleagues. Shopkeepers wanted the planned activities to occupy the limited leisure time of shop assistants. Social reformers hoped shop assistants would use their leisure time to enlighten themselves with educational classes. Shopkeepers and union officials offered leisure activities to shop assistants as a substitute for entertainment in the city.

⁴⁰⁷ *The Shop Assistant*, September, 1900.

CHAPTER FIVE

Exploring the City

“Are you fond of dancing? The halls have commenced their weekly ‘hops.’ But I don’t think much of them do you? There is very little pleasure and certainly no dignity about the dancing one usually sees in public halls.”⁴⁰⁸

-Margaret Bondfield, 1896

A shop assistant who worked in London was similar to other city dwellers. She probably visited theaters, music halls and cinemas. She walked the city streets and window-shopped at the large department stores. She might have visited museums and probably went to libraries or shops to buy books. She may have used the music rooms of her boarding house and may have taken music lessons at some point in her life. If she lived-out, she either walked to work or used public transportation. She would see streets packed with Hansom cabs, carriages, omnibuses, and trams. She likely faced harassment on the streets and knew what areas of the city to avoid when she walked. In her limited leisure time she had ample entertainment options to choose from. By World War I she had seen some of the city’s pageantry and participated in some of the festivals celebrating the major events of the decade.

Understanding and visualizing the city streets from over a century ago is important because it provides a window into the world of working women. The streets of London’s West End was the home of many large shops and departments stores and the workplace for thousands of shop assistants. In the second half of the nineteenth century, “the West End was transformed

⁴⁰⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, November, 1896.

into a middle-class commercialized entertainment area.”⁴⁰⁹ Rappaport asserts it was middle-class women who were responsible for turning the West End into a “shopping-district, a tourist sight, an entertainment center, and an arena for female work and politics.”⁴¹⁰ The West End as part of the city plays a central role in middle-class life. In “Telling ‘Spatial Stories’: Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris”, Victoria Thompson examines Paris in the years of the July Revolution of 1830. She argues “space was used by the members of the middle class to craft a distinctive and authoritative urban identity.”⁴¹¹ The West End of London serves a similar function for the middle class of London as Paris did for the French middle class. It was a shopping district and a middle-class entertainment area, but it was also a place of employment for thousands of shop assistants. At lunch time and after work, thousands of working women poured out the doors of their employers into the West End. They might have been going home, to the theater, to a restaurant or even became shoppers themselves. The shop assistant was a working woman and a consumer within the shopping and entertainment district of the West End. This chapter examines how the shop assistant negotiated the city and how she may have participated in urban life.

Travel in the City

Public transportation options expanded as the city grew during the nineteenth century. Omnibuses, trams, and the underground were the main forms of transportation for urban workers. A number of private companies controlled the omnibuses, but the buses had numbers and colors similar to the buses of today. The tops of buses were open to the sky but had lower

⁴⁰⁹ Michael Goron, *Gilbert and Sullivan’s ‘Respectable Capers’: Class Respectability and the Savoy Operas* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 51. For further information on space as an agent of change in early nineteenth-century London see Lynda Nead. *London’s Victorian Babylon: People Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴¹⁰ Rappaport, 7.

⁴¹¹ Victoria E. Thompson, “Telling ‘Spatial Stories’: Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, No 3 (September 2003), 527.

fares. Sitting at the top meant knife board seats and riders braced their feet on an iron railing at the edge. When women began riding on the tops of the omnibuses, boards were put in place to hide their ankles. Vivien rides the omnibus regularly as a form of transportation in London. One Sunday from the top deck of the omnibus she watched the bicycle riders weaving their way through traffic.⁴¹² In *Odd Women*, Monica Madden regularly rode the omnibus, sometimes with a “lack of purpose and intent.”⁴¹³ Riding on the top of the omnibus was a daring thing to do for a young woman, but Gertrude, in *The Romance of the Shop*, does it anyway. She went “boldly to the top of an Atlas omnibus” because she did not want to be “shut up away from the sunlight.”⁴¹⁴ All three characters are lower middle-class working women. Rappaport argues the authors may have been “using the ‘bus and the train as a vehicle to write about their sense of freedom in the city.”⁴¹⁵

The commuting distance for some Harrods staff indicates the employees utilized one of the different types of public transportation to get to work. For employees who lived within two miles of the store, it might be feasible to walk to work to save money. During the winter months, when the sun set at 4:00 p.m. and the weather was cold and wet, an assistant might avail herself of transportation if her walk was over one mile. It is reasonable to conclude that assistants who lived more than two miles away from the store used public transportation on a regular basis.

The underground opened in 1863 and by 1896 there were an estimated 682 million journeys through the city by train and omnibus. Underground advertisements from the turn of the century depict a mixed sex crowd. One poster from 1908 displays the inside of a railcar where the passengers are mostly well-dressed women. The poster tells viewers “Travel Underground

⁴¹² William Maxwell. *Viven*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 93.

⁴¹³ Airdow, Rosy. “A Suitable Wardrobe: The Lone Female Traveler in Late Nineteenth Century Fiction” https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41149_en.pdf

⁴¹⁴ Amy Levy, *The Romance of the Shop*, (1888. Reprint. New York: Broadview Press, 2006), 61.

⁴¹⁵ Rappaport, 126.

into the heart of the shopping centres.” Even though the art portrayed a middle-class crowd, many third-class tickets were sold.⁴¹⁶ In 1890 Punch described the underground as “so packed with people that getting in or out was a regular scrimmage.”⁴¹⁷ Kate often used the underground as a method of transportation even when it was crowded.⁴¹⁸ The underground expanded and by 1906, Kensington station opened near Harrods on the Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton Railway line. The expansion of this line permitted workers from greater distances to commute into the city for work. Prior to the addition of this rail line, no Harrods staff women appear to live beyond three miles from the store. With the addition of the railway, Harrods staff home addresses are spread further throughout London. Maps B and C indicate the home addresses of shop assistants who joined the store after 1905. Some assistants lived ten miles from the store on Brompton Road.

The City Streets

Shop assistants navigated the busy city streets on their walk to work. Maxwell described the morning commute for shop assistants in *Vivien*.

At a little before nine o’clock, a crowd of girls would pour out of Marefield Street and hurry away to their shops. Professional shoppers, nearly all of them, but with here and there a better-born amateur like Vivien and her friends, they would flit by in the wintry sunlight, filling the pavement with sudden girlish life, and then in a few minutes leaving it dull and dingy and empty again. They looked so pretty in the morning light – slim

⁴¹⁶ Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2012/oct/23/london-underground-tube-gallery#comments> and Poster; Travel Underground into the Heart of the Shopping Centres, by unknown author, 1908, London Transport Museum, accessed March 3, 2019 <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/posters/item/1983-4-9?&apiurl=aHR0cHM6Ly9hcGkubHRtdXNldW0uY28udWsvG9zdGVyc9zaG9ydD0xJnNraXA9MCA9MCZsaW1pdD00OCZzb3J0PWRhdGUmb3JkZXI9YXNjJmZpZWxkPVNUOVJUREFURQ==&searchpage=Y29sbGVjdGlvbMvY29sbGVjdGlvbMtb25saW5lL3Bvc3RlenMvcGFnZS8xPyZzb3J0PWRhdGUmb3JkZXI9YXNjJmZpZWxkPVNUOVJUREFURQ==>

⁴¹⁷ Punch, 1890 in Andrew Martin, *Underground Overground: A Passenger’s History of the Tube*, (London: Profile Books, 2012), 104.

⁴¹⁸ Elizabeth Crawford, *Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*. Chapter 1, Location 628.

figures with slender ankles, silk – haired blondes, warm-cheeked brunettes, chattering and laughing by twos and threes, or silently flitting one by one beneath the shadow of the red porches and out into the sunlight again...⁴¹⁹

Streets would be congested with traffic and people just as they are in London today, but some things were different. The streets would be dusty and have horse manure on the ground. Today we would be surprised to see a butcher peddling fresh meat or beer being delivered to homes by the barrel, but it was a common sight at the turn of the century. Traveling merchants wandered the streets calling on houses on regular set days while tradesmen such as butchers or bakers brought products to the door to sell as well as selling in the shop. “Men came to grind knives, to mend mats, to sell baskets, to offer carpet beaters, brooms, dustpans, brushes, all sorts of things.”⁴²⁰ If a shop assistant passed St. James Park in the morning she could stop and purchase a glass of milk straight from one of the cows tethered at the entrance of the park. A milkmaid sat in the park with her cow until the cows were banned from the park in 1905, although the women remained in the stall selling other food.⁴²¹ Both Bess from *Bess of Bentley’s* and Vivien take walks in the park. Bess walks in Kensington Gardens expressing her desire outside, “I want to be in the open air all day long...after a week’s close confinement.”⁴²² She also watched people in their fashionable clothes in the “church parade on Sunday morning during the season.”⁴²³ Vivien walks in Hyde Park and St. James Park for exercise and to people-watch.

Shop assistants walking through the city would likely pass other store windows, which shopkeepers packed with products. “The idea was to get as much in as possible” and while there was some attempt at order, “quantity was the main thing” shopkeepers aimed for in the

⁴¹⁹ Maxwell, 82.

⁴²⁰ Macqueen-Pope, 230.

⁴²¹ Macqueen-Pope, 155 and Tom Quinn, *Eccentric London*. (London: New Holland Publishing, 2008), 28.

⁴²² Askew and Askew, 11.

⁴²³ Askew and Askew, 18.

windows.⁴²⁴ Craftsmen worked in their shop windows displaying both their product and their skills. In the window of the tobacco shop, young women would sit rolling cigarettes. The watchmaker might conduct his repairs in the shop window “with his magnifying glass in his eye.”⁴²⁵ The shoemaker might set up his repair stand in the window making repairs in front of an audience. One shop on Regent Street sold hair products for women and in their window “sat a row of pretty girls, their backs to the public but displaying heads of wonderful texture and shade, and of amazing length.”⁴²⁶

Everything could be delivered from a store and delivery carts were a constant sight. Harrods and Selfridges both had fleets of carts to deliver purchases to customer’s homes. In smaller or mid-size shops, assistants might be sent out to deliver items. Vivien volunteered to deliver a customer’s blouses so she could get out of the shop for the morning. The blouse, along with two other deliveries were “urgent cases” allowing Vivien the “unexpected little treat” of traveling the city by cab.⁴²⁷

National Events in the City

City streets, buildings, stores and homes were decorated for national events. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 was a celebration for all members of society. The Queen’s portrait was seen throughout the city and many people had portraits of her in their homes or places of business.⁴²⁸ London “became a City of Flowers” and “every house, every cottage, decked itself.”⁴²⁹ When the Frye family decorated their home in Arundel Gardens, North

⁴²⁴ Macqueen-Pope, 226.

⁴²⁵ Macqueen-Pope, 228.

⁴²⁶ Macqueen-Pope, 228.

⁴²⁷ Maxwell, 131.

⁴²⁸ Macqueen-Pope, 295.

⁴²⁹ Macqueen-Pope, 299.

Kensington for the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, diarist Kate described the balcony as “outlined with red cloth and flags.” She felt the decorations were the best in the neighborhood. The coronation of a new king in 1902 and again in 1911 were also celebrated with extravagant decorations in the city. There were decorations in the shop windows and banners hanging on buildings. Selfridges’ decorated the building’s exterior for the coronation in 1911 with a theme honoring royalty past and present. A red valance edged with gold trim framed the building and twelve-foot high shields topped each of the building’s columns. Paper mache lions sat at the base of each column and a large gold crown decorated the top corner of the building. At night the entire display was illuminated.⁴³⁰ With the exterior of homes and stores decorated, shop assistants as well as pedestrians could not have missed the elaborate displays.

There was no avoiding certain events as a citizen and even more so as a shop assistant. Shop assistants sold all types of souvenirs including mugs, booklets, pins, locketts and sheet music. Mugs and plates sold at Harrods for the coronation depict the British flag and portraits of the new monarchs. National events meant busy days at the shop for shop assistants. Vivien’s employer Mrs. Wardrop’s business increased before the Jubilee and she hired another assistant. One union official expressed her dislike of the royal celebrations in an article in *The Shop Assistant*. She contrasted the freedom of Queen Victoria to the working woman’s lack of freedom. While the Jubilee was “the staple topic of conversation among customers,” she believed “most people are bored of the whole thing.”⁴³¹

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 was another occasion for public spectacle and included a large gathering of royals. The country went into a state of mourning and biography Lytton Stacey asserted that “astonished grief swept the country” since many “had never known a

⁴³⁰ Honeycombe, 41.

⁴³¹ *The Shop Assistant*, July, 1897.

time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them.”⁴³² The Queen’s funeral procession on February 2, 1901, went through the city on its way to Windsor. There were “miles and miles of soldiers” that could be seen “half the length of Edgewise Road.”⁴³³ Shops decorated the windows in observance of the Queen’s passing. Kate described a city in mourning: “I never saw such a sight as the shop windows - everything black in them, even the fancy shops, and as for the Drapers it looks too awful. Everyone is dressed in mourning - men with the deepest of hat bands etc. - not a piece of color anywhere - and of course black shutters to all the shops.”⁴³⁴ Shop assistants served a rush of customers needing black hats, clothing and gloves for mourning. At Whiteleys’ department store, “the people were standing 8 and 10 deep at the glove counter waiting to be served.”⁴³⁵ Kate wrote of her relief to have black garments already, because she felt it would be difficult to get garments made in a rush. Debenhams’ wholesale department sold all of its stock of black mourning crape.⁴³⁶ When Edward VII died in 1910, people went into mourning again. Stores eliminated all colors and “all displays as far as possible were black.”⁴³⁷ Selfridge’s “plunged into mourning” and the entire staff wore black. One employee at Selfridges in 1910, Adela Hill, recalled, “everyone wore as much black as they could afford and most of us looked like a lot of black crows.”⁴³⁸

⁴³² Lytton Stacey, *Queen Victoria*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1921), 423.

⁴³³ Elizabeth Crawford, “Kate Parry Frye’s Diary: Queen Victoria’s Funeral: 2 February, 1901,” *Woman and Her Sphere* Posted February 2, 2015. <https://womanandhersphere.com/?s=1901> (accessed August 15, 2018).

⁴³⁴ Elizabeth Crawford, “Kate Parry Frye’s Diary: Queen Victoria’s Funeral: 22 January, 1901,” *Woman and Her Sphere* Posted January 22, 2015. <https://womanandhersphere.com/2015/02/02/kate-fryes-diary-queen-victorias-funeral-2-february-1901/> (accessed August 15, 2018).

⁴³⁵ Elizabeth Crawford, “Kate Parry Frye’s Diary: Queen Victoria’s Funeral: 22 January, 1901,” *Woman and Her Sphere* Posted January 22, 2015. <https://womanandhersphere.com/2015/01/22/kate-fryes-diary-the-death-of-queen-victoria-22-february-1901/> (accessed August 15, 2018).

⁴³⁶ Corina, 59.

⁴³⁷ Honeycombe, 191.

⁴³⁸ Honeycombe, 191.

Entertainment

At the turn of the century, London offered its residents a number of entertainment options including street carnivals, seasonal fairs, festivals and exhibitions. Exhibitions at Earl's Court recreated foreign cities for visitors. In 1904, Earl's Court held a "Venice by Night" exhibition. Ticket holders entering the exhibit had the opportunity to tour 'Venice' by gondola along a recreated Grand Canal in the pool of Earl's Court. Visitors could walk through the recreated city streets in the exhibition hall, watch glassblowing and even see replicas of the fountains. Earl's Court hosted other exhibitions including one on the Balkans in 1907 and an Imperial Austrian Exhibition in 1906. The Austrian exhibition sold inexpensive food including tea for 2d, bread and cheese for 2d, and a plate of cold meat for 6d. Visitors could visit a sausage factory, a confectionary manufacturer or explore a salt mine. These exhibitions were depicted in novels as an evening of entertainment for young women and their dates. In one scene in *Vivien*, Marian met her boyfriend at an exhibition. In another scene, Vivien and friends attended an exhibition thanks to tickets purchased by an uncle. These exhibitions provided unchaperoned entertainments where women shop assistants could interact and enjoy themselves away from the watchful eyes of employers.

Dances were a popular evening activity for many people. Churches, stores and even the union sponsored dances, but those were chaperoned to ensure everyone behaved appropriately. Even at a chaperoned dance women might get "mauled" in a secluded corner, as Kate found out one evening.⁴³⁹ Shop assistants, like other urban workers, saw the advertisements for the dance halls. One dance hall ran an ad at the bottom of *The Shop Assistant* regularly letting readers know it was open every night. There were dances for everyone: charity balls, shilling hops,

⁴³⁹ Elizabeth Crawford, *Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*. Chapter 1, Location 755.

sixpenny hops (dances), three penny hops and cake walks.⁴⁴⁰ Small bands played at the dances and groups could rent out the local town hall for such events. The price of admission varied but often included refreshments. Bondfield did not approve of the popular dancing styles found in the public halls. “There is very little pleasure and certainly no dignity about the dancing one usually sees in public halls,” she wrote in 1896. These public dance halls were places where women could be “whirling” and “bumping” around a room.⁴⁴¹

Danger in the City

All women dealt with the potential for harassment on the streets when they explored the city. “Entering public space placed women of all classes, whether showgirls or shopping ladies in a vulnerable position.”⁴⁴² The city streets and places of work and leisure represented potential for danger. Walkowitz discusses the different strategies women used to free themselves of “unwanted admirers.” She argues a woman “had to demonstrate that she was not available prey.”⁴⁴³ Frye wrote about her experiences with harassment on the city streets. On one afternoon in the city, Kate and her sister noticed they were being followed. “I felt he had turned and so he had - so I warned Agnes and we proceeded carefully... Of course we knew we should be alright, but we could not stop and look about us as we should have like.” The man followed them until they went into Evan & Co. Department store and Crawford theorizes “their follower clearly felt unable to violate the female territory of a department store.”⁴⁴⁴ To make matters worse, the man saw and then followed Kate and her sister again the next day. Kate wrote about how upset she

⁴⁴⁰ Lees and Lees, 231.

⁴⁴¹ *The Shop Assistant*, November, 1896.

⁴⁴² Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 46.

⁴⁴³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 51.

⁴⁴⁴ Elizabeth Crawford, *Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*, Chapter 1, Location 597.

was, “Well I have never been annoyed as badly as that before and now I am afraid the man will remember us. It is very disgusting to think of - especially as one must be somehow to blame for it.”⁴⁴⁵ Significantly Kate recognized she and her sister would be blamed for the man’s actions, regardless of what had occurred. In *Pansy Meares: Story of a London Shopgirl*, Pansy had similar experiences with the dangerous characters she avoided as she walked to the crowded carriage after work. Pansy “avoided more or less furtive attentions of divers males” because she “was well used to their tactics.”⁴⁴⁶ The *Shop Assistant* told of one woman who passed a group of laughing men and she “gave them a quick glance, as she is wont to do when she passes groups of men.”⁴⁴⁷ The woman had learned to be cautious in the city when walking past groups of men.⁴⁴⁸ All of these stores, real and fictitious, represent the danger women faced from harassment on the street.

Nighttime or any time after dark brought a new set of dangers for women. Research indicates numerous stories, warnings and examples of women discussing the harassment they encountered. Kate wrote about her concern when she had to walk to the train station late in the evening when her rehearsals ran late. She described the crowds as “horrible.”⁴⁴⁹ Macqueen-Pope recalled, “No woman went about the West End alone at night; indeed she very seldom went there without male escort.”⁴⁵⁰ He specifically remembered the late night hours as dangerous. “No woman could walk across Leicester Square after midnight without running the risk of being taken for what she was not and being accosted in consequence.”⁴⁵¹ Walkowitz argues the West

⁴⁴⁵ Elizabeth Crawford, *Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*, Chapter 1, Location 599.

⁴⁴⁶ Newte, 109.

⁴⁴⁷ *The Shop Assistant*, July 19, 1913.

⁴⁴⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, July 19, 1913.

⁴⁴⁹ Elizabeth Crawford, *Kate Parry Frye: The Long Life of an Edwardian Actress and Suffragette*, Chapter 2, Location 954.

⁴⁵⁰ Macqueen-Pope, 231.

⁴⁵¹ Macqueen-Pope, 236.

End of London was “imagined in the late Victorian period as a notorious site for street harassment of respectable women by so-called gentlemen.”⁴⁵²

Leisure Activities

The union attempted to recruit new members by using the popularity of sports, specifically the bicycle. The bicycle was “the middle class machine” before World War I and the first column from the new activities section of *The Shop Assistant* called ‘The Rambler,’ included an announcement to inform readers about cycling clubs.⁴⁵³ “The Cycling Club runs, and all items of interest to our cycling readers” led the section.⁴⁵⁴ The popularity of cycling did not go unnoticed by local branches of the union. Over the summer months of 1900, branches promoted events where assistants could bicycle in the country.⁴⁵⁵ By 1903, the editor of *The Shop Assistant* recommended union branches take advantage of “the immense opportunities offered by the bicycle to propagate the movement.”⁴⁵⁶ They urged every branch to have a cycle club attached to it because “in this way healthy exercise could be combined with missionary work on behalf of the Union.”⁴⁵⁷ Union officials at one branch tried to appeal to cyclists by preparing a spot for bicycling parking if an assistant wanted to ride a bike to the meeting.⁴⁵⁸

Shop assistants who read magazines or newspapers saw advertisements for bicycles and cycling attire. One ad promoted a payment plan for the bicycles the shop sold for £8 10s.⁴⁵⁹ In “The Dress for Bicycling,” author Dora de Blaquière wrote “There can be no doubt of the

⁴⁵² Walkowitz, “Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment and Street Walking in Late Victorian England,” 1.

⁴⁵³ Macqueen-Pope, 163.

⁴⁵⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, June, 1900.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Shop Assistant*, June 1900.

⁴⁵⁶ *The Shop Assistant*, February 7, 1903.

⁴⁵⁷ London union branch shop assistants had yet to form a cycling club as late as 1903, an indication of the struggle the union had with membership and meetings in the city. *The Shop Assistant*, February 7, 1903.

⁴⁵⁸ *The Shop Assistant*, October, 1900.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Shop Assistant*, July, 1900.

interest taken in the subject of the cycle as a new form of exercise for women and girls.” Cycling was “quite the rage” and she predicted women would find “great pleasure” in the exercise.⁴⁶⁰

Even if an assistant was not an avid fan of bicycling, she still would know of the sport through work. Department stores and shops sold all of the supplies for cycling from the bicycles to the clothing. Harrods opened a cycling department in the early 1890s following the start of the sport.⁴⁶¹ Many of Harrods’s employees lived near Battersea Park, which was a popular destination for cyclists. Constance Hastings wrote about her experience cycling in Battersea Park for *The Girl’s Own Paper* in 1896. While learning to ride proved to be more of a challenge than Hastings planned for, a large section of her article actually discussed what she wore to ride. Hastings and other authors advised women who took up cycling “not to dress in a style to excite undue notice” or make cycling “unattractive in the eyes of outsiders.”⁴⁶² By participating in cycling clubs or by cycling on her own, the shop assistant was joining in a leisure activity enjoyed by the middle class. Bicycling was, by its very nature, uncontrolled and women riders could explore the city. De Blaquièrè noted behind the popularity of the bicycle was its potential to bring “great emancipation to women.”⁴⁶³ Bicycling offered a level of freedom that conflicted with the control shopowners wanted to have over the young women who worked for them.

In 1900, Margaret Bondfield (writing under her pseudonym Grace Dare) reviewed the presentations at a conference on recreational activities for working class women. One speaker advised women to participate in bicycling, hockey, tennis and gardening but Bondfield believed these activities could only be available for shop assistants in high-end shops. She felt the women in the audience were stunned by these ideas because of their facial reactions. Her estimation

⁴⁶⁰ Dora de Blaquièrè, “The Dress for Bicycling,” *The Girl’s Own Paper*, October 1895, 176.

⁴⁶¹ Callery, 29.

⁴⁶² *The Girl’s Own Paper*, 1896, 732.

⁴⁶³ De Blaquièrè, 176.

seems excessive because *The Shop Assistant*, *The Draper Warehouseman* and *Girl's Own Paper* and other newspapers discussed athletic activities regularly. Sports clubs of all types were regular local union activities and store supported events. Tennis clubs, golf, field hockey and even lawn tennis were popular sports with middle-class young women. Stores promoted sports 'costumes' in *The Shop Assistant* and other magazines. Even *The Girl's Own Paper*, in discussing fashion for sports mentioned the variety of prices available to accommodate every budget. While some shop assistants may have had no time or familiarity with sports, it seems unlikely that they would have had looks of "blank amazement" at the concept of recreational sports.⁴⁶⁴

Another sport with "immense popularity" at the end of the century was roller-skating.⁴⁶⁵ Rinks opened in London as the sport's popularity increased culminating in the world's largest indoor rink, The Olympian Club Elite Skating Rink, opening in 1890 in the Kensington area of London. The rink had beech and maple panned floors and hosted costume balls, skating exhibitions and theatrical shows on roller skates.⁴⁶⁶ A 1910 drawing by Balliol Salmon entitled "An Afternoon at London's Olympia – Skating Sport Hall, the Largest Skating Rink in the World," depicts men, women and children roller-skating at the rink. The majority of figures are well-dressed couples holding hands while roller-skating but in the forefront of the drawing is a group of women and children skating together. Shop assistant, Cicely Cotton's sister enjoyed roller skating when she was not at her apprenticeship at the store. Management warned her that "nice Plummer's girls did not allow themselves to be seen in such a place as a public skating

⁴⁶⁴ *The Shop Assistant*, November, 1900.

⁴⁶⁵ Jerry Kuntz, *A Pair of Shootists: The Wild West Story of S.F. Cody and Maud Lee*. (Norman: The University of Oklahoma, 2010), 63.

⁴⁶⁶ Kuntz, 63.

rink.”⁴⁶⁷ Cicely said her sister wore a costume to disguise herself, but was fired when a newspaper published a photo of her roller skating and identified her by name.

Roller rinks, like the Olympia, also hosted theatrical and burlesque performances. Burlesque was popular in London in the 1890s and theatrical troupes commonly replaced “men’s roles with casts of women, scandalously underdressed in pants or tights.”⁴⁶⁸ A series of shows lampooning the Wild West were held at the Olympia roller rink after skating races and figure skating. Kuntz asserts the shows appealed to young men and women who attended the shows on dates. When the show opened on December 26, 1890, the audience was between seven and eight thousand people.⁴⁶⁹

The theaters of the West End were central to the transformation of the area as an entertainment center. Theater historian Michael Goron argues the theaters changed because theater managers realized the middle class “required an entertainment experience which accorded with the cultural and ethical values that affirmed and defined their ideological and social status.” Theater managers sought out and hired writers and artists who could write and perform in these types of shows. West End theaters had different ticket prices but most were priced out of the reach of working class people. Certain areas of the theaters had higher prices and attracted the wealthy, who attended in evening dress, while middle-class patrons usually sat in the pit or the gallery. Before World War I, ticket prices for West End theater pit tickets remained low at about 2 shillings 6d each.⁴⁷⁰ Seats in the upper circle were four or five shillings each and not likely something most shop assistants could afford. As a single lower middle-class woman, it was daring for Kate to attend the theater alone in 1899. Even though she was alone,

⁴⁶⁷ Corina, 81. Plummer Roddis was a department store.

⁴⁶⁸ Kuntz, 63.

⁴⁶⁹ Kuntz, 63.

⁴⁷⁰ Macqueen-Pope, 267.

she bought tickets in the pit, something she and her sister had done in the past. Pit seats required Kate to be in the rush of the crowd to obtain good seats. At one show “the Pit simply shook and ‘rocked’ with merriment”, at something Kate did not find amusing. She questioned whether the people laughing in the pit even understood the play and if the actors were intentionally playing to the crowds’ amusement instead of acting as the play was written. Kate viewed the other people in the pit as less educated than she was, but she still sat in that section because it had the seats she could afford.

The newest form of entertainment was the cinema, which first opened in London in 1896. Popularity increased when several electric theaters opened. The first was the Daily Bioscope which charged only 1p or 2p catering to even “the poorest pleasure-seekers.”⁴⁷¹ Early cinemas even gave away free cups of tea and biscuits to attract women to the audience.⁴⁷² Chris O’Rourke’s research indicates that an animated picture theater opened in 1914 a few blocks from Harrods. There were multiple cinemas on Oxford Street which was home to Selfridges, John Lewis, and Debenhams department stores. Of the three closest to the stores, one opened in 1908, one in 1909 and one in 1914.⁴⁷³ By 1914 there were approximately 500 cinemas in London.⁴⁷⁴ The sheer number of cinemas in the city meant that even though cinemas were closed on Sundays, it seems likely many did have an opportunity to see films on other days of the week.⁴⁷⁵ The number of cinemas spread throughout the city and surrounding areas meant shop assistants probably lived near or worked near one.

⁴⁷¹ Chris O’Rourke. “London’s Silent Cinemas”, Last Modified 2016 accessed Oct 10, 2017, <http://www.londonssilentcinemas.com/>.

⁴⁷² Macqueen-Pope, 276.

⁴⁷³ Chris O’Rourke. “London’s Silent Cinemas”, Last Modified 2016 accessed Oct 10, 2017, <http://www.londonssilentcinemas.com/>.

⁴⁷⁴ There were 133 cinemas in 1909, 349 cinemas in 1911, 522 cinemas by the end of 1914.

⁴⁷⁵ The 1909 Cinematographic Films Act prohibited film shows on Sundays.

Saturday night in the city had a carnival type of atmosphere. The thousands of shop assistants leaving work when the stores closed joined a crowd of people already enjoying themselves. It was into this crowd that Harrods department store staff and shop assistants flooded as the store closed on Friday and Saturday evening at 7:00pm. London remained active for hours after the Harrods workers finished their day. In the summer months, the sun did not set in London until after 8:00 p.m. so, even if shop assistants spent an hour after closing cleaning the store, they still left work as the nightlife was just beginning. The West End before World War I was filled with crowds of people leaving the theaters, music halls or the circus. H.G. Wells evoked this atmosphere:

These twilight parades of young people, youngsters chiefly of the lower middle-class, are one of the odd social development of the great suburban growths-unkindly critics, blind to the inner meanings of things, call them, I believe, Monkeys' Parades-the shop apprentices, the young work girls, the boy clerks and so forth, stirred by mysterious intimations, spend their first-earned money upon collars and ties, chiffon hats, smart lace collars, walking-sticks, sunshades or cigarettes, and come valiantly into the vague transfiguring mingling of gaslight and evening, to walk up and down, to eye meaningly, even to accost and make friends. It is a queer instinctive revolt from the narrow limited friendless homes in which so many find themselves, a going out towards something, romance if you will, beauty, that has suddenly become a need-a need that hitherto has lain dormant and unsuspected. They promenade.⁴⁷⁶

Young people in particular found the streets a place of social interaction. For shop assistants living in dormitories, the street might be the only place they could interact with each other due to the rules of the living-in system.

Shop assistants lived all over the city of London at the turn of the century whether they lived in store dormitories or lived at home. Shop assistants had a unique perspective on many of the leisure and entertainment activities in the city. They participated in city as workers and as consumers. They sold the equipment for activities and souvenirs for events, but also participated in those activities and events with other city residents. A shop assistant could travel throughout

⁴⁷⁶ H.G. Wells. *The New Machiavelli*. (New York: Duffield & Company, 1910), 62.

the city aboveground by omnibus or below ground on the underground. She could get tickets to the theater or visit one of the exhibitions. She might visit a museum or go see a film. Women shop assistants faced harassment on the street, employers who controlled their leisure hours and a critical public as they followed their curiosity to engage in the activities available to them.

CONCLUSION

The years 1890 to 1914 represented a crucial period for shop work due to the development and expansion of department stores. London's West End, where many of these stores were located, was a place of employment for thousands of women shop assistants. Shop work was depicted as respectable work, "light, clean, easy and pleasant."⁴⁷⁷ Many women shop assistants discovered a contrasting reality of tedious long hours and low pay. Their jobs required interacting with the public while standing surrounded by merchandise for sale. Shop assistants became an example of the worldly working woman and the punch-line of jokes with sexual innuendoes over their sexual availability. Shop assistants were caught between an industry modernizing and struggling to figure out how to structure a new type of female labor force. Shop owners used the living-in system to control the lives of their assistants. The debates over the living-in system before World War I were not confined to shop assistants on one side opposing the living-in system and shopowners on the other side in favor of the living-in system, but were composed of diverse opinions from people within these groups. Evidence indicates despite the Shop Assistants' Union and male shop assistants in favor of ending the living-in system, women shop assistants wanted to continue living-in. They enjoyed the independence they gained while living away from their parents and the security the living-in system offered.

Shopkeepers believed shop assistants needed strict discipline and control.⁴⁷⁸ They tried to discourage shop assistants from exploring the city by offering amenities and supervised social

⁴⁷⁷ Bird, 63

⁴⁷⁸ Whitaker, 8.

and sports activities. Educational classes offered shop assistants a change to improve their business skills, cultural knowledge or even their elocution. Stores, community groups, schools and the union offered classes and social events to encourage shop assistants to enjoy their leisure time in chaperoned activities. These controlled entertainments gave assistants an alternative to the pubs, music halls, dance halls and street festivals of the city. Women shop assistants were eager to explore the city despite the harassment they faced from men on the street and the opposition of shopowners, reformers and the union.

Analysis of data collected from a previously unused set of employee records from Harrods department store provided a profile of women shop assistants from a department store prior World War I. World War I changed the nature of shop work and perceptions of women shop assistants. When hostilities first began sales at grocery stores increased as people stocked up on food, but sales at department stores declined.⁴⁷⁹ This decline led to layoffs among shop assistants. Stores lost male employees to enlistment, especially with recruitment drives and incentives offered to men who joined the services. In 1914, Selfridges had 3,500 staff; 950 of those were men. More than half joined the services.⁴⁸⁰ Harrods promised a £2 bonus to every staff member who enlisted. The store also provided half salaries to widowed dependent mothers and wives. By 1916, 2,000 men from Harrods were in the services. Women took over jobs at Harrods and other stores as men went off to war.⁴⁸¹ These jobs, even primarily male dominated positions such as grocers or dispatchers, now were done by women. By 1915, it was estimated

⁴⁷⁹ Pamela Horn, *Behind the Counter: Shop Lives from Market Stall to Supermarket*. (Gloucestershire: Amberly Publishing, 2015), 227-228.

⁴⁸⁰ Honeycombe, 44.

⁴⁸¹ Callery, 142.

that nationally, 260,000 male shop assistants had enlisted in the services dramatically changing the nature of shop work.⁴⁸²

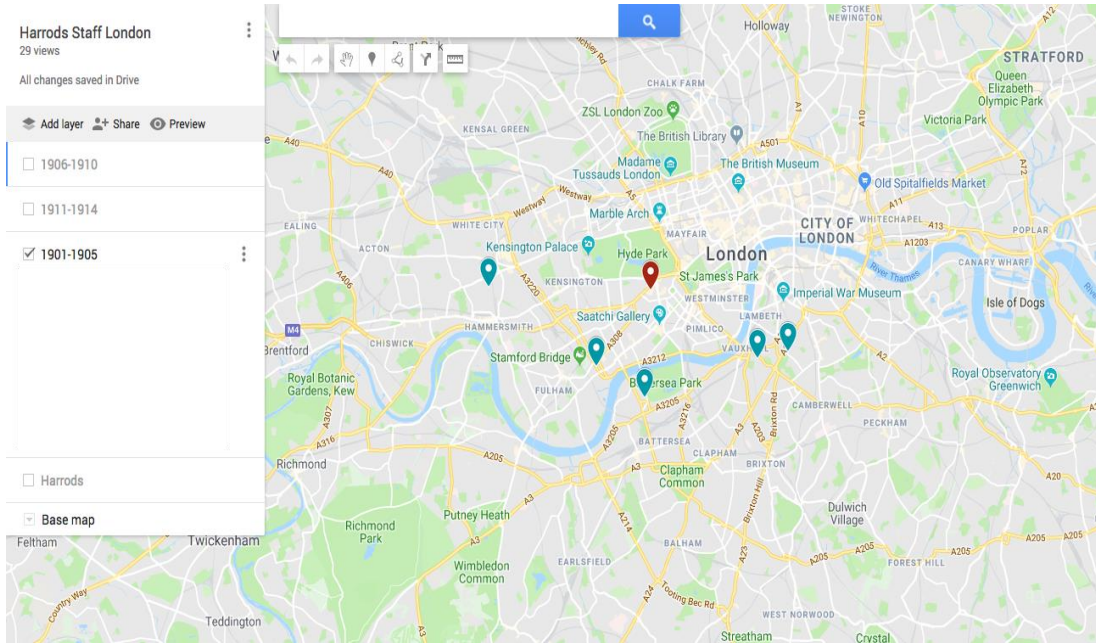
Understanding London's women shop assistants allows for a better understanding of opportunities and issues facing women workers before World War I. Shop assistants navigated a city where they faced harassment on the streets and judgments about their sexual availability. They actively sought to make a living as working women, while exploring the city as consumers.

⁴⁸² "The Coming of Conscription," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. 77, January – June 1915, (London: Spottiswood & Co. Ltd., 1915), 1301.

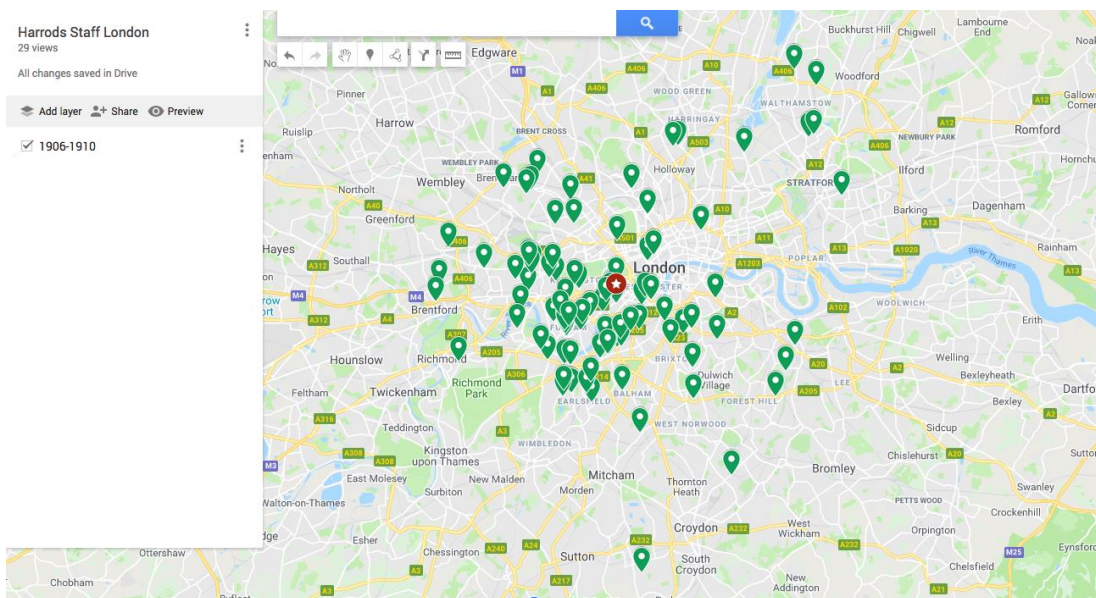
APPENDIX A

The Harrods employee files are located in a recently discovered card catalog made up of 47 drawers with approximately 54,000 employee records. This card catalog was in use between 1890 and 1930. These records represent a sample of the department store work force. These records were systematically sampled by choosing 22 equally spaced samples from each drawer for a total of 1046 samples. Based on the total number of records, a total of 1046 samples represent a 95% confidence level with a +/- 3% error. Although these records cannot be published, a database of the records was created for this project for research purposes.

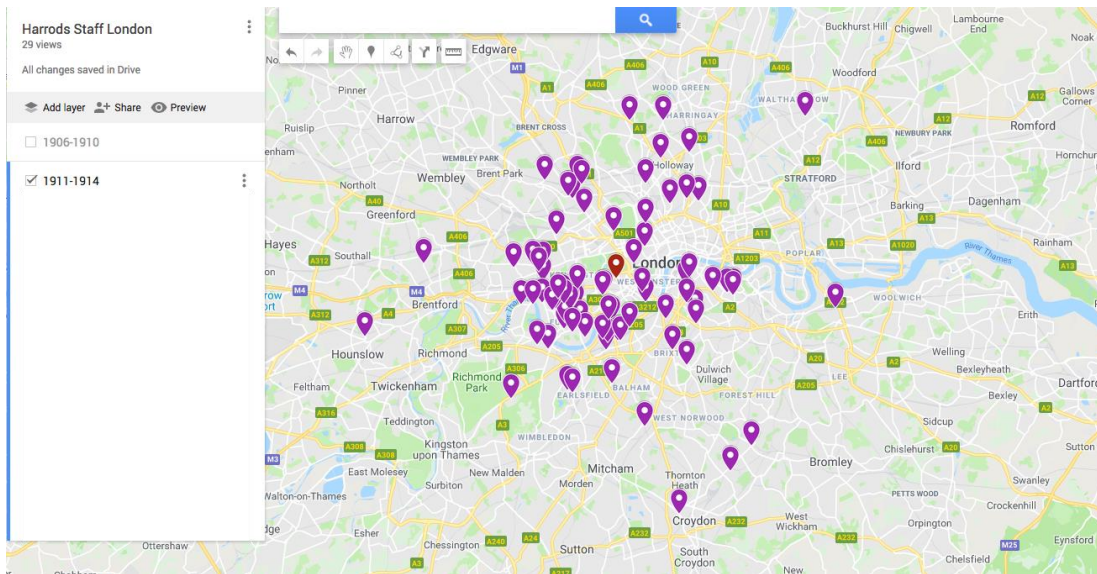
APPENDIX B



Map A



Map B



Map C.

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BIOGRAPHY

Kellie K. Bradshaw graduated from North Brunswick Township High School, North Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1988. She received her Bachelor of Arts from The George Washington University in 1992. She received her Master of Arts in History from The University of Charleston in 2001. She is employed as an associate professor of history at Germanna Community College.