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Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, Walter Benjamin:

Turn-of-the-Century Writing and the Benjaminian Archiving of the Modern

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Abstract

Drawing on the feverish archival impulse that pervades Walter Benjamin's work and attests to his effort to rescue a specific experience of modernity from oblivion, I propose a comparative reading of Henry James's and Dorothy M. Richardson's work. *The Portrait of the Lady* (1881), the 1908 Preface to the novel, "The Real Thing" (1892), and the travelogue that records James's 1905 return to the U.S., *The American Scene* (1907), are comparatively discussed with selections from Richardson's thirteen volumes of her long novel *Pilgrimage* (1915-1935), her 1924 essay "About Punctuation," and the 1938 Foreword to *Pilgrimage*. I argue that through the literary act James and Richardson construct a metaphorical archive-making that is thematically and methodologically comparable to the Benjaminian paradigm. James's and Richardson's literary archives offer insight into the late nineteenth-century city as the *par excellence* locus of western modernity, the gradual integration of professional women in the arena of the labor market, and modernism's increasing focus on the common and the everyday, as well as on the material, the object, and the commodity. My aim is to show how the texts of James and Richardson formulate a rather intriguing turn-of-the-century genealogy of the modern subject as regards his/her experience of the mundane and the everyday. Urban spaces, class and labor power, and the object/thing or its manifestation as commodity persistently return in the texts as the thematic expressions of this modern quotidian, while both authors' handling of their textual matter is performed in ways that are proleptic of Benjamin's cultural critique on modernity.

Benjamin's archival methodology, visible in a variety of his texts, offers a critical paradigm that provides fertile ground for a comparative reading with James and Richardson. Benjamin's short pieces that comprise *One-Way Street* (1928), his selection of early life reminiscences as snapshots of experiences in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (1938), and the massive compendium of citations in *The Arcades Project* (1982) illustrate his persistent archival logic. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) presents a critical context in which the baroque is posited as an artistic paradigm to discuss the "immersion in the most minute details of subject matter" (34) and the effect of extinguishing "the false appearance of totality" (176).

Written in the late 1930s, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (1969) offers the reading of Baudelaire as the par excellence modern poet violently thrust in the realities of urban commodity capitalism. The 1931 essay “Unpacking my Library” offers insight into the world of the collector and his objects, “The Storyteller” (1936) discusses the shortcomings of conveying experience in the modern world, and “The Author as producer” (1934) provides a contextual framework for the productive politics of authorship.

Three different but affiliated methodological tropes are discussed: The first is Benjamin’s spatio-temporal dialectics that *telescope the past through the present*, in other words, his tendency to read the historically sedimented layers in phenomena and things. The second method is his reverence for the minute, which I will argue *microscopes the whole through the fragment* by way of attending to the minor. Both methods are closely connected to Benjamin’s formulation of the dialectical image that showcases his *dialectics at a standstill*; the crucial moment when past knowledge and present perception are reconfigured, or the moment when the fragment is read to stand for the whole. The third methodological trope discussed in both James and Richardson is the fascination with the commodity that embeds texts within the capitalist context and bespeaks the commodification of human relations. In this context, I propose a reading of James’s and Richardson’s modernist writing that reveals the archival practice of the authors, a literary praxis that depicts the experience of the modern subject, which, in this constellation of texts, revolves around the notions of urban space, labor power/class status, and the commodity as capital, intertwining historical, cultural and materialist interests.

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For Ioanna Kosti
who always thought of knowledge as labor power and capital

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List of Abbreviations

- TAP* Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
- SW* Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*
- BC* Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*
- OGTD* Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*
- ECB* Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*
- TPL* Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*
- TAS* Henry James, *The American Scene*
- LC* Henry James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other Europeans Writers, The Prefaces*
- CS* Henry James, *Complete Stories 1874-1884*
- ANCP* Henry James, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*

Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, Walter Benjamin:

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Introduction

The unifying thread behind this project originally springs from a persistent interest in the work of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) and my recurring contention that his *oeuvre*—often characterized as unfinished and fragmentary—might serve as a steering wheel through Henry James's (1843-1916) and Dorothy Richardson's (1873-1957) literary waters. I propose that the attempted comparative reading of Benjamin's theoretical work on modernity and James's and Richardson's literary and critical texts offers a fruitful insight into the ways in which turn-of-the-century writing registers the changing cultural landscape and the vicissitudes of modernity. Drawing on the feverish archival impulse that pervades Benjamin's work, and his effort to rescue a specific experience of modernity from oblivion, I focus on three recurrent seminal themes in James's and Richardson's works: the reception of urban space, the complexities of class status and labor power, and the notion of the commodity as a focal point that invariably alludes to the capitalist condition. I argue that James and Richardson perform a metaphorical archive-making through the literary act that is thematically and methodologically comparable to the Benjaminian paradigm. James's and Richardson's literary archives offer insight into the late nineteenth-century city as the *par excellence* locus of western modernity, the gradual integration of professional women in the arena of the labor market, and modernism's increasing focus on the common and the everyday, as well as on the material, the object, and the commodity.

More specifically, the texts I have chosen to analyze in this dissertation reveal the relationship between the politics of authorship and the representation of the modern subject, both of which are fundamental to the representation of the modern condition as constituted since the late nineteenth century. I suggest that, spanning a period of time from the turn of the century well into the mid-twentieth

century, James, Richardson, and Benjamin, all engage in acts of writing that disclose and also expand the concept and practice of the archive, which is literally and figuratively materialized in their works. By exploring their “elective affinities”¹ I will discuss the texts in conjunction with the central trope of the archive: James and Richardson form a peculiar lineage at the turn of the century in their representation of the modern subject as a complex social and political being, exemplified both by their fictional characters as well as by their roles as authors. To examine James’s politics of authorship, I discuss one of his major novels, *The Portrait of the Lady* (1881), his 1908 Preface to the novel, his short story “The Real Thing” (1892), and the travelogue that records his 1905 return to the U.S, *The American Scene* (1907). Richardson’s thirteen volumes of her long novel *Pilgrimage* (1915-1935), her 1924 essay “On Punctuation,” and the 1938 Foreword to *Pilgrimage* are also examined as sites where the politics of authorship emerges on the twofold manifestation of cultural apparatus² and profession. Benjamin, in a constant “struggle against dispersion,” which is noted in his analysis of the dialectical figure of the collector, turns the spontaneity of the practice of collecting into the archival method that affirms the remembrance of the past and wards off forgetting (*TAP* 211).

Yet, to speak of “archiving the modern” means one has to define both the practice of archiving alongside the nature of the archive and the essence of the modern. The conceptualization of the archive in Benjamin seems to derive from his initial admittance of a certain loss and absence. As Peter Fritzsche notes, “for

¹ Recent scholarship on Benjamin’s 1924-5 “Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*” reads the essay with relation to the notion of “immanent criticism,” the unraveling of the work’s internal tendency for self-reflection. Goethe draws on chemistry and uses the law that describes elements that break themselves off previous unions to form new ones, according to their innate affinities (*Kindred by Choice* was the alternative translation of the title). Criticism thus assumes the task of revealing the “truth content of a work of art,” which is inextricably bound to its “material content” (“Elective Affinities” 297). Contrary to critical commentary that stresses the authority of interpretation and thus of the critic, immanent criticism—the contention that the work contains its own inner criterion (“Elective Affinities” 321)—shatters the semblance of unity and the false harmony of the work (“Elective Affinities” 340).

² I here draw on Brecht’s notion of the cultural apparatus which enfolds all fields of cultural production, be it the opera, theatre, film, radio, and the publishing of books: by definition artists do not control or manage the cultural apparatus in capitalism, thus they feel compelled to try to subvert or manipulate it, should they wish to serve revolutionary purposes. To this I will return in the chapter that discusses James’s views on narration and Benjamin’s “The Author as Producer,” which returns to Brecht.

archives to collect the past, the past has to come to mind as something imperilled and distinctive” (“The Archive” 18). In that sense, the archive has striking semiotic affinities with the photograph which stands as a representation of the thing that is not there, a representation of an absence or in the words of Eduardo Cadava, as “the image [that] already announces our absence” (*Words of Light* 8). Benjamin’s sixty fragments that comprise *One-Way Street*, his selection of early life reminiscences as snapshots of Berlin experiences in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, the massive compendium of citations in *The Arcades Project*, and several of his essays, such as “Unpacking my Library,” “The Storyteller,” and “The Author as Producer,” all elaborately illustrate his persistent archival logic at work in a period that roughly spans from the 1920s to 1940, when Benjamin flees the Occupation.

To contextualize Benjamin’s archival politics, I draw on several critical and philosophical texts that address the recent archival turn in cultural studies both with regards to institutional archives created by literary and/or historical figures, such as authors, and the more metaphorical concept of archive-making through literature—which is of pertinence here. I thus wish to propose a reading of James’s and Richardson’s modernist writing that reveals the archival practice of the authors as a literary praxis that depicts the experience of the modern subject, which, in this constellation of texts, revolves around the notions of urban space, labor power/class status, and the commodity as capital, intertwining historical, cultural and materialist interests. In “Archive Fever” (1995) Jacques Derrida, while tracing the meaning of the archive back to the Greek word *archē*, which refers both to origin and authority, argues that “to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive” equals to “an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (57). Maintaining one memory, one shred, one trace of it rather than another, the archive disrupts the façade of historicity, ambivalently protecting and burying history at the same time, a fact that Benjamin was painfully aware of, depositing “manuscripts, notebooks, and printed papers in the custody of friends and acquaintances in various countries,” performing a practice that Erdmut Wizisla has called “strategic calculation” (*WB’s*

Archive 1).³ Derrida's deconstruction of origin and authority is pertinent here because it stresses the fact that creating an archive, much like writing a text, is always embedded in a site of power that is historically and socially laden. He maintains that every archive is marked by its incongruities and disparities being "at once *institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional" (12, emphases in the original). Derrida's examination of the dialectical relation between instituting and conserving, revolutionizing while treading the trodden paths, which characterizes the archive, is valuable for this project not only because it echoes Benjamin's dialectics, but also because it will be shown to characterize James's and Richardson's literary practice.

Discussing Benjamin's politics of archivization, Fritzsche's "The Archive" (2005) embraces Benjamin's legacy of "attentiveness" (15) to the historical further arguing that the thinker wrote "in reference to a 'crisis of memory'" (16). Fritzsche examines archives through the lens of this crisis of memory as "not comprehensive collections of things, the effects left behind by the dead," nor as "arbitrary accumulations of remnants and leftovers" (16). He reads the archive as "the production of the [archivists'/artists'] heirs" who are obliged to "acknowledge the ongoing disintegration of the past" (Fritzsche 16). Thus, the archive is illuminated as a mnemonic strategy, a decent compromise combatting the irresolvable tension between the status of oblivion and the praxis of registering/recording. Saidiya V. Hartman also shares this concern in her *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997). Opening her book with a literary representation of slave torture in the first chapter of Frederick Douglass's 1895 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Hartman draws on Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to argue that "to reconstruct the history of the dominated is not discontinuous with dominant accounts or official history" but rather is "a struggle within and against the

³ Interestingly, Dragan Kujundzic in "Archigraphia: On the Future of Testimony and the Archive to Come" (2002) returns to Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Jacques Derrida to discuss archivization as perennially engaged in dialogue with the notion of survival and suggests that Freud's handling of the archive is comparable to Benjamin's project because "[i]t thinks the possibility of infinite multiplication and technical reproducibility of repression and destruction at work in the modern archive" (178).

constraints and silences imposed by the nature of the archive—the system that governs the appearance of statements and generates social meaning” (11). Fritzsches’s antinomy between remembering and forgetting and Hartman’s archival reading of a literary work are both relevant to my project in that they exemplify both the active role of the reader of the archive and the reading of literature as archive.⁴

Detecting the archival element in Benjamin’s work, Scott McCracken postulates that the Benjaminian *oeuvre*, especially *The Arcades Project*, offers a “complex and potentially engaging view of everyday life, one that seeks [...] to preserve and transform [the everyday]” (“Completion” 146); according to McCracken, Benjamin attempted to “develop a historical methodology that would see the everyday for what it is, but to suggest that what is, and indeed what has been, might, at the same time, contain the possibility of transfiguration” (“Completion” 146-7). Such reference to transformation and transfiguration is also evident in Derrida who suggests that “the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future” (17). Acknowledging this interaction, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith focus on archives of cultural memory rather than traditional archives of history, pinpointing that “the archives of cultural memory consist not only of the stories, images, or documents of the past but also of the ‘acts of transfer’ without which we would have no access to them” (9). The observation that cultural memory consists of both “what happened” and how it is handed down to the following generations (Hirsch and Smith 9) returns to Derrida’s argument that archivization both produces and records the event (“Archive Fever” 17); this dialectical formulation at once reveals the potential of the archival practice and creates a space for a parallel reading of the archive with literature.

In this vein, the texts discussed in this project problematize the relationship of literature with the archive; they reveal the immanent role of the archive both as

⁴ In the words of Antoinette Burton, “[f]rom the Rosetta stone to medieval tapestry to Victorian house museums to African body tattoos” scholars have read evidence “of any number of different archival incarnations for centuries” (3).

origin and power as well as trope and methodology in the literary text. Examining the archival impulse in literary texts can contribute to the theoretical analysis of the concept of the archive itself. In other words, the comparative analysis I propose constitutes a reading one can pursue in order to further explore the function of this metaphorical archive as a literary trope in the works of turn-of-the-century literary artists and critics.

Accordingly, I argue that Benjamin's archival methodology, visible in a variety of his texts, offers a critical paradigm that provides fertile ground for a comparative reading with James and Richardson. By drawing on his materialist cultural practice, I explore the multifaceted and convoluted processes through which James's literary texts and essays and Richardson's fiction and theoretical writing form a literary and textual archive of urban space, labor, and the commodity as well as illuminate the role of the archive and the role of the author in the constitution of the modern subject. Thus, I read James and Richardson with a view to articulating their works' archival impulse in the manner that Benjamin sets forth for the task of materialist historiography. The following chapters trace the archival thread in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The American Scene*, "The Real Thing," and his *Preface to The Portrait*; Richardson's thirteen novels that comprise *Pilgrimage*, as well as her Foreword to *Pilgrimage* and her essay "About Punctuation" are also discussed in the same vein. The texts' literary remaking of the archive, their fictional and factual records of ephemerality, defy the authoritarian fixity of the notion of the archive, granting legitimacy to literature's archival impulse. Hal Foster's "An Archival Impulse" (2004) is relevant here because it discusses archival art, especially the work of Tacita Dean, Sam Durant, and Thomas Hirschhorn, which intervenes and builds on the archive in a "gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory" (4). Foster's work explores visual narratives as efforts "to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present" (4) and, most importantly, also opens the notion of the archive to the plane of representation.

All texts reveal dimensions of the modern condition with emphasis on specific aspects of the human experience, namely, the individual's perception of urban spaces, the representation of class status and labor power, and the various

registers of the material and the object, that is represented either as commodity as such, or as an overt manifestation of capital. These themes are associated with the capitalist condition which is implicated in the trajectory of the modern subject. Commodity fetishism, the commodification of characters, the role of the author as producer, and imperial/ colonial politics are additional derivative thematic concerns that manifest themselves in the texts. Sheer materiality often seems to determine the condition of the subject to an unforeseen extent, like in the case of the labor that produces culture. In the words of Terry Eagleton,

the origin of culture is labour—a fact which culture itself tends shyly to suppress. It is as though culture is ashamed of its own humble parentage, and cannot bring itself to mention it. Culture is the child of leisure, and leisure is the offspring of labour. The labour of others, needless to say. (*The English Novel* 150)

My reading resists the “separation of ‘culture’ from material social life” as Raymond Williams suggests in *Marxism and Literature*. My aim is to show how the texts of James and Richardson formulate a rather intriguing turn-of-the-century genealogy of the modern subject as regards his/her experience of the mundane and the quotidian. Urban spaces, class and labor power, and the object/thing or its manifestation as commodity persistently return in the texts as the thematic expressions of this modern quotidian. I argue that both authors’ handling of their textual matter is performed in ways that are proleptic of Benjamin’s cultural critique on modernity.

Benjamin’s interest in Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Nikolai Leskov (1831-1895), and Marcel Proust (1871-1922), among other literary figures, reveals his fascination with literature’s archival impulses. His specific focus on these authors showcases Benjamin’s politics of archiving of the aspects of modernity that each of these authors represents: Goethe is important for his “elective affinities,” as Benjamin’s homonymous essay (1924-5) suggests by engaging criticism as the task which reveals the “truth content of a work of art,” while being intimately linked to its

“material content” (297); with Baudelaire, it is the city of Paris that reveals the relationship of the ephemeral to the eternal, which Benjamin reads as a dialectics of the modern that is both ephemeral and eternal; the essay on Leskov, the paradigmatic storyteller, is an exploration of the rise of the novel and the decline of storytelling; “The Image of Proust” (1929) again follows a dialectical path between Proust’s involuntary recollection and the role of forgetting, a dialectics which finds expression in Proust’s “weaving of [...] memory, the Penelope work of recollection” (238). In this context, I attempt, in the course of the following chapters, to compare James’s and Richardson’s texts, in spite of their varying form and content, highlighting their shared problematics of salvaging the experience of the modern subject.

Socially speaking, these literary texts mirror somewhat diverse social spectrums. James’s *The Portrait* and “The Real Thing” stage their civilized Europeans, earnest Americans, corrupt aesthetes, insatiable art collectors, passionate but down-to-earth artists, fallen aristocrats, and hired models in a universe where well-groomed lawns and museum tours give way to busy artist’s studios and somber death beds. Richardson’s sequence of *Pilgrimage* follows her heroine’s consciousness from affluence to impoverishment, wage labor, and a new-found labor politics. In Wendy Gan’s reading, *Pilgrimage*, “stretching over 13 volumes and still incomplete, its end only brought about by the death of Dorothy Richardson” stands as “a remarkable historical and aesthetic record of the changes in a middle-class English woman’s life at the turn of the twentieth century” (60). Boarding schools, governess’s posts, and dental practices invariably lead Miriam to the path of authorship, while serene German towns and the occasional Sussex escapade recede in the background of the foregrounded money-making London.

With the themes of urban space, class/labor, and the material/commodity in mind, I will closely examine the archival politics of James and Richardson that build up their diverse, but shared representations of the modern condition. Texts are not selected on their canonical basis of theoretical excellence and/or literary merit; I rather like to think of them as apparitions that flash to illuminate the obscure realities and registered materialities of the texts themselves. To put it differently, I

try to pry the texts open to their own locked secrets, according to the model of “immanent criticism” that Benjamin reads in “Goethe’s Elective Affinities,” which is discussed in his dissertation on early German Romanticism: Immanent criticism facilitates the unravelling or unfolding of the tendency towards reflection that inherently resides in the literary work. Benjamin serves this project in offering a critical paradigm; as Catherine Russell notes, his “own critical writing on Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Charles Baudelaire, and many other writers is consistently reflexive, engaged with the texts in such a way that their work is ‘illuminated’ as a meeting of reader and author” (*Archiveology* 3). James’s and Richardson’s writing are read in the light of Benjamin’s critical paradigm wherein fiction serves as an archive that has managed to contain shreds and fragments of the cultural memory of the modern subject.

I. A Community of Interests and Methodologies

Yet, the archive is also a socially and historically constructed space and, as Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook note, “archives are then not pristine storehouses of historical documentation that has piled up, but a reflection of and often justification for the society that creates them” (12). This social dimension of the archive is manifested in the array of texts examined in this thesis as texts that both represent and critique the ways by which the experience of the modern is archived, while problematizing the connections between urban space, class/labor, and commodity. The comparative framework I build in order to contrapuntally⁵ discuss the literary texts hopefully generates a constellation of archiving the modern as analyzed in Benjamin’s and represented in James’s and Richardson’s texts. Based on the above, I will pursue a reading of the manifestations of the three authors’ archival logic through their methodologies and shared themes of urban space, class and labor power, and the material or the commodity as capital.

⁵ Contrapuntal analysis, as developed by Edward W. Said, simultaneously considers the text, the historical context, and a reading “between the lines” that unconceals that, which is not said. Interpreting contrapuntally is “reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England” (*Culture and Imperialism* 78). In exploring imperialism, contrapuntal reading reveals the immanent resistance to it.

Theme and method delineate a paradigmatic axis that bespeaks alternative tropes of thinking about what literature tells us. The urban spaces featured in the different texts will be shown to function in ways that transcend traditional notions of fictional settings. Class status that is possessed, found, or lost and the transactions that revolve around labor power leave an indelible mark to be read on fictional characters and plot alike. Last but not least, the recurrence of the commodity as such and also as the minimal sign of capital will be analyzed for its significance in the Benjaminian thought and for its workings in the works of James and Richardson. Benjamin's methodological tools, which are discussed as constructing the salient practice that comprises the notion of this metaphorical archive, are also found in James's and Richardson's works. Three different but affiliated methodological tropes are discussed: The first is Benjamin's spatio-temporal dialectics that *telescope the past through the present*, in other words his tendency to read the historically sedimented layers in phenomena and things. The second method is his reverence for the minute, which I will argue *microscopes the whole through the fragment* through the attentiveness to the minor. Both methods are closely connected to Benjamin's formulation of the dialectical image that showcases his *dialectics at a standstill*; the crucial moment when past knowledge and present perception are reconfigured, or the moment when the fragment is read to stand for the whole. The third methodological trope borrowed from Benjamin and discussed in both James and Richardson is the fascination with the commodity that embeds texts within the capitalist context and bespeaks the commodification of human relations.

I will draw and expound on these tropes to discuss James's and Richardson's complex representations of the modern subject in the city. The thread that connects Richardson's and James's distinct literary fabrics with that of Benjamin is disclosed in their shared archival aesthetics. I read their consistent attention to the minute and the mundane in human experience as the *obsession with the fold* that, as Naomi Schor notes, accomplishes a "valorization of the minute, the partial, and the marginal" (3) and magnifies the specific to speak of the general. Likewise, the convergence of time and space in the dialectical image as the decisive moment of

reconfiguring tensions, contradictions, past knowledge, and present perception results in a palimpsestic reading of the now. Literary form is also part of this archival aesthetics: the authors' idiosyncratic narrative techniques, characterized by an elliptical narration of omission (James), innovative punctuation and experiments with form (Richardson), and "dialectical montage" and the "merely show" technique of quotations (Benjamin) exemplify the author's preoccupation with innovation and style.

James, an American-born canonical author who would later become a British subject, is a prominent figure in nineteenth-century realism, renowned for portraying the encounter of Americans with Europe—the well-known "international theme"—and for unprecedentedly exploring consciousness and perception.⁶ These two thematic strands in James's work are both relevant to this project: the mobility of American expatriates towards Europe and his own inverse mobility, as recorded in *The American Scene*, map geographical trajectories and trajectories of knowledge. In the words of Terry Eagleton,

For James, the real affinity between the earnest Americans and the elegant Europeans lies in the fact that it takes the disciplined work of the former to produce the culture consumed by the latter. (*The English Novel* 150)

Eagleton traces "hidden horrors" and "unspeakable secrets" in James's fiction of voids and absences. I suggest that James's persistent engagement with the literary depiction of the human consciousness paves the way for Richardson's immersion in the workings of the female consciousness as manifested in the novel sequence of *Pilgrimage*. James is notorious for his employment of omissions; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic," which focuses on "The Beast in the Jungle," considers how

⁶ Throughout his career, James was fascinated by the complex relationships between stereotyped naive American characters falling for the ostentatious cosmopolitanism of Europeans. James's first, or "international", phase includes works such as *Transatlantic Sketches* (travel pieces, 1875), *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). James's second period involved new subjects, such as social reform in *The Bostonians* (1886) and politics in *The Princess Casamassima* (1885). His third, or "major" phase shows a return to more cross-continental subjects in works such as *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904).

James uses “preterition,” a rhetorical trope by which certain elements are announced as elements to be omitted, thereby, foregrounded and punctuated. The pagoda of *The Golden Bowl*, existing only in the space of metaphor, is such an “effaced object” that leaves “a residue of shards and fragments” in its wake, informing our reading despite its invisibility (Otten xvi). Attentive to this reading of James’s hidden subtexts, as proposed by Eagleton and Kosofsky Sedgwick, I will discuss his authorial politics of omission and inclusion in another light, that of his texts engaging in an act of rescuing the lived experience of the subject: the hidden labor behind the tea ritual is juxtaposed with Isabel Archer’s inheritance to come; similarly the dialectical image that awakens her to the ruins of her life near the end of *The Portrait of a Lady* is powerful precisely because we have been spared the gruesome details of her unhappy married life.

Richardson, author, journalist, and a seminal figure in modernist prose fiction, records female experience in her thirteen-novel-sequence that makes up *Pilgrimage*, also closely inspecting her heroine’s consciousness. Richardson spends twenty years on the thirteen books—which she tellingly terms “chapters”—of her long novel published as a sequel of novels, with the first one published in 1915 and the last in 1935. *Pilgrimage* records the development of a single character, Miriam Henderson, her emotional and intellectual trajectory, what Virginia Woolf, in her 1923 review of *Revolving Lights*, termed “the psychological sentence of the feminine gender” (*Women and Writing* 191)⁷. Stylistically speaking, sentences are stretched to their syntactical limits often transgressing the rules of punctuation—especially in *The Tunnel* and *Interim*—thus conveying “a form of non-verbal content” (Lindskog, “Grammar” 6): The three-dot ellipses “do not necessarily force the reader to pause and reflect;” the four-dot ellipses suggest “something that is not expressed verbally,” and the “sporadic six-dot ellipses” points to “an inner experience in Miriam, below the surface of the text” (Lindskog, “Grammar” 17-9). Blank spaces in the text—what Jean Radford terms “printed silences” (*Dorothy Richardson* 69)—are also there to indicate “Miriam’s epiphanic, ineffable

⁷ Woolf’s piece can also be found as “Romance and the Heart,” Review of Romer Wilson’s *The Grand Tour* and Dorothy Richardson’s *Revolving Lights*, p. 12. *The Nation and the Athenaeum*, May 19, 1923.

experience” (Lindskog, “Grammar” 23). May Sinclair designates Richardson’s experimental prose as “stream of consciousness,” when she reviews “The Novels of Dorothy Richardson” for the April 1918 issue of *The Egoist*, comparing them with James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Sinclair 58 qtd. in Scott 444). The term may interestingly have been borrowed from William James; nevertheless, Richardson rejects it, registering her clear preference for the term *interior monologue* instead.

Although biographical criticism is not an angle explored in this project, the fiction analyzed, more than often, features glimpses of an auto-biographical flare. *Pilgrimage* is widely characterized as “autobiographical fiction” (Lindskog, “Poetics” 27), featuring a “quasi-autobiographical protagonist” (Parsons, *Theorists* 8), while Richardson herself believed that “all novels were expressive of the author, were in an important way, autobiographical” (Thompson, “Richardson’s Foreword” 345). James’s *The American Scene* reconstructs the city of his childhood much as it paints the picture of New York at the time of his visit. Likewise, the impasse that the artist/illustrator of “The Real Thing” finds himself at strongly reminds us of the precarious balance between artistic expression and the market that James painstakingly struggled to keep. Richardson is emphatically concerned with the balance between women, labor, and art much like James who, exploring the liaisons of art and the market, oscillates between criticizing and endorsing the literary money-making scene. Both Richardson and James share a middle-class background, a fact that accounts both for their cultural capital and artistic aspirations. According to Deborah Parsons, Richardson was born into the “leisured comfort of an aspiring middle-class family,” was well educated, yet following her father’s poor investments, at seventeen she began to earn her own living by as a student teacher in a school in Hanover, Germany (*Theorists* 8). Parsons further explains that following her mother’s suicide, Richardson moved to London, where she was employed as a dental secretary in Harley Street (*Theorists* 8). Richardson’s writing career roughly begins at 1906, at the age of thirty-three, as a freelance journalist and the publication of the first volume of *Pilgrimage* in 1914 is the culmination of a tempestuous professional life comprising of an array of other paid posts. James,

grandson to an Albany investor and banker (Edel, *Untried Years* 19-20 and 40), grew up in affluence which resulted in his easily avoiding the complications of employment. Leon Edel's conviction is that James was "the man who from the first decided to be exclusively the artist and prepared carefully himself for that career" (*Collection* 5). Yet, Edel also notes that "the process of making [money] was forever a mystery to [James], money-conscious though he was from his earliest days (*Untried Years* 102-3). Beginning to write as early as twenty, he unsuccessfully attempted to support himself as a freelance writer, but could always fall back on the family income. In 1869, at the age of twenty-six, he settled in London, where his dealings with the literary market seem to have later developed into a central concern about the ways in which he would be able to reconcile high-brow art with the demands of the readership.⁸

My interest in James's and Richardson's biographies is propelled by their archival tactics, in other words, by the ways in which they socially and politically contextualize their fictional characters. As a rule, James's fiction is insulated from the lives of middle-class subjects and rather chooses to disclose the entanglements of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, while Richardson brings to the forefront the experience of the working woman in London at the turn of the century. Yet their texts may also be read as depositories of their own archived experience—Miriam, the aspiring author, and the artist/illustrator of "The Real Thing" trying to balance art, ethics, and survival attest to this kind of concerns.

Richardson quite consciously designates James as a precursor to her literary style and respectively regards herself his literary descendant. To the best of my knowledge, Carol Watts was among the first scholars to note Richardson's interest in the work of James. In her analysis of the fragmentary quality in Richardson's work, she mentions that Kosofski Sedgwick's essay on James ("Is the Rectum Straight? Identification and Identity in *the Wings of the Dove*") illuminates Richardson's own work and her interest in him (Watts, Carol 71). Richardson

⁸ In London, James worked for Macmillan and other publishers offering serial installments that would later be published in book form. His audience, and by and large the audience for serialized novels, primarily consisted of middle-class women and publishers and editors were very specific about what would be suitable reading material, especially for young women.

certainly read and reviewed James passionately, offering varying critiques. In her review “The Perforated Tank” for the October 1921 issue of *Fanfare*, she describes James’s novels as constituting a “shut-in world of advantageously-placed people, guests in a hotel whose being and smooth running are taken for granted” (29). Although Richardson was also elsewhere critical of James, she repeatedly acknowledged his immense influence on her writing. In her article “Of Language, of Meaning, of Mr. Henry James,” Mhairi Catriona Pooler identifies the shared “unreadability” of the two authors and attempts to read Richardson’s “distinctive use of language... as a development of James’s late style” (98-9). The scholar notes Richardson’s acknowledgment of James in her *Foreword to Pilgrimage*, “a far from inconsiderable technical influence” (95), and explores their “shared conception of the connection between style and truth” (95). Pooler also draws attention to Richardson’s essay “About Punctuation” and suggests that although Richardson assertively rejected claims of any stylistic kinship with James as the opinion of “one of those who look for derivations and relationship, primarily always missing essentials,” yet her work was profoundly influenced by the “master” (Richardson, “About Punctuation” 415 qtd. in Pooler 99).

Watts also attempts a dialogue between the works of Benjamin and Richardson by often invoking Benjamin in her *Dorothy Richardson* (1995). The scholar cites Richardson’s encounter with Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, which she arbitrarily read from one point to another “taking up the first handy vol. and opening at random” (Richardson qtd. in Watts 10). Watts observes that Benjamin’s commentary on “The Image of Proust” is “relevant to Richardson’s narrative” and argues that in both *Remembrance of Things Past* and *Pilgrimage* “remembering serves as a kind of apprenticeship that will free the protagonist to become a writer” (11). Expounding on this point, I will suggest that in Richardson’s case this remembering is performed in the Benjaminian fashion as a “telescoping of the past through the present” (*TAP* 471), thus bringing about a convergence of tenses. In Miriam’s words on the penultimate page of *Pilgrimage*, “[w]hile I write everything vanishes but what I contemplate. The whole of what is called the past is with me, seen anew, vividly” (*IV March Moonlight* 657 qtd. in Watts 11). In her

recent “Moments of Insight in Long Novels by Henry James and Dorothy Richardson” (2015), Kate McLoughlin thoroughly affiliates the three authors in the context of her discussion of James’s and Richardson’s long novels as a response to the crisis of transferable experience, while exploring Benjamin’s notion of “Erfahrung” or reflective experience in James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove* and in Richardson’s *Honeycomb* and *Dimple Hill*.

Having offered some of the most influential theoretical formulations on the nature of modernity, Benjamin, the German-Jewish philosopher, literary critic, and Marxist thinker sets the tone of the whole project in that his work provides the theoretical backbone for my analysis of James’s and Richardson’s work. Benjamin’s archive of quotations on Paris in *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940) rescues from oblivion a specific cultural heritage composed of social spaces, political events, historical phenomena, visual and textual sources which are all attestations to the palpability of the spirit of capitalism. His mnemonic reconstruction and critical reflection of his birthplace in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (1932-8) also attempts to record a then irrevocably lost image of the city of Berlin, while highlighting childhood as the paradigmatic time of experience. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) presents a critical context in which the baroque is posited as an artistic paradigm to discuss the “immersion in the most minute details of subject matter” (34) and the effect of extinguishing “the false appearance of totality” (176). Written in the late 1930s, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* offers the reading of Baudelaire as the par excellence modern poet violently thrust in the realities of urban commodity capitalism. The 1931 essay “Unpacking my Library” offers insight into the world of the collector and his objects, “The Storyteller” (1936) discusses the shortcomings of conveying experience in the modern world, and “The Author as Producer” (1934) provides a contextual framework for the productive politics of authorship: Benjamin argues that no predetermined content or form can guarantee a communist, redemptive, or radical literary politics; rather when the author situates him/herself “within the production process” they can understand their place in the class struggle and produce valuable material (*Understanding Brecht* 93).

Recent critical and theoretical work on Benjamin has often favored the importance of the fragment in his work, instead of attempting to decipher the complexity of his writings more comprehensively. Yet this project, in the course of contextualizing James and Richardson within their contemporary social, cultural and political conditions, will read Benjamin's work "as a crucial interpretative context"—in a manner parallel to the one Angeliki Spiropoulou establishes in her comparative reading of Benjamin and Virginia Woolf (3).⁹ Spiropoulou is interested in the two authors' "attempts to think about modernity" and traces their "points of confluence" (15), a critical task that I will try to perform with Benjamin, James, and Richardson. I would additionally argue that the three authors' practices point to a certain archival logic which hierarchizes and builds around the representation of urban spaces, class/labor, and the material/commodity. Their representation of the experience of the modern subject will be shown to consistently revisit these three thematic concerns. Benjamin reads the material culture (texts, illustrations, photographs, commodities, spaces, ruins) of the Parisian arcades and elaborates on Marx's views on the power of the commodity *per se*. His perception of the constituents of modernity go beyond Marx in that he acknowledges the commodity as an empowering element, an enabling factor in the course of the human subject towards liberation. Marx contends that commodity fetishism explains the way capitalism is experienced by the human subject and Benjamin shares the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism as "an aspect of the mystification, the pervasive self-deception of bourgeois society which would inevitably be dispelled by the transformation of the capitalist system" (Gelley 948). Nevertheless, Benjamin's Marxism replaces the Hegelian dialectic—in which the contradiction between the proposition (thesis) and its counter-argument (antithesis) is resolved with synthesis—with "dialectics at a standstill," in which "the moment of awakening would be identical with the "now of recognizability" (*TAP* 463-4 qtd. in Higonnet, Higonnet,

⁹ Spiropoulou's *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* discusses a selection of Woolf's essays, short stories, and novels concomitantly with Benjamin's critical theory of modernity and philosophy of history. Detecting the common ground shared by the two literary figures, Spiropoulou argues about Woolf's critical historiography and her engagement with the past, a prevalent trope in her fiction, and powerfully reads the author's work against the backdrop of Benjamin's *oeuvre*.

Higonnet 395). In compiling *The Arcades*, Benjamin in a sense does away with interpretation; and “[w]here Adorno calls for theoretical mediation, Benjamin juxtaposes explosively” (Higonnet, Higonnet, Higonnet 395).

Yet, Benjamin’s critical writing on Kafka, Proust, Baudelaire, Leskov and other authors provides a springboard for literary interpretation: as Russell observes, it is “consistently reflexive, engaged with the texts in such a way that their work is ‘illuminated’ as a meeting of reader and author” (3). The present study of the texts of James and Richardson aspires to follow precisely this route: by way of analyzing the character formations they effect in their novels as different manifestations of the modern subject and by discussing their comparable yet diverse representation of urban spaces, class/labor power, and the commodity. I suggest that the Benjaminian aesthetics and methodology, namely the reverence for the microscopic, the recognition of the dialectical image, and the palimpsestic reading of social space enable us to read these turn-of-the-century English texts as archives of the modern experience.

II. Benjamin’s Critical Paradigm in Reading “The Man of the Crowd”

Benjamin’s commentary on Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd” (1840) may serve as a paradigm of Benjamin’s archival methodology in that it brings urban space, capitalist economy, and class in conjunction, while paying attention to the minute and reading urban space as the aggregate of social spaces and social relations. “The Man of the Crowd” was published in 1840, simultaneously in Philadelphia’s *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* and *Atkinson’s Casket*. A century later, the tale draws Benjamin’s critical attention not just because it was translated and studied by Baudelaire, but due to its “peculiarities” that make the tale “capable of exerting both a subtle and a profound effect on artistic production” (“Motifs in Baudelaire” 324). In more than one sense, Benjamin’s commentary on “The Man of the Crowd” delineates his literary methodology. In his 1938 “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” and his 1939 “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” Benjamin revisits Baudelaire’s reading of Poe’s crowd to read the latter’s short story not only for its unparalleled literary atmosphere of obscurity and indeterminacy that

makes it resemble “an x-ray picture of the detective story” (“Paris of the Second Empire” 27), but also, in my view, as a literary source that registers the modern urban social cartography of Poe’s times. In his reading, Benjamin performs an archaeology of both the crowd and the urban setting of the story, offering observations that build up a partial record of 1840 London. It is an archive that produces the double effect that Fritzsche notes; namely, “the boundedness of identity in time and space and the synchronization of time and space within those bounds” (“Archive” 17). Benjamin attentively observes the historically situated “here and now” of Poe’s story that brings to the fore the metropolitan subject amidst the alienation effects of the capitalist condition.

Poe’s inaugural phrase positions the rest of the story against a background of indecipherable mystery: “It was well said of a certain German book that ‘er last sich nicht lesen’—it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told” (Poe 97). This book that resists its reading highlights the undermining of any effort towards interpretation. Yet the very second paragraph of the text unsettles this professed illegibility through the narrator’s engagement with three different ways of seeing that evoke interpretation: his “poring over” newspaper advertisements, “observing the promiscuous company in the room,” and “peering through the smoky panes into the street” (97). Perhaps as a response to this ambivalence between readability and unreadability, Benjamin performs an interpretive gesture shedding light on the city and the human geography of the crowd, in the backdrop of the literary trope of nightfall invaded by the artificial lighting of gaslight.

The narrator, a man of leisure, is very appropriately situated in a London hotel coffee house, a *par excellence* locus of the public sphere in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Having assumed the role of spectator, he devours through the window the spectacle unfolding across the street. The scene steadily captures the narrator’s attention: “I gave up [...] all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without” (Poe 97 qtd. in “On Some Motifs” 325). The within-without contradiction in the phrase registers a precarious dichotomy on the domains of private and public—since nothing could be more

public than a hotel coffee house—yet it retains the binary of interior-exterior, wherein the window pane, at this initial stage, spatially marks the ultimate frontier for the narrator. Moreover, the framing of the scene alludes to both writing and reading a text, a connotation that Benjamin may have had in mind while discussing the story.

In his essays, Benjamin draws connections between “The Man of the Crowd” and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Cousin’s Corner Window” (1822), acknowledging the latter’s observer as the true “man of leisure [who] views the crowd” (“On Some Motifs” 326). Hoffmann’s story is of significance to Benjamin in that it is “one of the earliest attempts to capture the street scene of a large city” (“On Some Motifs” 326); otherwise put, Benjamin is interested in the literary origin of the street scene, much as he is in Poe’s depiction of class stratification. His sincere appreciation for Hoffmann’s story is manifested in his reference to a detail, the cousin’s use of opera glasses to “pick out individual genre scenes” and his “ability to enjoy *tableaux vivants*” (“On Some Motifs” 327, emphasis in the original), which foregrounds the function of the gaze and the social geography of the city. While Poe’s narrator first watches the scene from a distance through the window of the public coffee house before being lured into the crowd, the cousin in Hoffmann’s text, an invalid, cannot but sustain his detachment; “his attitude” is “one of superiority,” Benjamin notes (“On Some Motifs” 327). Moreover, the mediation of the scene provided by the window is here reinforced by the cousin’s use of his opera glasses which function like a second window pane that partly collapses distance but certainly enhances the observer’s detachment from what is seen. Thus, whereas in “The Cousin’s Corner Window” the observer remains a viewer beholding the city spectacle, in “The Man of the Crowd,” the observer (and narrator) is drawn to the street and assimilated by the spectacle, becoming part of the spectacle himself.

The initial “abstract and generalizing” view of Poe’s narrator, while still in the comfort zone of the coffee house, gradually resorts to the exercise of physiognomic descriptions that includes the categorization of walkers according to their similar physical traits, their attire, and gestures, it “descend[s] to

details” (“Man” 98). Poe describes businessmen, clerks, and the *demimonde*, and, in his reading, Benjamin reiterates the image of Poe’s social clusters of professionals intact demonstrating the capitalist world that contains them. Poe’s narrator “look[s] at the passengers in masses, and [thinks] of them in their aggregate relations” (Poe 98). Starting with those who “had a satisfied business-like demeanour” and “seemed to be thinking only of making their way through the press,” he notes that these people “when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on” (Poe 98 qtd. in “Paris of the Second Empire” 29). Poe swiftly proceeds to mark a nervous and hurried quality in the movement of the crowd and his description of the next group of people is conveyed in phrases that register a greater intensity of movement and agitation: They are “restless in their movements,” “talked and gesticulated to themselves,” “when impeded in their progress [...] they redoubled their gesticulations,” “[i]f jostled they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion” (Poe 98 qtd. in “Paris of the Second Empire” 29-30). This group of individuals is the society of “noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers” (Poe 98) whom, according to Benjamin, Poe describes as “half-drunken wretches” (“On Some Motifs” 325). Benjamin sees “something demonic about Poe’s businessmen” (“On Some Motifs” 326), being “restless in their movements” and gesticulating “to themselves,” perhaps because they exemplify the facilitators and main agents in capitalist productive relations.

Clerks are a visible and easily discernible “tribe” that Poe’s text divides into two categories: “junior clerks of flash houses” and “upper clerks of staunch firms” (98). The first category is quickly set aside as those who “wore the cast-off graces of the gentry” (Poe 98). Georg Simmel’s observation of fashion certainly reverberates these cast-off graces: “the fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower; in fact, they are abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepares to appropriate them” (“Fashion” 543).¹⁰ Conversely,

¹⁰ Later in the same text, Simmel elaborates on this further:

Just as soon as the lower classes begin to copy their style, thereby crossing the line of demarcation the upper classes have drawn and destroying the uniformity of their coherence, the upper classes turn away from this style and adopt a new one, which in its turn differentiates them from the masses; and thus the game goes merrily on (545).

upper clerks take up more narrative space, in descriptions that profile them as a collectivity:

They had all slightly bald heads, from which the right ears, long used to pen-holding, had an odd habit of standing off on end. I observed that they always removed or settled their hats with both hands, and wore watches, with short gold chains of a substantial and ancient pattern” (Poe 98-9 qtd. in “On Some Motifs” 325).

Their appearance is “not far from being uniform” (“Paris of the Second Empire” 29) yet, the “image cannot be called realistic” since it “shows a purposely distorting imagination at work” (“On Some Motifs” 325). As Fritzsche argues, Poe’s presentation of a “structured model of society” was “drawn from illustrious nineteenth-century sciences such as anthropology, botany, and zoology” and therefore “distinguished differences, prepared typologies, assigned functions to the various parts, and thereby supposed the discovery of underlying laws of cohesion” (*Reading Berlin* 91). Benjamin finds the generalizing tone of the excerpt far-fetched in that, “the uniformities to which the petty bourgeois are subjected by virtue of being part of the crowd are exaggerated” (“Paris of the Second Empire” 29). Indeed, clerks and employees are collectively depicted in the text as though they all invariably present a spectacle of a homogenized quality.

Benjamin perceives Poe’s “uniformities of attire and behavior, but also a uniformity of facial expression,”—what Georgia Gotsi has termed the “uniformity of a taxonomy” (40)—as symptomatic of Karl Marx’s view that within all capitalist production “the worker does not make use of the working conditions,” instead the “working conditions make use of the worker” (“On Some Motifs” 328). Subsequently, in working with machines, the workers gradually internalize the automatization of machinery: they even coordinate “their own movements with the uniformly constant movements of an automaton” (*Capital* 404 qtd. in “On Some Motifs” 328). In his *Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, Benjamin reads Poe’s “segments of the crowd” as a “mimesis of the ‘feverish pace of material production’ along with the forms of business that go with it” (83-4). Mentioning “the repertoire of clowns,”

Benjamin argues that the jittery “abrupt movements” of the sentient automata in Poe’s text imitate “both the machines which push the material and the economic boom which pushes the merchandise” (*ECB* 83). Paradoxically, this Marxist reading of the text represents higher clerks as bearing similarities to the schema Marx builds for industrial workers. Benjamin does not seem preoccupied with distinguishing between the industrial proletariat and a larger, more inclusive notion of the working class that would encompass the working strata of the middle classes, found in Poe’s excerpt. The text then perhaps prioritizes a notion of homogeneity of urban capitalist experience of labor over any intra-class variations of professional status and labor conditions.

The cloak of the night that gradually enfolds the crowd sets the stage for the emergence of more interesting scenes, according to the text: “the late hour brought forth every species of infamy from its den” (104). Indeed, the appearance of the street as a phantasmagoria of the types Poe describes could not be separated from the gaslight: “the rays of the gas-lamps, feeble at first in their struggle with the dying day, had now at length gained ascendancy, and threw over everything a fitful and garish lustre” (Poe 100). Benjamin notes that the gloominess and intermittence of the light matches the appearance of the London crowd (“On Some Motifs” 325) and remarks that the wandering crowd is “as gloomy and fitful as the light of the gas lamps overhead” (*ECB* 186)¹¹. As it is late afternoon, the gas light from the street lamps is already shedding its dim shine on the street scene in a ceaseless play of disclosure and concealment. Gas light is important for Benjamin’s reading because “the first gas lamps burned in the arcades” (*ECB* 81) and the “appearance of the street as an *interieur* in which the phantasmagoria of the street is concentrated” is inseparable from the softness, paleness, and haziness of their light that allows for different qualities of perception.

“The Man of the Crowd” hitherto registers the narrator’s gaze as a gaze of distance, aloof in its voyeurism that feeds on the kaleidoscopic spectacle through the window. The window not only functions as the frame of a painting which

¹¹ As Lynda Nead observes in her *Victorian Babylon*, “Gas bore witness to night scenes, to aspects of the city that were hidden by day. Street lamps represented the intrusion of daytime order and the rational space of the improved city into the darkness of the city at night” (83).

defines and contains the scope of the view to the outside world, but also mediates what is seen like a screen that—though translucent—very specifically frames and shapes the sight. Moreover, the “wild effects of the light” at this point make the narrator focus on “individual faces” and “frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years” (100). Reminiscent of James’s windows in his “house of fiction” that register the workings of a single point of view, the window in “The Man of the Crowd” is a meaningful figuration that underlines the need for perspective, offers access to the spectacle, and finally propels the story forward in that it triggers the observer’s mobility; the sight of the man urges the narrator to leave his comfort zone. The fleeting and momentary sight is here valued in its own right, while it is this force of the spectacle, the phantasmagoria of the thoroughfare, that makes the narrator take to the street for twenty-four hours straight in an obsessive pursuit of the man of the crowd.

The very moment the mysterious man of the crowd catches the eye of the narrator, the previous complacent distance of observing disintegrates into proximity. As Benjamin notes, “Poe’s observer succumbs to the fascination of the scene, which finally lures him out into the whirl of the crowd” (“On Some Motifs” 326-7). The narrator leaves the comfort of the hotel and is set in motion: manically following the man of the crowd, he is brought to “a large and busy bazaar” where the man “entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all objects with a wild and vacant stare” (102). Poe’s text here approaches the bazaar as a typical modern urban site—the theatre of buying and selling—yet the man of the crowd divests it from both its fundamental uses. Similar to the *flâneur*, he neither partakes in the dealings of the market nor does he practice any kind of sociability or communication. In fact, Baudelaire sees the short story as the epitome of the modern artist, who is simultaneously able to be part of the crowd and observe it from a superior detached vantage point, in a typical *flâneuresque* fashion. Benjamin, however, asserts that “[t]he man of the crowd is no *flâneur*. In him, composure has given way to manic behavior” (“On Some Motifs” 326). Both pursuer and pursued, the narrator and the man of the crowd become emotionally engaged, to the point of obsession, with the objects of their pursuit. For the narrator, the object of interest is

the man of the crowd; for the man of the crowd, it is the crowd itself. This manic obsession is as automatic and mindless as the movements and gesticulations of the professionals that Benjamin has already discussed.

For Benjamin, space itself, as negotiated in the diverse settings of the story, is produced by the social relations of urban life. To be more specific, after the bazaar, the man of the crowd approaches “one of the principal theatres” (Poe 103), closing for the night, where he follows the throng of the crowd. This second site of reference underlines both the notion of consumption by the middle classes—theatre audiences had by 1840 already been enlarged to become more socially diverse—and the notion of spectatorship, predominant throughout the story. A third site of modernity emerges in the text at daybreak in “a blaze of light” as “one of the palaces of the fiend, Gin” (Poe 104). Gin palaces in London gradually replaced gloomy and unattractive establishments that sold alcohol; their emergence was facilitated by gaslight and, according to historian Alex Werner, gin palaces were frequented by men of all classes, with the exception of the highest levels of society, as well as by “not completely respectable” women (n.p.). The 1830s and 1840s when “their proprietors and builders scaled increasingly extravagant heights of architectural bravura” are the “great age” of gin palaces (Clark, Peter 296). The three sites, the all-inclusive bazaar, as the apotheosis of the commodity, the theatre that attracts anyone who can afford the entrance fee, and the gin palace which lures the humblest social subjects, all register the notion of consumption and paint the vivid picture of a social hierarchy manifest in the taxonomic distinction of social groups that frequent the places.

More than offering a master class in the depiction of a single consciousness, Poe, according to Benjamin, succeeds in delivering “the classic example among the older versions of the motif of the crowd” (*ECB* 186). Benjamin archives Poe along with Engels in that he finds “something menacing in the spectacle they presented” (*ECB* 187). City dwellers are hostile, alienated, and manic due to the commodification of urban experience. The discontents and complications of capitalism are omnipresent in urban space and society alike, since London as a *capital* city embodies the metropolitan centre of capital and the crowd’s

“innumerable varieties of detail, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance” (Poe 98) become the morphological variations of economy as bodies. In reading “The Man of the Crowd” Benjamin thus proposes an Ur-Reading, a primal reading of the urban spectacle: The city constitutes the story’s exclusive geography; yet space cannot be separated from its social extensions precisely because the perplexities and complications of capitalism are omnipresent. Perhaps then, “er lass sich nicht lesen,” Poe’s acknowledgement of the unreadability of the sign, the mystery which will not be revealed, and the essence of the crime that remains undivulged (97) may also be seen as the experience of the capitalist condition that dare not speak its name.

III. Trajectories of the Chapters

This project is pervaded by these three major themes explored in the main chapters One, Two, and Three respectively; urban space, labor power/ class, and the material/ commodity are the three fundamental tropes through which I propose to analyze the representations of the modern subject in the city. Discussing the culture of the western realist and modernist novel, Fredric Jameson’s 1986 essay, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” refers to a “radical split” between the realms of the private and the public, the poetic and the political, “between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power: in other words, Freud versus Marx” (69). Jameson asserts that deeply entrenched within us is the “cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private existences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamics” (“Third-World Literature” 69). One of the tasks in the present study is to address this alleged rift, arguing that economic abstractions and political dynamics are indeed commensurable with our experience as subjects.

Chapter One is entirely devoted to the notion of space; I begin with a comparative reading of James’s and Benjamin’s accounts of their birthplaces in *The American Scene* and *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* to argue that, in their collecting and arranging their reminiscences, both men engage in a “struggle against

dispersion” (*TAP* 211). The city has already emerged as the privileged site of contest for the dealings of the market and the hidden potential of its layered pasts. Paris and Berlin are both seminal for Benjamin: the first for incarnating the “Capital of Modernity”—to borrow David Harvey’s title—as a commercial theatre of exchange values being displayed, gazed at, sold, bought, and collected, contributing to a reshaping of the urban bourgeois imaginary, but most importantly, to the transformation of the previously revolutionary battlefield. Paris offers Benjamin the space of a post-revolutionary imaginary (Gourgouris 215)¹², where his dialectics of the phantasmagoria of the marketplace, are put to the service of the oppressed subjects. Berlin serves as an ark of lost moments, selected for encompassing his childhood memories. Starting with the bourgeois interior that fascinates Benjamin as if it were a microcosm of the urban landscape, numerous phantasmagorias are discussed in *The Arcades Project*: the street and the arcade as “private exterior,” the salon and drawing room as “public interior,” the world exhibitions, the magic lantern of the market. James’s peripatetic philosophy, his travel impressions of New York recorded in *The American Scene* go beyond the delivery of a reflective and self-reflective chronicle and dig into the qualities of NY spaces such as his discontent with the sense of publicness in buildings and the blurring between the private and the public. The mnemonic layers of the city of Berlin in *Berlin Childhood* are discussed along with James’s two chapters “New York Revisited” and “New York Social Notes,” with a view to comparing the operation of memory in the two works. In both cases, remembrance emerges due to “space-intake” and points to the archival project of salvaging.

I examine James’s travel impressions of New York with Benjamin’s memories of Berlin to chart the two authors’ peripatetic strategies and their critical reflection on their respective homelands with a special focus on the urban spaces and their social edifice. I argue that, in both authors, attention to the detail is a method of conjuring “the whole picture” of the modern condition. This is a gesture that ties in with Benjamin’s imperative of telescoping the past through the present,

¹² According to Benjamin, the city is determined and remapped according to systemic capitalist imperatives, e.g. the “Haussmanization of Paris and the new wide boulevards was a response to the barricades erected during the 1871 Paris Commune” (*TAP* 23).

since here in performing an idiosyncratic architecture of hues the authors *microscope* the whole through the minute, the fragment. As Susan Sontag notes, “Benjamin was drawn to the extremely small as he was to whatever had to be deciphered: emblems, anagrams, handwriting,” because “what is so grotesquely reduced is, in a sense, liberated from its meaning—its tininess being the outstanding thing about it. It is both a whole (that is, complete) and a fragment (so tiny, the wrong scale)” (*Saturn* 124). Benjamin’s “micrological” method, by which the tiny stands for the great, is valuable when used in the context of critical close reading of modernist texts. In Spiropoulou’s words, “it is precisely by dint of Benjamin’s focus on the marginal and peripheral that he can best be claimed as a major theorist of the modern” (27).¹³ Additionally, I explore the enhanced role of remembrance in the two works to discuss the memory-narratives of their birthplaces as mnemonic palimpsests that make use of and constantly return to urban experience. James’s travel impressions of New York and Benjamin’s *Berlin Childhood* chart the two authors’ idiosyncratic modes of flânerie, while their spatial analysis shifts constantly oscillating between past and present.

Miriam, Richardson’s heroine in *Interim*, offers an interesting constellation of the cities that are focal points of interest here. While contemplating on the notion of “*Cosmopolis*” Miriam thinks:

It would be one of the new ideas. Tearing off the page, she laid it on the sofa-head and sat contemplating an imagined map of Europe, with London, Paris and Berlin joined by a triangle, the globe rounding vaguely off on either side. All over the globe, dotted here and there, were people who read and thought, making a network of unanimous culture. (342)

The eurocentrism, unanimity and homogeneity of Miriam’s remaking of geographic space is readily unsettled over the next few lines where she concludes that there is “NO cosmopolis” (*II Interim* 343). Showcasing one of Miriam’s many reflections on space, this passage strikingly features all three main cities whose literary

¹³ Also see Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Literary Criticism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987, p. 53 (cited in Spiropoulou 27).

representations I explore here. The text's line of reasoning epitomizes Miriam's investigative rationale and her subversive consciousness-in-the-making. In Gan's words, "[t]he opening up of the city of London to increasing numbers of working single women signals a spatial dimension to Miriam's experience of her changing life and times" (61).

Yet, London is the primary setting of most of the thirteen constituent novels of *Pilgrimage*. The metropolis in Richardson is not only a text to be deciphered by her fictional alter ego, but more of a driving force behind Miriam's actions. Pedestrianism and story-making are interlocked in *Pilgrimage*, or to evoke Michel de Certeau, the story of spatial practices "begins on ground level, with footsteps" (97). Miriam, as the woman who crosses the streets and metaphorically collects images that allow her remapping, comes of age in the metropolis, whose tensions, brings her subjecthood to light and trigger her quest for autonomy. The critical reading of a dialectical image in *Pilgrimage* brings the chapter to a close: the subtext of Rudyard Kipling, whose poetry repeatedly flashes in the text, comes to the surface to disrupt *The Tunnel and Interim* and affiliates Miriam's complicated work-life with the British colonial past. Burma, India, and Afghanistan stand here as the periphery that symptomatically emerges as spaces mapped out by the colonial cartography of the Empire. Their episodic projection on the imperial centre unsettles the binary opposition of colony and metropolis and turns the metropolitan centre and the dependent periphery into two dialectical poles.

Chapter Two explores the confines that labor power and class position impose on characters, but also the very inability of these confines to absolutely contain and fully control human subjects. As far as class is concerned, Benjamin is interested in salvaging the history of the defeated, invoking a certain return of the oppressed, the vanquished, whose stories are effaced or forgotten by the sweeping force of those victorious. He, nevertheless, largely explores the manifestations of class on the register of the bourgeois life and the bourgeois imaginary acknowledging that the bourgeoisie, rather than the proletariat, dominates the nineteenth and twentieth century as the prevalent social force. The social in-betweenness and indeterminacy of his dialectical figures provide a paradigm for the

function of dialectics since these types interestingly transgress class boundaries or constantly oscillate between them. The flâneur is a “bohemian, a déraciné” (*TAP* 895), a social renegade who feels at home in the crowd, rather than within the narrow confines of his class. The typology of the flâneur draws on the man of leisure, who has no obligation to work, his transformation into the bohemian, who makes do on limited resources, and the intellectual (journalist, author, etc.), who attempts to make a living by keenly observing the spectacle of the city. The prostitute, although by definition of lower-class, is read on a par with the commodified bourgeois lady; simultaneously being the seller and the commodity, the prostitute becomes the ur-form of the wage-laborer. Feverishly accumulating objects, the collector paradoxically goes against the grain of capitalist accumulation: the items collected—whether they are expensive china, rare books, or fountain pens—are neither to be used, nor to be sold. The collector sets the object free both from its use and its exchange value and thus withdraws it from the market, incapacitates, and strips it bare from its commodity quality.

The exploration of the theme of class liminality and labor power in this chapter commences with my reading of an archival historical document that Benjamin chooses to include in *The Arcades Project*: the 1830 petition signed by the *filles publiques* of Paris registers the formal complaint of prostitutes against the atypical and unofficial prostitution of bourgeois women who are protected by institutions and bourgeois social mores. Contrary to the critical tradition that sees Benjamin as ignoring and fundamentally omitting the female subject, the petition cited in *The Arcades* is a case in which the voice of the woman is recorded. Benjamin’s inclusion of the petition in the textual body of *The Arcades* is of interest not only for its valuable documentation of the neglected female voice and for exemplifying Benjamin’s archival practice, but, perhaps most importantly, as a

manifestation of the prostitutes' liminal subjectivity, their passage "from sex to text."¹⁴

Moving from historical document to fiction and from the literal notion of the archive to its theoretical load and metaphorical offshoot, I discuss "The Real Thing" as a case of James's economy of labor power that drives forth all the characters: the illustrator/ artist opting for the low-class models for his magazine illustrations and the reversal of class stratification within the enclave of the studio are only symptoms in a story where everyone is desperately trying to sell their labor power. James here emerges as much more than the detached aesthete who remains impervious to class struggles and the complexities of wage labor. The story, in its subversion of class status and hierarchies, reveals a subtext of class instability prompted by the complexities of paid labor that inescapably affect everyone. On a metanarrative level, James also seems to be discussing his own professional stakes in the labor market. The story features a clear distinction between illustrative work and painting, pot-boilers and true art, which perhaps refers to James's own artistic hierarchies and his turbulent relation with the market.

Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, in turn, features an impoverished heroine in the wake of her downward class mobility, who, despite her affluent background, is obliged to seek employment. I hereby follow Miriam's labor trajectory across the pages of *Pointed Roofs* (1915), *Backwater* (1916), *Honeycomb* (1917) *The Tunnel* (Feb 1919), *Interim* (Dec 1919), *Deadlock* (1921), and *Revolving Lights* (1923) which showcase the heroine's initiation into the labor market. Especially *The Tunnel* and *Deadlock*—the fourth and sixth volumes of *Pilgrimage*—focus on Miriam's working life as a dental assistant. As Mepham suggests, Miriam is daringly portrayed "beyond the scope of traditional romance and marriage plots" in her quotidian experience of "living with work... a life of white collar urban

¹⁴ This phrase is borrowed from Amanda Anderson's incredibly rich book review "Prostitution's Artful Guise. *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* by Charles Bernheimer," *Diacritics*, Vol. 21, No 2/3, A Feminist Miscellany, (1991): 102-22. Anderson reads a "nineteenth-century association between prostitution and art" in a time when "[t]he rise of serial publication produced a situation in which authors, like prostitutes, were forced to sell themselves on the market" and "[t]he plight of the writer was thus not unlike the plight of the prostitute, precisely because a man's text, like a woman's sex, was seen as something that one should not parcel out for pay" (ibid. 103).

poverty” (462). The labor complications of the turn-of-the-century tertiary sector that affect Miriam include constant career change (teacher to governess to dental assistant), economic hardship, and the experience of having been fired. As Carol Watts observes, “what makes *Pilgrimage* so distinctive is its refusal to let go of [...] the consequences of the world of work” (43). The practice of working and her subsequent vocational discontent bring about the heroine’s newly-found politicization and gradually her work, a former privilege, is to turn into a form of coercion. It is within this context, that I examine Miriam as an eloquent example of the modern female subject who moves between social strata on account of her professional activity but also thanks to her cultural capital.¹⁵

The third thematic axis of this project focuses on the notions of the material, the commodity, and capital and their pervasive power within the modern economic nexus. The commodity will be discussed with reference to its fetishizing power in James and Richardson. I read the authors’ tenacious attentiveness to the minute, their *obsession with the fold*, as emphatically manifest in their representations of commodities. This is an aspect of what Thomas Otten reads as “a micromaterialism” of the Jamesian text, “an intimate interest in the world of objects and the life of the senses that readers register as a kind of signature for the Jamesian” (xix), which I also find in Richardson. The characters’ relation to specific commodified things, that is, things that have entered the sphere of the market, will be analyzed as metonymically standing for much greater agendas in the stories. Clothes, furniture or everyday commodities such as soap leave traces that as Elaine Freedgood argues, “link them necessarily to the historical situations of the novels in which they appear” (15-6). The accumulation of commodities as capital, in its most literal and abstract forms, defines and shapes not only the characters’ subjectivity and course of action (Isabel Archer, Miriam Henderson), but also the lives of the three authors. In this sense, the ending of this chapter discusses James’s and Richardson

¹⁵ I use the sociological term cultural capital as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977) to refer to Miriam’s and the Monarchs’ non-financial social assets, such as education, taste, and manners. While capital, for Bourdieu, is a social relation within a system of exchange, and includes “all the goods material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation,” cultural capital is a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status (178).

paratextual¹⁶ contributions to their novels. In reading the material culture (texts, illustrations, photographs, commodities, spaces, ruins) of the Parisian arcade, Benjamin extends the Marxian view on the power of the commodity and acknowledges the commodity—the *par excellence* constituency of capital—as an empowering element, an enabling factor. According to Marx, exchange value substitutes the original use value of the commodity-to-be, thus the commodity acquires any supplementary meaning, such as desire.

The workings and mandates of desire unavoidably cross paths with manifestations of capital and displays of commodities in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel Archer's encounter with the Touchett family provides her with an inheritance of seventy thousand pounds, a tangible capital also constituting an imaginary venture capital marking the outset of her traveling adventure. Desire is one of the facets of this legacy's value since according to her benefactor, Ralph Touchett, it is to enable "to meet the requirements of [her] imagination" (*TPL* 164). I will argue that Isabel's adventure in the commodity land of *The Portrait*, that consists of her actual mobility, the geographical trajectory she marks, and her financial mobility, the capital she inherits, amount to a registering of her commodification. The *Preface to The Portrait of a Lady*, as a metanarrative record of James's literary views, is also examined as paradigmatic of James's unwavering attachment to the literary market. *The American Scene*, extensively explored by scholars in the recent past, will be examined in the wake of recent critical scholarship preoccupied with refuting previous views on James's "immunity" to social reality and historical conditions (Freedman, Salmon, Tintner, Gilmore). Bill Brown's discussion of the reification of people and the personification of objects in the text also reads *The American Scene* as a seminal work that reveals James's connection to modernism and modernity (*A Sense of Things*). James deconstructs bourgeois culture, much as he embraces it and explores the way monetary consumer culture inundates domestic life (Meeuwis).

The relevant part on Richardson focuses on moments in Richardson's *Backwater* (1916), *Honeycomb* (1917), *The Tunnel* (1919), *Deadlock* (1921), and

¹⁶ Gerard Genette's term "paratexts" refers to "those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that mediate between book, author and reader: titles, forewords and publishers' jacket copy form part of a book's private and public history" (1-4).

Oberland (1927) that reveal the transformative powers of capital for Miriam's life and Richardson's reverence for the object. I will argue that in a Benjaminian fashion, Richardson pays homage to the particular, constructing what I call, her *architecture of hues*, while resolutely avoiding to sustain a supposedly all-inclusive and totalizing vision. Miriam refrains from offering a panoramic view and is consistently devoted to the study of the microscopic, the mundane and the insignificant. According to Carol Watts, through "the world of 'forgotten things'" there arises another aspect of reality in *Pilgrimage*, "a personal and collective form of memory" (44). Thus, Richardson's archival logic is discussed here with reference to her care for the minor and the salvaging of the trivial through its expression in the commodity.

In her *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine*, Schor avers that the detail is "threatening" and underlines "its tendency to subvert an internal hierarchic ordering of the work of art which clearly subordinates the periphery to the centre, the accessory to the principal, the foreground to the background" (20). This dissertation aspires to follow this practice of directing attention to the detail with regard to the literary archives of James, Richardson, and Benjamin and their documentation of the modern. As Lynda Nead asserts in her *Victorian Babylon*, her exploration of nineteenth-century London, there can never be "a pure, clean modernity": "the discourses that constitute that historical temporality [of modernity] bear the ghosts of the past, of modernity's own other. The past ... returns to disturb and unsettle the confidence of the other" (7). Nead's insistence on the present being "permanently engaged in a phantasmatic dialogue with the past" (7) is related with, as I would like to argue, the spectral potentiality of the future, which is also there for us to see in the now. As time is accumulated and becomes legible in things, so can James's and Richardson's modernist literature be read as a material and materialist archive of the modern condition. Like Benjamin, they work against the grain of oblivion. By "remembering not to forget" the material universe that has been rendered obsolete, or extinct, the historian, the novelist, the reader, all set the locomotive of awakening, since "remembering and awaking are most intimately related" (*TAP* 389).

Chapter One

1. The Archive of the City in James, Richardson, and Benjamin

1.1. Four cities, four spaces of modernity

This first chapter explores the theme of urban space as a focal concern in Benjamin, James, and Richardson. The city emerges as the central site of contest for the workings of the market and the hidden dynamics of historically layered pasts; my analysis demonstrates how the modern metropolitan experience is mediated both by capitalism and the urban sites of “what has been” (*TAP* 463). All three authors reenact and represent in a sustained way the city spaces which would otherwise be undermined, forgotten, or destroyed, their authorial practices contributing to their archives of the modern. Benjamin’s Berlin, James’s New York, and Richardson’s London are all instances of urban space which is sieved through the perception of the subject that roams the city and enjoys it as spectacle, or through the intellectual evocation of space as it once was. Yet, in the case of *Pilgrimage*, the alternate spaces of Burma, India, and Afghanistan also emerge to symptomatically puncture the homogeneity of the western metropolitan landscape.

While Benjamin’s handling of urban space is the theoretical backbone of the chapter, the notion of the city as spectacle was first introduced by Simmel in his 1903 essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” which highlights the struggle of the subject to sustain her or his individuality against the cumbersome social forces that define modern life. This struggle of the “metropolitan type” who is relentlessly attacked by a “rapid crowding of changing images” and an “intensified emotional life” prompts the development of an emergent “intellectualistic mentality,” a “blasé attitude” (“Metropolis” 410, 412, 414). Simmel examines the causes of this phenomenon within the market economy, by demonstrating the ways in which money contextualizes the urban experience. His overall consideration of space and spatiality still provides a breeding ground for the current debate in various disciplines. Benjamin assimilates Simmel’s work demonstrating the processes through which the city affects the “inner life” of the individual while rendering the

city the central space of analysis throughout his work.¹⁷ As Stephane Symons avers, while Simmel is interested in the effects of the money economy on the individual (the mental experience of the modern subject) he does not engage in the examination of labor relations *per se*. Both Benjamin and Simmel are interested in how fashion, social class, and money, to name but a few, become manifestations of the urban experience and as David Frisby notices, “Simmel is the only sociologist whose writings are referenced” in *The Arcades Project* (134). Benjamin indeed builds on the foundations of Simmel’s sociology of space closely examining space from a phenomenological point of view. In Benjamin, Simmel’s rapid fluctuating, wavering images of the city become “reception in distraction” [Die Rezeption in der Zerstreung] as a symptom of “profound changes in apperception” (“Work of Art” 269). In the same vein, the distance of perspective is eliminated in order to give way to the detail, while spaces and social agents become mutually contingent in an interplay of the spatial and the social.

The geographical trajectory drawn by the texts discussed arrives at four spatially diverse yet chronologically comparable terminals: Benjamin’s representation of Paris of the nineteenth century and Berlin of 1900s, James’s turn-of-the-century New York, and Richardson’s transitional late Victorian and early modernist London from 1890 to 1914. I aspire to show how the urban spaces represented in the three authors’ texts—in their similarities and discrepancies—ultimately become registers of how fictional characters (Miriam Henderson and Isabel Archer) and authors (James and Benjamin) perceive the modern city. Thus, these disparate accounts of dissimilar sites contribute to the literary reception of urban space as one of the three poles that constitute their archive of the modern.

Paris and Berlin are both exemplary in the Benjaminian *oeuvre*. Paris is the capital city of the nineteenth century that epitomizes the spirit of modernity and whose palimpsest showcases multiple sedimented historical layers. The urban bourgeois life ambivalently conceals and reveals the former revolutionary

¹⁷ Although Benjamin never wrote a distinct essay on Simmel, in 1912 he did enrol in the latter’s classes at the University of Berlin. For more on the intellectual relationship and the affiliations between the works of Simmel and Benjamin, see Stephane Symons, *More Than Life*. Also see “More Than Life: Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin” Berkeley Consortium for Interdisciplinary Research, audio, min. 3.

battlefield and the traces of the Paris Commune. Benjamin's Paris stands as the space where the marketplace assumes the form of a phantasmagoria. Fascinated with magic lantern performances, Benjamin uses the term "phantasmagoria" to allude to the ghost-like images created by the magic lantern, the mass medium of the nineteenth century, which emerged in the post-revolutionary period after 1789. Besides exemplifying the subject's experience of commodity culture, the phantasmagoria in Benjamin is inextricably linked to the notion of space since it allows for the dialectical game between inside-outside. While he mainly reads the bourgeois interior as a microcosm of the urban landscape, numerous other phantasmagorias come to light in *The Arcades Project*. The most obvious case concerns the street and the arcade which appear as "private exterior," while the salon and the drawing room become apparitions of the "public interior." Yet another phantasmagoria, that of the world exhibitions, is significant in that it reveals the polyvalence of the commodity in accordance with the function of the magic lantern of the market.

Berlin, in turn, foregrounds Benjamin's childhood memories and activates what Andy Merrifield has described as "a Proustian encounter with the lost times and spaces of his native city" (49). In his 1938 introduction, Benjamin notes that, while being abroad in 1932, he realized he "would soon have to bid a long, perhaps lasting farewell to the city of [his] birth" (37). More than just his city of birth, Berlin is consolidated in *Childhood around 1900* through a set of images: Benjamin admits that, "certain biographical features" and "the physiognomies—those of [his] family and comrades alike" seem to recede. His effort is to "get hold of the images in which the experience of the big city is precipitated in a 'child of the middle class'" (BC 38) and through that to reconstruct the urban topography of the city. Thus, the text is the chronicle of an urban palimpsest that Benjamin roamed as a child.

Roaming is also prevalent in James's peripatetic analysis of New York recorded in *The American Scene*. The New York chapters of his travelogue are not simply a reflective and self-reflective chronicle but an evocation of the history of specific urban spaces, such as the Metropolitan Museum, that prompt his retrieval of

an American past simultaneously individual and collective, private and public. James's record of his 1904 peregrination in the U.S., that closes the circle of his twenty-one-year absence, largely negotiates what Milton A. Mays has called "a 'grand tour' in reverse" (186). Until 1905, James performs his "impressionistic sociology [...] from New England through New York, Washington, and other principal sea-board cities to the South of Richmond, Charleston, and St. Augustine" (Mays 186). The itinerary followed by the American expatriate offers several intriguing subversions and reaffirmations of the Grand Tour motif. While the seventeenth-century Grand Tour is traditionally a trip through Europe primarily reserved for and enjoyed by upper-class European young males, in the nineteenth century—facilitated by the advent of extensive rail transportation of the 1840s—this social practice spills over into the middle class and occasionally among women. Isabel Archer is a paradigm of this mobility from the U.S. towards the "civilized" Europe, in spite of the irony surrounding the outcome of her educational rite of passage that is simultaneously enlightening and devastating. Apparently, James's *contra* Grand Tour is not undertaken with a view to sightseeing the ruins of classical antiquity and the monuments of the Renaissance. It rather constitutes a revision of the Tour for the sake of the exploration of a new market. In 1904, already in the sixth decade of his life, James is in no need for a Cicerone, a guide, tutor or travelling companion. In his reversed trajectory from the centre of the British Empire to the numerous cities of the New World, James re-affirms the cultural hegemony of Britain and Europe and so repeats the initial stereotype of the Tour.

By examining the allusive ties between the city of Berlin in *Berlin Childhood* and the city of New York in James's four chapters, "New York Revisited," "New York and the Hudson," "New York Social Notes," and "The Bowery and Thereabouts," I compare the operation of memory in the narrative of the two texts. The palimpsestic layering of the city comes to light in these two minor narratives whose authors recollect memories of images, feelings, and reflections that invariably derive from their respective cities of origin. Memory is the binding force that conflates their older experience of the city with the city *in the now*, thus linking the impermanence and ephemerality of the past with the transient

present, the actual seeing with the retrospective reflective vision of the mind. In both cases, remembrance is stimulated by the reception and reading of urban space, the receptivity of the roaming subject to seeing sites and the ensuing reflection. In both cases, the act of remembrance points to an archival logic of salvaging a specific urban past in the consciousness of each author as these two narratives derive from spaces of the two cities, urban spaces which are often fading away or have already been transformed. Memory emerges as a force that intertwines not only the past with the present, but also the private with the public, the individual with the collective. In retrieving images and fleeting impressions of the sites from their memories, both James and Benjamin attempt to archive urban space as it once was, mnemonically defying its invisibility at the given moment. With this in mind, I examine James's travel impressions documented in *The American Scene* together with Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood* to chart the two authors' idiosyncratic modes of flânerie and their critical reflection on the state of affairs of their homelands with an emphasis on social relations and urban sites. The New York of *The American Scene* blends James's contemporary impressions of walking through the city with his childhood remembrances to deliver a memory-mediated chronicle of his birthplace.

London is the setting of most of the thirteen constituent novels of *Pilgrimage*. The metropolis in Richardson is not only a text to be deciphered by her fictional *alter ego*, but also a driving force behind Miriam's actions. In Miriam's consciousness, London assumes dimensions that by far exceed the mere operation of space as setting, becoming one of the core modern themes she reflects on. As de Certeau notes, connecting pedestrianism and the city with story-making, the city "is simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity" (95). The metropolis empowers Miriam to emerge as a female collector of impressions who reshapes the city through her sustained attention to the minute, the commodity, her experience of labor, and market transactions. London, the site of metropolitan tensions, is the stage where she comes of age and discovers her subject position as a laborer in the market, which is analyzed in chapter two. Miriam's metropolitan relationships revolve around the social function of space and feature the relationship of Miriam as employee with her employers or Miriam in her role as tenant with her landlady, thus

intertwining living spaces and work spaces within a specifically capitalist economy. Benjamin's "dialectics at a standstill," as the defining instant when contradictions, past knowledge, and present perception are reconfigured, lends a critical angle to my reading of *Pilgrimage*. I begin with the contention that *The Arcades Project* provides us with a literary montage of street signs, excerpts from books, a wide range of photographs and illustrations, as well as Benjamin's commentary. Such a compilation invites a comparative critical reading of the various spaces of the French capital through Benjamin's selection of fragments. *Pilgrimage*, in turn, consists of a variety of fractions of Miriam's urban experience of the modern city; her reception of London spaces registered in the pages of Richardson's novel—the places she lives in, her work spaces, and the public spaces of the city—constitutes a collection of dialectical images that refract, rather than simply reflect, Miriam's perception and her experience of metropolitan modernity.

A sole divergence in the path of my urban space exploration brings forth three very different compass points, which stand in the antipode of the three European metropolises: Burma, India, and Afghanistan will briefly and dissonantly arise from the text as an alternative peripheral and colonial space that Richardson archives by way of inserting the poetry of Rudyard Kipling in the text of *Pilgrimage*. The lines from "Gunga Din," "Mandalay," and "The Ballad of the East and West" disrupt Miriam's narrative and draw attention to the carefully concealed colonial spaces that become manifest at the metropolitan heart of the empire. Although the omnipresence of London is undeniable, the novel's urban metropolitan narrative comes to a standstill with the emergence of Kipling's lines that on three occasions beget a dialectical image in *The Tunnel* and *Interim*. My aim is to read Miriam's and, by extension, the reader's perception of these three dialectical images, Kipling's interventions in the text of *Pilgrimage* as ruptures, breaches laden with the long history of colonialism: the colonial background is brought into a direct dialogue with the labor realities of Miriam's professional life in a flash that exposes tensions rather than reconciles them. In much the same way that James's and Benjamin's texts construct a repository of mnemonic spaces, *Pilgrimage* here archives the peripheral spaces of imperialism which rise to the surface of the text to

disrupt the spatial continuum of the metropolis. If James and Benjamin choose to inventory past mnemonic spaces as they overlap with current actual spaces, Richardson also allows for the inclusion of these otherwise invisible colonial spaces. The texts of all three authors attest to the creation of their often incoherent, elliptical, and certainly subjective and partial textual archives. Kipling's poetry, flashing like a dialectical image and reconfiguring Miriam's present with the British colonial past, functions as an episodic projection of the colonial periphery onto the imperial centre and dismantles the traditional binary of colony and metropolis to unearth the trace of the Empire in the colony and that of the colony in the centre of the Empire.

1.2 Renewing the Old, Telescoping the Past: Mnemonic Spatial Strategies in *The American Scene* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900*

Written as narratives of urban spaces, the texts of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* and *The American Scene* converge here on account of the mediation of memory. Through remembrance, the two texts rescue from oblivion spaces which have left a mark on the consciousness of the two authors but are changing or have already been transformed. I propose to examine the two authors' texts on the cities of Berlin and New York and comparatively explore the mnemonic strategies employed in the NY chapters of *The American Scene* and the urban memoir of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* in order to comparatively discuss their common archival aesthetics. Here the archive of the modern comes into being through the employment of memory that represents urban spaces and spatial experiences, linking the present time with the past in a correlation of tenses. In recording the perseverance of individual memory and the reflection of the private self, the texts reconfigure the modern and counteract the commodifying powers of capitalism that turn cities into mere economic centres of "objective culture," as Simmel called them ("Metropolis" 422). James's and Benjamin's archival practices attest to their effort to salvage the image of the city-as-has-been and at the same time highlight the empowering reflective power of the roaming subject who remains tied to the collective and the historical. My argument is that James and Benjamin understand memory as not simply the act

of “voluntarily recalling past events” (Coladonato 33), but also as a “‘Penelope work’ that weaves remembering and forgetting,” a medium that “brings about the convergence of imagination and thought” (*ECB* 146). In this manner, both texts can operate in the present as archives of images of Berlin and New York, the two authors’ birthplaces. Both authors are outsiders to their two cities of origin and their texts quaintly “photograph” and frame the cities in the early twentieth century with the subject of the photograph *in absentia*—entirely out of sight in the case of Benjamin and partly so in the case of James.

Although Benjamin writes *Berlin Childhood* from 1932 to 1938, his impressions recall the city as he witnesses it at the turn of the century, through the eyes of “a child of the middle class” (*BC* 38). Respectively, James’s lengthy visit to the U.S. from 1904 to 1905 counterbalances his prolonged absence from the country and conjures older memories and previous impressions. Born in 1892 to an upper middle-class Jewish family, Benjamin flees Berlin around 1932 for Ibiza, Nice, Svendborg, San Remo, and Paris to escape from being captured by the Nazis as the National Socialist Party was already implementing anti-Semitic policies. James, born in 1843, oscillates between Europe and the U.S. for the first twenty years of his life until he finally settles in England. Composing *Berlin* while in exile in Paris, Benjamin seems obliged to fall back on his childhood impressions to analyze several aspects of the city’s life, while James, *in situ* after a twenty-year absence, recovers traces from the repository of his memory and creatively triggers them to chronicle his “return of the native” (Graham 258). James’s significant return to his childhood memories will be examined in comparison to Benjamin’s remembrances with a view to proposing that in recalling and recollecting, the two authors fulfil the collector’s task, namely, to renew the old. Both authors chart the city both as a space of memory and as an archive of the social. In both texts, space is represented through the eye of the native, focusing less on his encounter with the random exotic or picturesque site, and more on the enactment of a roaming through time. As Esther Leslie observes, in discussing *Berlin Childhood*, space becomes “a doorway into time” (*Walter Benjamin* n.p.). James’s and Benjamin’s construction of the archive of the city as a precarious amalgam of past and present challenges the more

conventional legacy of the archive, to which we are all heirs, and the tendency to regard archives as neutral reservoirs of facts and undisputed historical veracity. In their chronicles, the meaning of the past is realized by a superimposition of “what has been” on “what currently is” and memory accordingly illuminates the present condition resulting in a concurrent archiving and revitalization of past and present.

Drawing on the work of Ross Posnock, who has already highlighted the similarities of James’s and Benjamin’s “shared practice of peripatetic cultural analysis” (142), I propose to read James’s New York architectural and social observations in the light of Benjamin’s methodology of viewing and reading the palimpsest of the city. Posnock attends to the similarities between James’s response to the American scene and Benjamin’s flâneur, arguing that James’s cultural analysis “mimes the dissonant rhythms of his radical curiosity” which “feeds on shocks, contingencies, and the transitory attractions of urban minutiae,” an achievement that Posnock reads as the “stylistic triumph of *The American Scene*” (22).¹⁸ Gert Buelens makes the link between Susan Buck-Morss’s discussion of the flâneur (*Seeing* 345) and its root in consumer culture, with which he associates *The American Scene*, a narrative site in which James consumes, performs and judges the American scene (“Aliens” 362-3). Rob Shields in turn argues that if Benjamin’s flâneur “attempts to wallow in the rush of sensate information, taking pleasure in the diversity of the stimuli of the urban environment,” he additionally tries “to regain and keep his native’s mastery of the environment” (72-74). In fact, James’s gaze seems to oscillate in a dialectic of closeness and remoteness, now native, now exile. In this vein, I argue that both authors’ cultural analyses employ similar methods in their descriptions, which are characterized by the intense recording of the details of urban settings. The emphasis on the analysis of primarily social observations best reveals their mutual passion for the minute and their politics of linking the personal to the collective. Drawing on Benjamin’s notion of telescoping the past through the present, the montage of different epochs that are brought to

¹⁸ In fact, Posnock suggests that James’s *The American Scene* “has more in common with [Randolph] Bourne’s and Benjamin’s early twentieth-century urban modernism than with the genteel lamentation of the late Victorian cultural elite” (146).

dialogue, I will designate James's and Benjamin's descriptive strategies as the *telescoping of the whole through the fragment*.

To begin with the subtitles that mark the texts in important ways, the chapter titles in *Berlin Childhood* seem to stand for two separate strands in the Benjaminian thought; one that is marked by specific sites and landmarks such as "Victory Column," "Tiergarten," "At the Corner of Steglitzer and Genthiner," "Market Hall," and one that bears the trace of the reception of childhood experience, such as "The Telephone," "Butterfly Hunt," "News of Death," "The Fever." Likewise, in James's *The American Scene*, which features the names of the places traversed ("Boston," "Philadelphia," "Baltimore," etc.) as chapter titles, New York is the only place extensively discussed in four chapters: "New York Revisited," "New York and the Hudson," "New York Social Notes," "The Bowery and Whereabouts," which, as Jeremy Tambling suggests, "at a hundred pages of writing of varying intensity, virtually comprise a small book" (132). The sheer volume of narrative length devoted to the city is perhaps in itself an indicator of James's distinctive appreciation of the uniqueness of his birthplace compared to the rest of the places where he wanders. As Peter Collister notes, "the scenes of New York are the most aggressive in exposing the extreme measures of the nation and its likely destiny, as well as, in their ties with his childhood, emphasizing the fragility of those earlier selves which James had accumulated" (24). Collister's point is important because it spatializes, in a sense, the notion of James's earlier selves. The accumulation of former selves shares a lot with the palimpsest of the city, the accumulated layers of its past. Not surprisingly, James wished to call the book "The Return of the Native" and then "The Return of the Novelist," both titles bearing strong self-referential connotations (Graham 248).

In the *Preface* to *The American Scene*, James admits that, although his absence "for nearly a quarter of a century" offers him "the freshness of the eye" of the "inquiring stranger," he still feels "as acute as an initiated native" who "should understand and should care better" (4). This oscillation in a dialectics of proximity and distance from his subject matter certainly suggests that James's previous knowledge, impressions, and beliefs are to furbish the on-site depictions of sites and

sights. At the same time, his view on former urban experience attests to the fact that “James’s ability to remain anchored in the shifting present lies in his willingness to be distracted” (Posnock 141). In the inaugurating page of his chronicle, Benjamin also professes to “deliberately” call to mind “images of childhood” since these “in exile, are most apt to waken homesickness” (*BC* 37). Both authors are more than willing to sacrifice any sense of supposed objectivity, in order to capture “images” of “the big city” (*BC* 38). Submerging into the past to investigate memory becomes in both cases a mnemonic exercise utilized to make sense of the complexity of the present. Benjamin’s and James’s “remembrance of things past” illuminates and crystallizes the present phenomena in an archival exposition of layered pasts.

Benjamin’s reconstruction of his childhood in Berlin engages memory not only in re-collecting the remembrances of his life and the city but also in “the traces of that past preserved in the present” which at the time of the writing were “accessible to Benjamin only as memories” (Brumann and Schulz 186). In Benjamin’s words, from a page aptly titled “Excavation and Memory:”

the man who merely makes an inventory of his findings, while failing to establish the exact location of where in today’s ground the ancient treasures have been stored up, cheats himself of his richest prize. In this sense, for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them. (*SW* 2,2 576)

In the same vein, James’s very site-specific reading of New York spaces—in its convergence of the spatial dimensions of its sights and sites along with their cross-temporal extensions—is consistently informed and perhaps even burdened by previous memories. It is difficult to distinguish Benjamin’s from James’s employment of memory when one reads phrases like this one from “New York Revisited:” “My recovery of impressions... may have been judged to involve itself with excursions of memory—memory directed to the antecedent time—reckless almost to extravagance” (*TAS* 44).

As Tamara Follini argues, James's strolling in the streets of New York and his consequent reflections not only "recall a romantic paradigm of a walk as a process of self-discovery and knowledge," but may also lead to "dispossession, of the self and its history, of a place in contemporary society" (42). They establish a context of danger and risk that is most explicitly indicated during James's account of his visit to the Met. Reflecting on the museum premises, he says,

Was it in the garden also, as I say, that the Metropolitan Museum had meanwhile struck me as standing?—the impression of a quite other hazard of *flanerie* this, and one of those memories, once more, that I find myself standing off from, as under the shadow of their too numerous suggestion [...] The original Museum was a thing of the far past; hadn't I the vision of it, from ancient days, installed, stately though scrappy, in a large eccentric house in West Fourteenth Street, a house of the prior period, even the early, impressive construction of which one recalled from days still more ancient, days so far away that to be able to travel back to them was almost as good, or as bad, as being a centenarian? This superfluous consciousness of the original, seat of the museum, of where and what it had been, was one of those terrible traps to memory, about the town, which baited themselves with the cheese of association, so to speak, in order to exhibit one afterwards as "caught," or, otherwise expressed, as old; such being the convicted state of the unfortunate who knows the *whole* of so many of his stories. (*TAS* 91, emphasis in the original)

Visiting the Met, James entirely relies on his memory of the museum back in the day when its seat was in West Fourteenth Street only to subsequently find this *memoire involontaire*¹⁹ to be "superfluous" and perhaps somewhat disturbing. Moreover, he sees the workings of the flâneur as precarious and hazardous because

¹⁹ Benjamin's 1929 essay "The Image of Proust" not only reveals an elective affinity between the two authors, but also emphasizes the connections between involuntary memory and the act of writing. Drawing on Peter Szondi's Proust-Benjamin chapter, in his study entitled *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, John McCole maintains that: "The culmination of *A la recherche du temps perdu* comes with the narrator's decision to compose the novel; only art can hope to capture and stabilize the fleeting epiphanies of involuntary memory" (264).

excessive dependence on past remembrances might potentially interfere with the supposed objectivity of the observer. The daunting *flânerie* that intimidates James seems to come in full effect since the “too numerous suggestion” of the Met space, “the cheese of association” performs its workings on his consciousness in much the same way that “space winks at the *flâneur*” asking him “what do you think may have gone on here?” (*TAP* 418-9). In James’s archiving of space, history seems to approach Benjamin’s definition: it “is never, in any rich sense, the immediate crudity of what ‘happens,’ but the much finer complexity of what we read into it and think of in connection with it” (*TAS* 88).

The Metropolitan “is a palace of art, truly, that sits there on the edge of the Park, rearing itself with a radiance, yet offering you expanses to tread” but the important thing for James is that “it spoke with a hundred voices of that huge process of historic *waste* that the place in general keeps putting before you; [...] the reiterated sacrifice to pecuniary *profit*” (*TAS* 91, emphasis added). The excerpt attests to James’s very economic vision of waste and profit as a dichotomy in which everything is ultimately inserted. As Wendy Graham suggests, the Museum is “symptomatic of the prodigious scale of wastefulness entailed in pecuniary emulation as a pedagogical and civilizing strategy” (262). In fact, waste and profit may be read as manifestations of accumulation and consumption. According to Marx’s reading, capitalism functions with two seemingly contrasting but essentially complementary attitudes. The first is the cycle of accumulation, the heaping up of riches that entails economizing and thrift. The second is consumption that presupposes markets eager for products and ensures profit making. These two sides of the same coin find for Marx their expression in the lines of Goethe’s *Faust*, which he quotes: “Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast; the one is ever parting from the other” (*Capital* 741).²⁰ While on the one hand, capitalists “are forced by the coercive laws of competition to accumulate and reinvest,” they are “plagued by the desire to consume on the other” (Harvey, *Companion* 258). Marx suggests that, initially, capitalists exercised restraint on consumption but “as the

²⁰ In his lectures on the first volume of the *Capital*, Thanasis Giouras often refers to these lines in relation to what I describe here.

spiral of accumulation on a progressively increasing scale got under way” these limitations were done away with (Harvey, *Companion* 258). The tendency to accumulate is inextricably tied with Marx’s renowned term “abstinence”: following the phase of primary accumulation capitalists abstain from using the nascent income and choose to *de novo* recommit the wealth into the production process and so invest it in capital accumulation.

The emergence of historical weight, “the bitterness of history” (*TAS* 41), is another element in James’s productive receptivity of space and his impression of the urban environment. James again makes reference to the notion of waste in “New York Social Notes” by elaborating on the idea of a relentless meaningless replacement of buildings through alluding to the French Revolution imagery of “the very young sent to the scaffold—the youths and maidens, all bewildered and stainless” (*TAS* 77). Although, as stated in his brief preface, the “freshness of eye” of the “inquiring stranger” is alternated with the “acute” status of the “initiated native” (*TAS* 4), James here falls back on European history to refer to American current affairs. The French past is considered along with the American present in a gesture of re-constellating what he reads as architectural tensions and strife within the metropolitan fabric. In that sense, I would not wholeheartedly agree with Beverly Haviland that James is “deeply interested in how one made sense of the past while looking, hopefully, into possible futures” (285). Rather I think that James shares common ground with Benjamin as they both dialectically read the urban landscape with a view to attempting “a history of now,”²¹ thus salvaging what has been thrust into oblivion; in that, James tentatively performs the task of the historian, “the herald who invites the dead to the table,” as Benjamin would have it (*TAP* 481). Later on, James argues “that history is never, in any rich sense, the immediate crudity of what ‘happens,’ but the much finer complexity of what we read into it and think of in connection with it” (88). Even if America “had repudiated the past” as A. Wilber Stevens argues, I disagree that it “did not provide the opportunity for such reflective activity” (30-31). In fact, it is this resistance to history that James critically reflects on and debunks.

²¹ I borrow this term from the 2011 music album by Asian Dub Foundation, “A History of Now.”

The rise and demise of ephemeral phenomena and the passing of historical time is also visible in *Berlin Childhood*. In his subchapter “The Telephone,” Benjamin focuses on “[t]he sound with which [the telephone] rang between two and four in the afternoon” and deciphers this auditory stimulus as “an alarm signal that menaced not only my parents’ midday nap but the historical era that underwrote and enveloped this siesta” (BC 49). Benjamin here marks the era of the ringing of the telephone not so much as a fresh start, a coming of “a brave new world,” but rather as the beginning of the end of the era of the siesta. Similarly, in his “At the Corner of Steglitzer and Genthiner,” discussing his visits to his aunt, his “Tante Lehmann,” he mentions a gift he received: “the large glass cube containing a complete working mine, in which miniature miners, stonecutters, and mine inspectors, with tiny wheelbarrows, hammers, and lanterns, performed their movements precisely in time to a clockwork” (TAS 65). The toy is important for it is not only an image of industrial modernity and a reminder of the division of labor, but also an instrument that “dates from an era that did not yet begrudge even the child of the wealthy bourgeois household a view of workplaces and machines” (TAS 65). Just as “The Telephone” stands for acoustic communication being gradually displaced by modern media (Jennings, “Mausoleum” 317), the latter section also registers the rupture of the bourgeois boy accessing the image of labor in an era that otherwise made it invisible for bourgeois children.

The mnemonic tool, which unfolds like a mnemonic palimpsest, so to speak, registers in both pedestrian roaming as well as James’s and Benjamin’s space archives. While Posnock has discussed James as a strolling observer of the *American Scene*, Greg Zacharias acknowledges the factor of memory in the text and argues that James is rather “a flâneur of his own memory” (26); the 1907 narrative of the *American Scene* not only offers “a literary and political deployment of the analyst character [...] and of the author,” but also “of the 1904-5 American scenery itself” (26). In the same fashion, *Berlin Childhood*, “Benjamin’s first attempt at autobiography,” features a Benjamin that is “doubly present—both as a child and as the mature writer” (Witte and Winnett 50). This reading, which emphasizes the texts’ value for James’s and Benjamin’s spatial politics on the threshold between the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, underlines the act of memorialization highlighting that “both analyst and author must inevitably ‘play’[...] ‘the chord of remembrance’” (*TAS* 6 qtd. in Zacharias 27). Perhaps then, the return to the original site culminates for both men in a gesture that postulates memory as the sole authentic site.

The specific references to two spaces in James’s and Benjamin’s texts, the New York hotel and the Loggia underline the interrelatedness of space and spectacle. As Michael W. Jennings explains, the word “Loggia” refers to an architectural feature that distinguishes itself from the balcony: rather than extending beyond the building’s shell, it is “carved out behind the skin, with three interior walls, a roof, and a railing on the open side” (“Mausoleum” 329). The section on the loggias inaugurates *Berlin Childhood* underlining Benjamin’s recurrent theme of inside-outside and pointing to “the child’s spectatorial gaze” (Jennings, “Mausoleum” 316). Reminiscent of Poe’s window in “The Man of the Crowd,” the loggia is also a threshold that reconciles the private with the social, the domestic with the urban. The interior-exterior dialectic of this space is further punctuated by the mention of “[t]he rhythm of the metropolitan railway and of carpet-beating” which rocked the young boy to sleep (*BC* 39). The very urban and very exterior noise of the railway is juxtaposed with the domestic sound of beating carpets that alludes to household chores.

The continental Loggia finds its transatlantic counterpart in James’s “hotel” which expresses “a social, indeed positively an aesthetic ideal, and making it so, at this supreme pitch, a synonym for civilization” (*TAS* 51). James finds that the Waldorf-Astoria in New York embodies the “amazing hotel-world,” “sitting by this absent margin for life with her open lap and arms, is reduced to confessing, with a strained smile, across the traffic and the danger, how little, outside her mere swing-door, she can do for you” (*TAS* 51). The fancy hotel here stands as a protective enclave that shelters and shields its residents from the outside commotion, but most importantly, as the threshold between privacy and sociability. Whereas in this particular excerpt the hotel seems to be a private space isolated from the world, a few lines later, James remarks that besides the American society, others are also

endorsing the hotel-world, and as a result “unlearn” “their old discrimination in favour of the private life” (*TAS* 51). Thus, the hotel space is characterized by the intertwining of the liminality of the public space that turns private and the private enclave that has the ability to open its border to the world. Hsuan L. Hsu is right to argue that, in fusing geographical and aesthetic concerns, James shows “how emergent geographical scales (like Victorian apartments, metropolitan centre, and global circuits of capitalist exchange) affect the subjective psyches of individual characters and readers” (233). Benjamin displays similar concerns in his admittance that “the air of the courtyards has forever remained intoxicating to me” and that “it is precisely this air that sustains the images and allegories which preside over my thinking, just as the caryatids, from the heights of their loggias, preside over the courtyards of Berlin’s West End” (*BC* 39). As the loggias “mark the outer limit of the Berliner’s lodging” (*BC* 42), so does the “native conception of the hotel” bespeak the “ubiquitous American force” (*TAS* 53).

Aside from the anticipated exploration of a sequence of sites, both James and Benjamin unforeseeably foreground the distinct memory of a girl in their texts. In “New York Revisited,” James views the ancient rotunda of Castle Garden “as a vague non-entity,” as he recalls “the time when it was the commodious concert-hall of New York, the firmament of long-extinguished stars” (*TAS* 41). His reminiscence of a performance he had enjoyed as a child some half a century back interrupts his visit of the actual venue:

the image of the infant phenomenon Adelina Patti, whom (another large-eyed infant) I had been benevolently taken to hear: Adelina Patti, in a fanlike little white frock and “pantalettes” and a hussar-like red jacket, mounted on an armchair, its back supporting her, wheeled to the front of the stage and warbling like a tiny thrush even in the nest (*TAS* 41).

Adelina Patti (1843-1919), whom Susana Salgado calls a “nineteenth-century superstar” (63), was a Madrid-born famous soprano, who moved with her Italian parents to New York while she was still a baby. Her first appearance was at Niblo’s Garden in December 1851, at the age of eight and she continued singing until the

age of seventy-one (Brown, *New York Stage I*; 181, 2; 40). Patti “remains one of the best-paid singers in all opera history” (Salgado 64) and has received wide critical appraisal. This combination of high brow art and equally high financial gains would not have left James unmoved. Paradoxically, this is not the only time that James refers to this experience. A later tribute to Patti is also made in 1913, in his other autobiographical book, *A Small Boy and Others*. There, he writes,

[U]nder proper protection, at Castle Garden, I listened to that rarest of infant phenomena, Adelina Patti, poised in an armchair that had been pushed to the footlights and announcing her incomparable gift. She was about of our own age, she was one of us, even though at the same time the most prodigious of fairies, of glittering fables. (98)

The passage about Patti in *The American Scene* seems to anticipate and prefigure the mnemonic and pertinent *Small Boy* excerpt. Both fragments register James’s admiration for the little girl-turned-star, capturing perhaps a glimpse of his unattainable desire.²²

Remembering his teacher, Helene Pufahl, Benjamin similarly strays to the image of another prodigious little girl, albeit memorable for much more ominous reasons:

Boys and girls from the better families of the bourgeois West took part in Fraulein Pufahl’s circle. In certain cases one was not too particular, so that

²² It is worth mentioning that the first reference to Adelina Patti is actually made as early as in 1874 in James’s short story “Eugene Pickering.” The tale first appears in the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* (October–November 1874) and although James does not deal with Adelina Patti directly, her story is mentioned thrice; first, at the onset of the tale around a gambling table in Homburg where the unnamed narrator watches his old school-mate, the now twenty-seven-year-old Eugene gamble with a “faded beauty” (CS 38). The unattainable and experienced *femme fatale* Madame Blumenthal is interestingly also an artist: she has “published a novel, with her views on matrimony, in the Georges Sand manner” (CS 60) and also “novels and poems and pamphlets on every conceivable theme, from the conversion of Lola Montez to the Hegelian philosophy” (CS 61). The narrator makes her acquaintance at a Patti opera concert and is enchanted: she claims to be a “fierce democrat,” a “revolutionist” with the wish to die “on a great barricade” (CS 64). Madame Blumenthal objects to the narrator’s remark about “the charm of Adelina Patti’s singing” saying that “it was meager, it was trivial, it lacked soul” and stressing the importance of “great passion” (CS 65). In the meantime, the curtain has risen again and “Madame Patti’s voice rose wheeling like a skylark, and rained down its silver notes” upon which the narrator concludes “give me that art [...] and I will leave you your passion” (CS 65). By the end of the story Madame Blumenthal accepts to marry Eugene and then goes back on her word while Eugene has “tasted of the cup of life” (CS 74), a phrase that in turn prefigures Isabel Archer’s reluctance to “touch the cup of experience” (TPL 159).

this domain of the bourgeoisie a little girl of the nobility also might stray. She was called Luise von Landau, and the name soon had me under its spell. Even today, it has remained alive in my memory, though there is another reason for that. It was the first among these of my age group on which I heard fall the accent of death. (*BC* 67)

Both Adelina Patti and Luise von Landau are noble, prodigious, and already out of this world: for Adelina nobility comes from “her incomparable gift,” for Luise it is a class distinction. The former is prodigious in being a child prodigy performing for James; the latter is prodigious in having Benjamin “under [her] spell.” The two little girls acquire the form of an allegory of exceptionality for the two men.

The allegorist, as Benjamin purports, “is as it were, the polar opposite of the collector” (*TAP* 211). Having given up “the attempt to elucidate things through research into their properties and relations,” he “dislodges things from their context and [...] relies on his profundity to illuminate their meaning” (*TAP* 211). Adelina perhaps occupies James’s mind and text because she represents James’s relation to the literary market (the sense of performing)²³, a community of peers of the same age (“she was one of us”), but also what may be perceived as an insurmountable divide between him and the ideal story (“the most prodigious of fairies, of glittering fables”). Luise epitomizes Benjamin’s perception of class spill-over (she “stray[s]” into the domain of the bourgeoisie), and her name bears magical qualities—or “theological niceties” as Marx would have it (*Capital* 163)—(“its spell”). Most importantly, despite belonging to Benjamin’s peers (“of my age group”), Luise has become an icon of mortality, an allegory of premature death; her unnaturally early demise has come to equate the girl with death, in his mind. According to Benjamin, “in every collector hides an allegorist, and in every allegorist a collector” (*TAP* 211). Thus the two authors may be read to embed in their urban chronicles their remembrances of the two girls as distinct allegories that self-referentially point back to the authors themselves.

²³ To the best of my knowledge, Goble’s “Delirious Henry James: A Small Boy and New York” is the sole scholarly work featuring a two-line commentary on Patti. As he notes, Castle Garden hosted Patti and “other celebrated divas from whom [James] learns “what ‘acclamation’ might mean” (*AS* 42 qtd. in Goble 391).

Discussing *Berlin Childhood* in a letter to Gershom Scholem, Benjamin mentions that “these childhood memories... are not narratives in the form of a chronicle but... individual expeditions into the depths of memory” (*BC* xi-xii). In much the same way, James’s memory of Patti interrupts the description of Castle Garden, turning it from a sketch of a geographical site and a visual sight into an “expedition” seeking to unearth the hidden strata of the polyvalent urban palimpsest. The memory of his encounter with Patti is important because it foregrounds the event of her past performance he has witnessed as a child, the spectacle he fondly remembers. Mark Goble reminds us of Benjamin’s warning that “reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography” (*BC* 316) and argues that “James’s accomplishment has less to do with how well—how clearly, that is—he remembers ‘old New York,’ and much more with how deeply he shows urban experience as inspired and exhilarated by media of every sort” (361). The depth of memory enriches experience, and additionally, recollection is “an elemental phenomenon which aims at giving us the time for organizing the reception of stimuli which we initially lacked” (Paul Valéry qtd. in Benjamin, *Baudelaire* 116). What is more, the Patti and Von Landau excerpts constitute instances whereby the narrator reads the urban text resorting to his imagination, fantasy, and memory, rather than thoroughly scrutinizing the landscape from a strictly intellectual or empirical viewpoint.

James’s and Benjamin’s narratives of their birth cities are selective archives of the two cities that not only evoke the past through the present through the dominance of memory, but also *renew the old* bringing it into conjunction with the new. To better illustrate my point, towards the end of *Berlin Childhood*, in the entry titled “Cabinets,” Benjamin describes how, after Christmas and birthday celebrations, he would single out one of the presents he got with a view to donating it to the “new cabinet” in which whatever was stored away “kept its newness longer” (156). He notes that what he had in mind as a child, was “not to retain the new but to renew the old:” “And to renew the old—in such a way that I myself, the newcomer, would make what was old my own—was the task of the collection that filled my drawer” (156). Besides effecting the significant renewal of the old, with

the reorganization of his cabinets, Benjamin links this renewal to the acquisition of things. While the task of the drawer collection was to renew the old, the task of assuming possession of objects resonates another text by Benjamin, namely “Unpacking My Library” in *Illuminations*. In this text, Benjamin argues that the collector’s existence is tied to “a very mysterious relationship to ownership” (62) and, more specifically, one that “does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate” (62). Thus, the rationale behind the collector’s behavior is “an owner’s feeling of responsibility toward his property” (“Unpacking” 68), a concept fundamentally rooted in the capitalist economy, and also “a form of practical memory” (*TAP* 205 and 883). As Eli Friedlander has argued, memory is not simply “an instrument for retrieving already formed experiences, but rather the medium of the realization of the meaning of the past” (23); in fact, Benjamin came to “characterize the constructed dialectical image as ‘the involuntary memory of humanity’” (Friedlander 24).

Perhaps not paradoxically, before Benjamin and James adopt similar mnemonic strategies which attest to their sustained attention to the minute, they seem to have started from very distinct origins. Benjamin’s evaluation of Baudelaire is commonly known: he is the *par excellence* modern poet faced with the phantasmagoria of the capitalist condition. James, on the other hand, in a critique of Baudelaire published in the *Nation* on April 27, 1876, characterizes *Les Fleurs du Mal* as “evil-smelling weeds” and Baudelaire as “taking up mere cupfuls of mud and bog-water” (Gargano 561). According to James, Baudelaire offers a “lurid landscape and unclean furniture” (Gargano 561); James also contemptuously maintains that, like so many of his compatriots, Baudelaire remains on the surface of things²⁴ ignoring their inherent moral implications (*LC* 153):

His great quality was an inordinate cultivation of the sense of the picturesque, and his care was for how things looked, and whether some kind

²⁴ Michael Millgate, in his study of James’s revisions for the New York Edition, argues that James was “improving the surfaces of his past work without affecting what he was accustomed to call substance” (87).

of imaginative amusement was not to be got out of them, much more than for what they meant and whither they led and what was their use in human life at large.

James finds that Baudelaire is destructively influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and suggests that “an enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection,” then contending that Poe was the greater charlatan but also the greater genius of the two (*LC* 154).

James’s discontent with Baudelaire’s attentiveness to the material and the concrete seems stretched especially when one thinks of the critical school that has explored precisely these elements in James’s work—I am here thinking especially of Otten’s *A Superficial Reading of Henry James: Preoccupations with the Material World* (2006), Maya Higashi Wakana’s *Performing the Everyday in Henry James’s Late Novels* (2009), and Michael Anesko’s *Monopolizing the Master: Henry James and the Politics of Modern Literary Scholarship* (2012). Having emphatically argued that Baudelaire is too preoccupied with the surface of things, James proceeds to make much the same “mistake” he criticizes Baudelaire for: caring much less for objective representation than he wishes to admit, the James of the *American Scene* delivers a spatial surface of unfathomable depth engaging in the analysis of phenomena and events that transcend the limits of the spaces he discusses.

In fact, setting off from different origins, James’s and Benjamin’s urban peregrinations head towards convergent ends; their originality in approaching subjectivity recasts the city as a narrative that, in both cases, may be read as an elliptical and, at times, incoherent archive of space. Both authors’ archival politics entail the power of inclusion and exclusion, that which is represented and that which is omitted. Their very particular and idiosyncratic representations of sites are arranged and orchestrated through remembrance and the reconstruction of the actual places that bears the mark of the two exiled authors. Whereas the act of memory features as a counterpart to the commodifying powers of capitalism—the imposed “publicness” of places that James complains about—and the erosion of the private sphere by Nazi politics—that haunted Benjamin—yet it is closely associated with possession, which is a very intimate and very private mode of having and the

cornerstone of capitalism. Memory is a “dead possession,” something past or dead that has come to belong to the living. Benjamin argues that “[e]pic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense,” genuine memory ought to “yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through” (*SW* 2,2 576). The two texts reconfigure the modern in that they salvage the private self, the individual memory, while never losing sight of the historical and the collective.

1.3 Space Perception in *Pilgrimage*: Contrapuntally Reading Dorothy

Richardson’s Archive

Having discussed the mnemonic representation of urban space in James and Benjamin, I now turn to the portrayal of city spaces in the now, in the perpetual given moment that is recorded over the course of *Pilgrimage* which both celebrates the ongoing present and draws on that which has already happened. I will argue that the representation of Miriam’s spatial practices, her gendered reception of urban space contributes to a reading of *Pilgrimage* as a literary archive of the female modern experience. Richardson’s means of registering space is read as a literary recollection of sites, both metropolitan and colonial. Richardson enacts the politics of writing the subject in the city and becomes the author whose literary archive, read retrospectively, shares affinities with Benjamin’s consistent archiving of the city. Both authors attempt to rescue a specific cultural heritage of modernity from oblivion. Their partial, subjective, selective, and eclectic archives counteract an archiving that consolidates the narrative of modernity as a narrative that orders and arranges ruins, fragments, and subjects into a homogenizing, unifying, and cohesive whole, such as that of museums or history books. Both Richardson and Benjamin turn the “excavation sites” of collecting urban impressions into precarious “construction sites” where “a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic” is possible (Foster 22).

I explore the indissoluble relationship of Miriam Henderson with London arguing that the metropolis enables a mobility that ushers Miriam into a newly-

found intellectual emancipation and political maturity that transgresses the social boundaries imposed on her. Originally obliged to leave England and her family at 17 to seek employment as a teacher in Germany, Miriam finally lands in 1890s London, at the dental practice of Dr. Hancock and finds lodging at the house of Mrs. Bailey on Tansley Street. Miriam's representation of the realities of her urban surroundings reflects her consolidation as a political subject. Richardson's text is a fiction of the woman as a political subject within the fiction of the urban text. My work aspires to contribute to the scholarship that has tried to "alter the notion that *Pilgrimage* is a book that concentrates on the mystical, philosophical aspects of feminine identity at the expense of more material factors" (Bluemel 85). I will demonstrate how Richardson's text constitutes a materialist representation of the city created by the working woman. Miriam projects her consciousness onto the city, its spaces, objects, people, and, in the process, retrieves the self as part of the world. The workings of Miriam's consciousness, her arranging of urban stimuli are subsequently used in Richardson's literary and semi-autobiographical archive of protean metropolitan and colonial sites.²⁵

Following Buck-Morss's directive to "interpret works of art of the past in the light of the revolutionary potential of the present" as the sole way to redeem Benjamin's "oppressed past" (*SW* 4 396), I propose a materialist reading of Richardson's work. Hence I argue that what critics have identified as Richardson's exploration of the mystical and philosophical is,²⁶ in fact, a poetics fashioned from the working woman's social and political being, immanent in her experience of the everyday, the mundane and subtle nuances of city life. Benjamin's statement in "Literary history and the study of literature" sheds light on the workings of both *The Arcades Project* and *Pilgrimage*:

It is not a question of representing works of literature in the context of their

²⁵ In her 2013 *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing*, Abbie Garrington has already discussed how Richardson's "haptic modernism" is first and foremost visual. Garrington focuses mostly on Richardson's *Close Up* columns and her more limited reference to *Pilgrimage* argues that Miriam's writing is a haptic experience as well.

²⁶ For example, see Caesar R. Blake's 1960 *Dorothy M. Richardson*. Blake reads *Pilgrimage* as a mystical novel, while Llantada Díaz's "Pointed Roofs: Initiating Pilgrimage as Quest Narrative" examines *Pointed Roofs* as "the first stage of Miriam's mythical quest" (53).

time, but to bring to representation, in the time when they were produced the time which recognises them—that is, our time. (qtd. in Buse, Hirschkop, McCracken, Taithe 30)

The affiliation of the time of authorship of the literary works with the time they portray symptomatically reveals the time of their context and its (un)timeliness in our present; in other words, “[t]he true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space)” (*TAP* 206 qtd. in Buse, Hirschkop, McCracken, Taithe 36). The ensuing analysis explores the way in which Richardson’s text articulates a narrative voice that calls for the Benjaminian cultural critique: the preoccupation with the mundane, the spatiotemporal dialectic, the attention to the commodity as the sign of capital. The condition of modernity frames and pervades Benjamin’s and Richardson’s texts not “as a rupture with the past, or as a fresh start, but as a set of processes and representations that were engaged in an urgent and inventive dialogue with their own historical conditions of existence” (Nead 8).

Being consistently framed as a pensive observer in *Pilgrimage*, Miriam seems to have allusive ties with some of Benjamin’s dialectical types, such as the flâneur and the collector. I read Miriam’s reception of London spaces as a sustained reading practice that involves the collection of images of sites and sights that bespeak the experience of the subject in the modern condition. In Richardson, as in Benjamin, the inventory of the modern always derives from the most personal, yet it can never escape the historical burden of the collective. If *The Arcades* delineates an “archaeology of the debris” (Markus 13) that simultaneously refers to the city at a turning point in modernity and a plethora of other literary, historical, and philosophical texts in order to rescue the forgotten history of the unsung subject in the modern condition, I propose that in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*, Miriam, through a similar but symptomatic archaeology effected by the function of the dialectical image, is able to decipher and read the subtext of her present. Through its heroine, Richardson’s text reconstructs the relation between the subject and the city within a theater of dialectical images. According to Benjamin, the dialectical image is “an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash” and thus illuminates “the now of its

recognizability” (*TAP* 473); being inextricably bound to the arrest of thoughts, or “dialectics at a standstill,” the dialectical image “appears as the caesura in the movement of thought” (*TAP* 475). The notion of simultaneity pervades the idea of the dialectical image: “it is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (*TAP* 463). Miriam is overwhelmed by a sequence of dialectical images in *Pilgrimage* and it is through her *dialectics at a standstill* that Richardson re-constellates the material of her novel.

In my opinion, Richardson does not build a literary archive that is confined to the turn-of-the-century London. Perhaps most importantly, she brings forth a literary archive of the discarded past, the refuse of women’s lives. Apart from Miriam’s nascent sense and affirmation of subjectivity, and her minor and major victories, Richardson’s archive of feminine experience also includes gloomier episodes, namely the *fin-de-siècle* frequent convergence of femininity and mental instability, the encounter with poverty and sickness, as well as elliptical allusions to suicide at the end of *Honeycomb*. Additionally, the sheer multiplicity of spaces that Miriam inhabits or explores and the length of the text itself display Richardson’s attack on the time conventions of the *Bildungsroman* novel, as the narrative forces the collapse of disparate time zones that are archived in her novel. As Howard Finn notes, the original reception of *Pilgrimage*, “on the basis of one novel at a time, sometimes years apart” did not result in perceiving the novels “as chapters in an integral whole” but rather as “forming a loose saga, featuring the same protagonist” (122). Richardson’s “mounting accumulation of detail” and “the slackening movement of the prose” contribute to the sensation “of volumes read and far more time traversed”²⁷ (Glikin 45). In the words of Carol Watts, “*Pilgrimage* insistently records, with an obsessive eye for detail and nuance, the changing thoughts, memories, and desires of a woman living an ordinary life” (4) and, in doing so, reveals “the impact of modernity on an ordinary life” (Watts 56 qtd. in

²⁷ To cite an example, as Gloria Glikin observes, “[f]orty two pages recount an emblematic day at Wimpole Street with the three dentists for whom she worked, from nine o’clock in the morning to half past six in the evening” (45).

Gan 60).

In 1912, at the age of 36, Miriam, Richardson's alter ego, begins to write what will eventually become the *Pilgrimage*. When she embarks on the adventure of telling her own story—in a very unconventional way²⁸—the city roamer and the author/archivist become one, the narrative tension between author and heroine is resolved. *Pilgrimage*, as, indeed, all literature, offers more when read in the manner Eagleton proposes for history: “history is not a fair copy but a palimpsest, whose deleted layers must be thrust to light, written together in their episodic rhythms rather than repressed to unruptured narrative” (*Walter Benjamin* 59). In this context, it seems that, in terms of form and content, *Pilgrimage* is a work that brings forth new archival material, such as women's differentiated experience of labor in the early twentieth century, as well as diverse textualities to represent the past and the present. In that, it approaches Eagleton's “deleted layers” (*Walter Benjamin* 59) by shifting the focus of attention to the making of events and to the writing of history—rather than to history as a finished product.

Urban Space and the Awakening of the Self: Phantasmagoric Apparitions

Miriam Henderson's relation to private places and her mobility in the public sphere determine and reveal her status as the gendered subject at the turn of the century metropolis. On the one hand, Miriam explores and enjoys the city; she takes the train, she walks, and most of all, she keenly observes the surrounding city. On the other hand, the mere fact that she is a woman sets limitations to the range and scope of her mobility. Benjamin's reading of the urban condition in the French capital in *The Arcades Project* lends a theoretical lens here, through which Miriam's active engagement in the life of the English metropolis, indicates her subjection to the unceasing fluctuations of the market. Although I do not claim that *Pilgrimage* in its entirety is a literary arcade of the English metropolis, I do think of Richardson as the *woman archivist* who, as the case of Miriam indicates, enacts the history the

²⁸ This unconventionality is reflected in the publishing history of Dorothy Richardson's novel. Indicatively, Margaret Anderson decided that she wanted to publish Richardson in *The Little Review*, while the next part of *Pilgrimage* (*Interim*) appeared alongside Joyce's *Ulysses* beginning in June, 1919 (Fromm, *Biography* 117-8).

working woman makes in the streets, placing her heroine in the *herstory*²⁹ both of them will eventually narrate. Richardson and Miriam, author and narrator, attempt a narrative opposing the conventions of male narratives and defying the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. In the process of becoming a writer, Miriam assumes various positions, which affect her trajectory towards authorship, thus representing the dialectics between the woman worker and the woman author. I argue that the heroine's mobility and her urban surroundings play a decisive role in her awakening to herself and the world around her—patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism. Miriam's initial contemplative trajectory, her imagined mobility, is performed as travelling exercises, constituting a preface to her actual mobility in the phantasmagoria of the city. In fact, Miriam becomes mobile so as to seek her place in the world and inevitably participate in its politics of exchange and consumption, thus affected by the process of alienation and reification; the displacement from the comfort of her family home introduces her to the market and reinforces the articulation of her identity alike. Thus, she is the gendered subject who ambivalently remains “at home in the world” and “homeless in the world”³⁰ at the same time.

Jean Radford, in her *Dorothy Richardson* (1991) has elaborately commented on the significance of Miriam Henderson's walking the streets of London, contextualizing it within the specific era. She argues for “an actual enlargement in women's sphere of movement” during the period 1896-1908:

Improvements in the policing and lighting of central London, the extension of the underground system, bicycle and loosening codes of respectability, meant greater freedom for the middle class woman than ever before. (53)

Radford reads in Richardson a transition from “the potent Woolfian image of the

²⁹ Robin Morgan is accredited with coining the term in her 1970 book *Sisterhood is Powerful*. As Casey Miller and Kate Swift write in 1976 *Words & Women*: “When women in the movement use herstory, their purpose is to emphasize that women's lives, deeds, and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued in standard histories” (146). Since then, the term has been used in feminist academic discourse, to describe feminist efforts and the emergence of new female literature that has sought to challenge or transgress the limitations posed by the masculinist logic of the male-centered canon.

³⁰ Benjamin described alienation in modernity “as a collective state of no longer being *heimisch* or *at home*” (Hanssen 2)

room as the space of female freedom and creativity” to “the equally potent image of the street (specifically the London street) as the site of female empowerment” and concludes that “the construction of the city as a wasteland in male modernism” is challenged (35). While “the conservatism of the English past [...] meant only restriction, dependence, imprisonment,” London is “imaged as positive, enabling” (Radford 35). Important as this transition may be, observing Miriam in space means looking at both private and public places.

Yvonne Wong comments on the difference between the Heideggerian dwelling and the undwelling of Miriam³¹ and distinguishes between the two different experiences of her room in Central London (*II The Tunnel*) and North London spaces (*I Backwater*): the first is one of “joy” while the latter “entails isolation, darkness, and suffocation” (7). Wong argues that the “discomforting sensuous contrasts” between the two spaces attest to “Miriam’s dissimilar relationships” with the two London worlds she experiences: “her beloved Central London in *The Tunnel* where she dwells, and the ugly North London Wordsworth House in *Backwater* where she undwells” (7). This comment is supported by the text itself: North London is “hard, strong, sneering, money-making, noisy, and trammy” but more importantly it means “twenty pounds a year and the need for resignation and determination every day” (*I Backwater* 322). The disjunctive dwelling and undwelling unsettles the boundary between the private and the public: Miriam perceives the city as hers, public as it may be, whereas the private world of her North London residence stresses her dislocation, her homelessness.

Elizabeth Bronfen similarly reads “a tension between London as her privileged space, a kind of center to which Miriam returns again and again, and the various destinations which make up the locations beyond London” (18). She distinguishes three interior spaces: Miriam’s living space, the “islands,” that is, sites

³¹ In the essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Martin Heidegger sees dwelling and undwelling as gathering both the materiality and immateriality of man’s relation to space. He says,

The loss of rapport with things that occurs in states of depression would be wholly impossible if even such a state were not still what it is as a human state: that is a *staying* with things (emphasis mine). Only if this stay already characterizes human being can the things among which we are also fail to speak to us, fail to concern us any longer (157).

Thus, there is a spatial quality to our existence itself.

that are “initially unfamiliar” but become “semantically coded,” and the neutral spaces which Miriam “experiences as free spaces, though not as her own” (18). Gan also notes Miriam’s “ardent fervor for rooms:” “On a weekend visit to Alma and Hypo Wilson, she soaks in the soft brightness of her bedroom, feeling so pleased with it that she feels that going downstairs to be with company will be a ‘sacrifice’” (*II The Tunnel* 111 qtd. in Gan 61-2). Gan suggests that Miriam recognizes “what a room of her own means—privacy and hence freedom” (61-2).

Despite the distinction between the London spaces that confine her and those she feels secure and confident in, it is still the city that enables her to experience not only space itself but a fuller existence in an ontological and political sense. Her wanderings allow her to explore her femininity questioning the dominant patriarchal discourse of religion, science, and even literature, thus enabling her critique on hegemony. Benjamin’s “colportage phenomenon of space” (*TAP* 418) is obvious in Miriam’s reception of the city, and experience of space has a profound influence on her, much like it does on the flâneur: “The space winks at the flâneur: What do you think may have gone on here?” (*TAP* 418-9). Walking around St Pancras, Miriam observes: “She belonged to the darkness around St Pancras church... people had been garroted in that part of the Euston Road not so very long ago” (*II The Tunnel* 30). It is a moment when the past of the specific space converges with the present moment and Miriam performs the active task of flânerie, reading the palimpsest of the city and deciphering its riddle³².

In London, Miriam enjoys the city *per se*. Her relentless observation empowers her both to structure her own identity and to reflect on the world (Bowler, “Gaze” 77). The revealing passage where she praises the city for its uniqueness culminates in the notion that the urban space liberates her from the burdens superimposed by patriarchy and associated with her female identity, her gender:

that feeling when you live right in London, of being a Londoner, the thing

³² In her *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (2003), Deborah Parsons has already discussed that Miriam, in her urban peregrinations, often adopts a panoramic, detached perspective, which is reminiscent of the Benjaminian conception of the flâneur (76). Benjamin also uses the term “panoramic literature” in his *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*.

that made it enough to be a Londoner, getting up in London; the thing that made real Londoners different from any one else, going about with a sense that made them alive. The very idea of living anywhere but in London, when one thought about it, produced a blank sensation in the heart. What was it I said the other day? “London’s got me. It’s taking my health, and eating up my youth. It may as well have what remains....” [...] She would be again, soon... not a woman... a Londoner. (*II The Tunnel* 265-6)

Representing herself as a London dweller and refuting the conventional roles of women is, in fact, a starting point for Miriam’s exploration of her female identity. On the one hand, the above excerpt refers to Miriam as a sexless Londoner empowered by the endless possibilities of the city. This is a disposing of her gender not in the genetic sense but rather in the social sense of what it meant to be a “lady.” Miriam’s London is recast as a space that can be disconnected from the spatial confines that require her to conform to stereotypical gender roles. In Lorraine Sim’s words, Richardson “dissociates Miriam’s relationship to the street from the conventional middle-class, gendered activity of shopping, instead foregrounding a relationship that is intersubjective, whereby Miriam imagines the street to be a part of her own being or ontology” (71). Moreover, the pure life force that she finds in London renders the city an enabling social and imaginary place.

On the other hand, the city very much relies on the domestic role that she rejects, since the notion of the “angel in the house” was construed as an emblem of the empire. The term was introduced by Coventry Patmore in his 1854 homonymous poem and was taken up by John Ruskin who indulged in the idea of a virginal domestic goddess, who is also a mother and wife. According to Ruskin, in her “sweet ordering” of things, the angel in the house cleansed and sanctified the domestic sphere for the men to resort to, exhausted from the commotion of trouble of the public sphere (73-4).³³ Miriam’s rejection of such roles relates to her critique

³³ John Ruskin’s essay “Of Queen’s Gardens” was initially presented as a public lecture and subsequently published in his collection *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). It epitomizes the Victorian ideal of femininity conflated with domesticity which defined women as belonging to the private sphere of the house, while reserving a much more active role for the man as “the doer, the creator, the discoverer” of the public sphere.

of her contemporaries:

What was the secret of the everlasting same awfulness of even the nicest or refined sheltered middle-class Englishwoman? [...] The “lady” was the wife for the professional Englishman—simple, sheltered, domesticated, trained in principles she did not think about, and living by them; revering professional and professionally successful men; (*II The Tunnel* 200).

In both excerpts, femininity is interpellated by space, Englishness, and class, in Miriam’s thoughts; “awfulness” is attributed to the “sheltered middle-class Englishwoman” and the interiority of shelter and domestication persists to reveal the subjugation of women. Francesca Frigerio has already discussed how “such ideological constructions of women’s roles” often “peep through Richardson’s pages to mirror her heroine’s difficult path to consciousness” (14).

Abbie Garrington draws attention to Miriam’s mobility around London as “central to the perception of its spatial reality, highlighted by the adjectival neologism in the description of North London as ‘noisy and trammy’” (*I Backwater* 322 qtd. in Garrington, “Haptic Text” 91):

She wandered about between Wimpole Street and St Pancras, [...] into the unending joy of the way the angles of buildings cut themselves out against the sky, glorious if she paused to survey them [...] a maze of shapes, flowing, tilting into each other, in endless patterns, sharp against the light; sharing her joy in the changing same song of the London traffic; the bliss of *post offices* and *railway stations*, *cabs* going on and on towards unknown space; *omnibuses* rumbling securely from point to point, always within the *magic circle* of London (*III Deadlock* 85-6, emphases mine).

Public spaces here exemplify the enchantment Miriam experiences amidst the fluidity of streets, buildings, and means of transport. The circularity of her schema presents London as an isle isolated and cut-off from the rest of the world and at the same time a laboratory of endless possibilities. More than that, her selection of the spaces, activities, and means of transport is very specific in that it highlights literal

and metaphorical kinds of movement: the London traffic is a moving image in which nothing is still and everything crosses paths with each other, while post offices facilitate the dispatching of commodities, letters, and telegrams—the activities of circulation and communication. Railway stations, cabs, and omnibuses serve the purposes of travelling, the mobility of individuals.

I see Miriam's site-specific assortment of mobile human activities on a par with Benjamin's "magic circle," a characterization he employs when elaborating on the dialectical type of the collector and the method of collecting:

It is the deepest enchantment of the collector to enclose the particular item within *a magic circle*, where as a last shudder runs through it (the shudder of being acquired), it turns to stone. [...] Collecting is a form of practical memory, and of all the profane manifestations of "nearness" it is the most binding. (*TAP* 205)

The circularity of the schema also persists in Benjamin, yet here movement is turned into ossification, absolute stasis. Collecting is first of all acquiring, gaining possession of things and Miriam does speak as if she owns the city. By performing certain aspects of the work of the flâneur and the collector, Miriam becomes instrumental in Richardson's archival work: she engages in what Benjamin calls "practical memory" and offers Richardson the material of her novel. The authors of *Benjamin's Arcades: An Unguided Tour*; Peter Buse, Ken Hirschkop, Scott McCracken, and Bertrand Scott Taithe suggest that in first possessing things and then reconfiguring them, the collector "is able to possess a new consciousness" and that the process of re-assembly "is in itself political" (36). Miriam's reconfiguration of post-offices, railway stations, cabs, and omnibuses not only pays tribute to the concept of mobility, but it does so within the context of building a form of "practical memory" of space (*TAP* 205) that contributes to her archival practice.

After a professional appointment with the three Pernes sisters, who run a girl's school in Banbury Park, North London, and offer "twenty pounds a year in return for Miriam's services" (*I Backwater* 191), she goes out with her mother, jumps on an omnibus, and in awe witnesses the phantasmagoria of public spaces:

In these longer plots stood signboards and show-cases. ‘Photo-graphic Studio,’ ‘Commercial College,’ ‘Eye Treatment,’ ‘Academy of Dancing.’ ... She read the announcements with growing disquietude.

Rows of shops reappeared and densely crowded pavements, and then more high straight houses.

[...] She turned away uneasily to the spellbound streets. (*I Backwater* 195)

The excerpt alternates commercial establishments with private residences and crowded sidewalks, bringing to the fore the façade of a “*Blendwerk*, Benjamin’s deceptive image designed to dazzle” (*TAP* 938). Miriam’s discontent seems to derive not from the sight of signs of commercial establishments but from what they allude to in her mind, namely the employment she is about to have, for which she has no preference. At the end of the passage, she turns to the streets, a more neutral space that perhaps unburdens her from worries relevant to her paid labor.

Similar to the way in which shop signs stand for Miriam’s involvement in the labor market and public spaces mirror her psychological condition and train of thought, Benjamin sees the streets as having become “the dwelling place of the collective” (*TAP* 423):

For this collective, glossy enameled shop signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois; walls with their “Post No Bills” are its writing desk, newspaper stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze busts, benches its bedroom furniture, and the café terrace is the balcony from which it looks down on its household. (*TAP* 423)

All objects and public spaces here assume uses and functions drawn from the private domestic sphere, collapsing the private/ public boundary. Whereas Miriam’s space intake is marked by the obligation to work, Benjamin’s spatial analysis distances itself from individual experience and speaks of the “collective.” Yet his use of the typical comforts of bourgeois life—oil painting, writing desk, libraries, bronze busts, furniture, and balcony (the vantage point of panoramic control)—underlines that in the feeling of “coziness” the bourgeoisie “never hav[e] to think

about how the forces of production must develop in their hands” (*TAP* 342).

Leaving the distracting phantasmagoria of the public sphere, Miriam turns her gaze to the private space and offers an image of the privacy and quiet of the domestic room as essential in a space where she is to re-compose herself. Of her room at Mrs. Bailey’s boarding house, for example, she notes on two different occasions:

The room was full of clear strength. There must always be a *clear cold* room to return to. There was no other way of keeping the inward peace. Outside one need do nothing but what was expected of one, asking nothing for oneself but freedom to return, to the center. (*II Interim* 321, emphasis added)

The clinical frigidity in Miriam’s description (“clear cold room”) leaves in my opinion no room for any notion of an older, idealized, domesticated life. Yet, despite the fact that Miriam crosses the threshold between the private and public spaces back and forth, the private room, identified with the inward peace of the center of the self, acquires an absolute value. It guarantees the stability of the inside/ outside structure, but more importantly the possibility of both stasis and mobility. And later on, she thinks of the “huge thick walls” of the London room as holding

all the lodgers secure and apart, fixed in richly enclosed rooms in *the heart of London*; secure from all the world that was not London, flying through space, swinging along on a planet spread with continents—Londoners.” (*II The Tunnel* 77, emphasis added)

The private room then is cherished not as the boundary to the outside world, the city, but rather as the protective threshold to everything that is *not* the city. The city-as-body metaphor (*heart*) alludes to an organic wholeness of city life and its dwellers, while the outer space metaphor in which the inhabitants of London assume the form of “continents,” unsettles England or even the Empire border, much as it enhances it. The Londoners as continents of planet London become *par excellence* spaces in Miriam’s interior monologue and the flight “through space” can be read in a twofold semantics of inner space and actual space.

To refer to de Certeau's distinction between the concepts of place and space, place (*lieu*) constitutes "the order (of whatever kind) in accordance to which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence," thus "an instantaneous configuration of positions" which "implies an indication of stability" (117). Yet space (*espace*) "is composed of intersections of mobile elements" and in this sense, it is "a practiced place" (de Certeau 117). In his example of pedestrians, people walking are seen to transform the street from a place, "geometrically defined by urban planning" into a space that is rendered useful or pleasurable (117). According to de Certeau, the pedestrian "condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others spatial 'turns of phrase' that are 'rare', 'accidental' or illegitimate," in a process which he calls "the rhetoric of walking" (99). In the manner that James and Benjamin retrace their childhood steps in New York and Berlin respectively, through the mediation of memory, Miriam's peregrinations also turn the spaces where she wanders into "practiced" (de Certeau 117) or performed places.³⁴ Thus, the exploration of urban space in all three authors emerges as the compromise between the stability of place and the mobility of socially constructed spaces.

In his discussion of nineteenth-century domestic interiors, Benjamin argues that the experience of living

was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself with a spider's web, in whose toils world events hang loosely suspended like so many insect bodies sucked dry. From this cavern one does not like to stir.
(*TAP* 216)

Although Miriam's room shares very little with the bourgeois interiors that Benjamin has in mind,³⁵ still, the room, in both cases, emphasizes the re-workings

³⁴ Miriam engages what de Certeau would define as the "tour," the everyday narration of mobility, in direct opposition with the canonical and regulative notion of the map which in fact eliminates the trajectories that shaped it. She partakes in a resistant anti-discipline of tactics, "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong" (xvii). Tactics is not subservient to strategy, but is the art of adapting to the environment, the act of "making-do" (28) which is always mapped out by the strategies of the powers-that-be.

³⁵ *The Arcades Project* offers abundant citations of lush, luxurious and fashionable interiors in which the salon appears as a *safe house*, a shelter from the public commodified world.

of “world events,” of the experience in the public sphere. The room constitutes the space in which Miriam brings the exterior polyphony of public life into the interior monologue of her narrative.

In her reading of *Deadlock*, Garrington explores the domestic interiors that Miriam inhabits, regarding the walls of her room as screens: the four room walls “operate as screens onto which imagined, mobile spaces can be projected: ‘The walls were traveler’s walls. That had been their first fascination’” (*III* 87 qtd. in Garrington 94). Later on, as Garrington notices, Miriam, during a discussion with Hypo Wilson, observes that, “‘Of course there is actually no such thing as travel. So they say. There is nothing but a Voyage autour de ma Chambre, meaning de tout ce que je suis, even in a tour du monde’” (*IV Dawn’s Left Hand* 167 qtd. in Garrington 94). The fact that all mobility for Miriam begins with the travel of her imagination is of secondary interest here. The primary point is the way she perceives herself as travelling into her consciousness (“*tout ce que je suis*”). In other words, she acknowledges the dialectical relation between the journey into the self and the one out in the world and proceeds to reflect this dialectic on language. She explains the French word for “room” (*ma Chambre*) by replacing it in the next phrase with *myself*. On a similar note, Benjamin explores the potential of nineteenth-century domestic interior and remarks that “the space disguises itself—puts on, like an alluring creature, the costumes of moods... the nineteenth century interior is itself a stimulus to intoxication and dream” (*TAP* 216). Benjamin cites an early work by Soren Kierkegaard as “the key to the schema of *Voyage autour de ma chambre*” (*TAP* 421). Kierkegaard’s young hero, Johannes, repeatedly asks to go outside but is denied permission, so his intelligent father who “managed everything” proposes “as a substitute, that they walk up and down the room hand in hand” (*TAP* 421). A seemingly “poor substitute” at first, the experience proves “something quite novel.”

While they strolled in this way up and down the floor of his room, his father told him of all they saw. They greeted other pedestrians; passing wagons made a din around them and drowned out his father’s voice; the comfits in the pastry shop were more inviting than ever. (*TAP* 421)

For Benjamin, domestic spaces function in parallel with the arcade in that they provide a phantasmagoria: they can assume different forms and “put on” what he terms “the costumes of moods” (*TAP* 216). Similarly, Miriam’s room does not stand directly opposed to the city. It “symbolizes ‘London’” and its “physical boundaries often blend into the city’s boundaries in a fluidity of space in which ‘inside’ is often ‘outside’” (Winning 47). Thus, “the domestic interior moves outside” (*TAP* 406) much like it does in the case of the Parisian arcade. Additionally, Miriam dialectically connects space with human beings: “these backgrounds thought of without the people to whom they belonged, faded and died. And this would seem to mean that places, after all, were people” (*IV Clear Horizon* 361). Such a comment that points to the social production of space is important in demonstrating the text’s polyvalent registry of space.

When the readers broaden their gaze to Miriam’s transactions with the public sphere, they find that she spends a lot of her leisure time strolling in London and visiting shops without actually buying products. Although Miriam identifies her employers’ abundant ownership of commodities with an unrestricted freedom to act, she equally cherishes the urban landscape. Not as powerful a consumer as her employers, nevertheless, she takes pleasure in the city *per se*. Miriam’s “tactile apprehension” and “kinaesthetic appropriation” (de Certeau 97) does spatialize the impression the reader gets of London. Thus, her experience of the metropolis can be compared to Baudelaire’s and Benjamin’s city experience. Miriam is fascinated by “being a permitted co-operating part of the traffic” (*II Interim* 374), by its “trooping succession,” and suggests that “to have the freedom of London was a life in itself” (*III Deadlock* 106).

The seminal role of the notion of space in *Pilgrimage* is also related to the way *Pilgrimage* remains unfinished much like *The Arcades Project* is never brought to closure. Both texts can be read as works in progress. In her Introduction to *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Sontag notices that Benjamin’s sentences “do not seem to be generated in the usual way; they do not entail. Each sentence is written as if it were the first or the last” (24). As Garrington suggests, in Richardson “memory itself is the great spatializer, in that it disrupts the linear narrative flow of

consciousness in order to pile up its riches, layering past events upon the moment” (“Haptic Text” 86). The text of *Pilgrimage* constructs a narrative space that attacks linearity and re-constellates Miriam’s past and present experiences. The text is typically modern and typically reminiscent of Benjamin and his materialist work of the “past [...] brought into the present in a historical apocatastasis” (*TAP* 459). Miriam’s “recollected spaces of past experience interweave in a narrative that is radically spatial rather than sequential.” (Garrington, “Haptic Text” 86-7).

Yet, besides Miriam’s reception of metropolitan London spaces, there are other spaces that, marked by their absence as they may be, illuminate Richardson’s text, enabling the work of immanent criticism, which unravels the work’s tendency for self-reflection. Immanent criticism thus bears the potential of revealing the “truth content of a work of art” that remains closely attached to its “material content” (“Elective Affinities” 297) and goes against the authority of the critic. The spaces that allow for immanent criticism are the spaces that concern me in the next section that analyzes the ways in which the poetry of Kipling surfaces in Richardson’s archive of the modern. If *Pilgrimage* largely consists of exploring Miriam’s inquisitive daring consciousness taking in the capitalist realities of class stratification and imperialism, it can be argued that along with her self-articulation, there is the edifice of a textual space built upon the ruins and the discard of the spaces she’s been to, but also of the spaces to which she chooses to be oblivious, excluding them from her narrative.

1.4 When the Colony Returns to the Metropole: Burma, India, and Afghanistan in *The Tunnel and Interim*³⁶

Precisely because Richardson's spatial register is dominantly preoccupied with the metropolitan centre of London, the text's spatial digressions to the remote spaces of Burma, India, and Afghanistan, registered in *Pilgrimage* through the reproduction of Rudyard Kipling's verses, are important in their own right for Miriam's space perception. The three colonial sites are mentioned as far away, exotic places that, conjured by the poetic text, return to haunt the otherwise largely metropolitan setting of the novel. Most importantly, this haunting is made possible through Benjamin's dialectical image: Richardson's citations of Kipling's poetic verse trigger Miriam's recognition of the dialectical image that opens a textual space for the three colonies to emerge and manifest the pervasive power of the colonial experience on the cultural realm of the metropolitan West (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 164).

Richardson scholarship, which explores the undercurrent of contemporary imperialist ideologies in *Pilgrimage*, has for the most part focused on Miriam's oscillation between tracing an indeterminate cosmopolitanism and her complete assimilation by hegemonic imperial discourses. Radford, one of the first scholars to examine the character's racial politics, associates Miriam's "xenophobia" with the notion of Jewishness and her relation to her suitor, the Russian-Jewish émigré, Michael Shatov (*Dorothy Richardson*, 1991). Watts (*Dorothy Richardson* 1995), and Jane Garrity (*Step-Daughters of England*, 2003) examine the ways in which Miriam's contact and association with foreigners allow her to challenge the dominant notions of Britishness and racial superiority on a par with "her own cultural positioning, about which she feels an extreme ambivalence" (Watts 54). Yet both find that, by and large, her "new-woman discourse is inextricably that of the centre" (Watts 56). This prevents her from imagining a culture "outside the terms of imperialism itself" (Watts 53) to the extent that the novel ultimately values "not incessant mobility, but stillness; not internationalism, but Englishness" (Garrity 86).

³⁶ An earlier draft of this sub-chapter was published in *Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies* 7 (2015): 30-43. Sincere thanks to both anonymous reviewers who offered their comments.

Frigerio draws on Edward Said's concept of contrapuntal reading in order to focus on historiography and evolutionary theories depicted in Richardson and examine Miriam's search for her identity "both as a woman and as a citizen of the British Empire" (8) in *Interim* (1919), *Deadlock* (1921) and *Revolving Lights* (1923). Celena E. Kusch discusses the concept of cosmopolis in the early volumes of *Pilgrimage*, arguing that "the model of the British 'colonial' looking for financial opportunities" is applied to "the modernist seeking intellectual pursuits and thereby create a cosmopolitan identity that can deploy the cultural capital of both colony and empire" (39). For Kusch, the first five volumes of the novel "repeatedly reify national and cultural boundaries" through Miriam's "cross-cultural encounters" with "colonial citizens and laborers," and reveal "the foundation of intellectual cosmopolitanism not in universality but in differentiation from the cultural otherness of 'colonials'" (43).

It is true that Miriam's racial and imperial politics are ambivalent and the text of *Pilgrimage* wavers between challenging and reproducing the dominant imperial discourse. In this vein, I aspire to show how the representation of imperial politics in *Pilgrimage* may be read through Benjamin's dialectical image by specifically exploring the three instances where Rudyard Kipling's colonial subtext surfaces in Richardson's text, bringing to the fore three Other spaces, that stand as alternative *topoi* to the urban sites of London. To begin with, Richardson's mention of Kipling's lines is an act of inclusion. The author archives the work of the "bard of empire" in her novel perhaps acknowledging its vast cultural impact. On the other hand, Richardson's archival politics also entail a form of exclusion: contrary to other authors mentioned by name and discussed in *Pilgrimage*—the lecture on Dante in *Interim* is a pertinent example—neither Kipling nor the titles of his three poems are distinctly referred to. This contradictory act ties in well with the fact that the dialectical image comes about with language as its staging theatre.

Discussing the dialectical image, Benjamin insists that

image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. –

Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. (*TAP* 462)

Kipling's imperialist discourse reproduced in Richardson's text is the place where Miriam and the readers of *Pilgrimage* perceive the dialectical image that bespeaks of faraway places that would otherwise be effaced from the narrative. Burma, India, and Afghanistan are *in absentia* archived in *Pilgrimage*; they are mentioned as exotic settings of distant histories that nevertheless haunt the text. I will examine the emergence of Kipling's work in *Pilgrimage* as a paradigm of the way "the imperial experience while often regarded as exclusively political also entered into the cultural and aesthetic life of the metropolitan West" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 164). Rather than reaching a verdict as to whether Richardson fully assimilates Kipling's "Tory imperialist" politics (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 161) or vehemently opposes what these politics entail, I will concentrate on the way in which the particularities of the imperial experience enter the realm of popular culture—Kipling being a persistent cultural icon (Rooney and Nagai 14)—so as to leave their mark on Miriam's consciousness and subsequently on Richardson's text.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said contextualizes the "unembarrassed cultural attention" to the empire by citizens of nineteenth-century Britain and France (9):

British India and French North Africa alone played inestimable roles in the imagination, economy, political life, and social fabric of British and French society [...] scholars, administrators, travellers, traders, parliamentarians, merchants, novelists, theorists, speculators, adventurers, visionaries, poets, and every variety of outcast and misfit in the outlying possessions of these two imperial powers, each of whom contributed to the formation of a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life. (9)

Said constructs his argument about the affiliations between oppositional cultures within imperialism by drawing on the convergence of geographies and the cultural and political reciprocities that imperialism generated both in the metropolitan as well as in the colonial areas. This convergence of geographies—a de-contextualization and re-making of the colony within the metropolis—is explicitly

seen in the three fissures inflicted on the text of *Pilgrimage* by the text of Kipling. As I hope to demonstrate, a certain colonial aesthetics and politics haunt the metropolitan center and are subtly manifested as part of Miriam's urban experience; thus, Richardson's intertextual politics allows the spectral presence of the colony as a peripheral space to disrupt the metropolitan space of the center.

All three instances manifested in Richardson's text are citations of Kipling's poems "Gunga Din," "Mandalay," and "The Ballad of the East and West;" the first two were published in the *Barrack-Room Ballads*, 1892, while "The Ballad of the East and West" was published in 1889. Characteristically, the *Barrack-Room Ballads*, reprinted three times in 1892 and fifty times in the next thirty years, was one of the most popular verse-books for more than a generation (Carrington 196) which probably accounts for its inclusion in *Pilgrimage*. In the 1909 book of criticism on Kipling, edited by Michael Lackey, E.M. Forster, "alternately praising and criticizing the Nobel Laureate's political agenda as well as his aesthetic vision," offers insight into an early critique of Kipling (Lackey 12) and contextualizes Kipling's impact on the readership at the very heart of the Empire:

We middle classes — our life today is so sheltered, so safe, we are so protected by asphalt pavements, creosoted palings and policemen, so guarded on all sides from all that may injure the body or disturb the soul, that in literature we are apt to rush to the other extreme, and worship vitality unrestrainedly. How magnificent (we think) to lead a lawless roving life somewhere east of Suez, where the divorce laws, which we should be discussing this evening, need no reform because there are none. Armed with a sword instead of an umbrella, and a revolver instead of a tram ticket, how magnificent to meet some other strong man face to face and of course to get the best of him. (Lackey 13)

Forster ironically discusses the middle-class values seeking refuge in a literary celebration of imperial explorations and conquests—Kipling's vitality—that partly constitutes the material of Kipling's text. "[S]heltered," "safe," and "protected" the middle-class reader of colonial literature will "unrestrainedly worship" this vitality

which both makes up for the monotony and banality of urban life, and again constitutes an imaginative expansion.

It is not surprising therefore that Kipling should surface in Richardson's text as part of Miriam's work life; here the colonial aesthetics meets the middle-class metropolitan life. The colonial vitality is projected into the quotidian labor of a working woman making her way into mental escapade through the mundane. One of the partners at Mr. Hancock's practice, Mr. Orly, arrives at the dentistry to start his working day, to find Miriam already there, engaged in what she will later describe as "housekeeping" (*II The Tunnel* 40): "She was dabbing at the stains of the American cloth cover of the bracket when Mr. Orly came swinging in, putting on his grey frock-coat and humming *Gunga Din* as he came" (*II The Tunnel* 38). For a page or so, Mr. Orly hectically gives Miriam orders or demanding commands her for things: "I say, has this man got a chart? Don't throw away those teeth. Just look at this'... "I say has this man got a chart?'.... 'Right. Tell' em to send him in. I say, 'v' I got any gold and tin?'" (*II The Tunnel* 38-9). His instructions end with "Send' im in,' and he resumed *Gunga Din* over the wash-hand basin." (*II The Tunnel* 39). The inclusion of Kipling in the text subtly reminds the reader of how one should be aware "both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 51). The most quoted stanza of the poem, "Tho' I've belted you and flayed you, By the livin' Gawd that made you, You're a better man than I am, *Gunga Din!*" concludes the rhyming narrative told by a British soldier in India, about a native water-bearer ("bhisti") who—after having been persistently abused by the regiment—saves the soldier's life by sacrificing his own.

The poem is characterized by what is often perceived as an unrestrictedly racist agenda and the "us and them" rhetoric (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 128-130). Even though it has been argued that the ending celebrates *Gunga Din*'s heroism and the (impossible) possibility of the friendship between the imperial soldier and the colonized water carrier, still it is a heroism that can be acknowledged only because, according to the economy of racial superiority, the colonial Other is

annihilated while the Englishman survives and rules. Thus, the virtue of the non-European is praised and the colonial soldier matures, but with the prerequisite that only the Westerner is to live. There is clearly a differential allocation of grievability, in the sense that the bhisti's vulnerability is heightened within the confines of the colonial socio-political economy which ultimately thrusts him headlong into his perish. Following Said's method of contrapuntal reading,³⁷ I argue that Richardson's gesture of including Kipling in her text affiliates the center and the periphery and thus dismantles the fixity of a colonial versus a metropolitan topography regulated by solid boundaries. Miriam's labor space, the dentistry, is invaded and disrupted by the geographically and culturally discrepant experiences which the colonies stand for. This reconfiguration of spaces, enabled by the function of the dialectical image that Kipling's lines trigger symptomatically reveals the complex processes through which the metropolis can no longer remain impervious to the developments in its periphery. Metropolitan centre and dependent periphery are re-constellated as two dialectical poles of a single geographic spectrum. It is an act of mutual transmutation, counteraction, empowerment in certain aspects and disempowerment in many others. "Gunga Din" undercuts *Pilgrimage* while Miriam is at work; it therefore underlines the capitalist metropolitan economy as inextricably affiliated with the imperialist policies abroad and suggests that the thriving of the centre is predicated upon the exploitation of the colonial resources overseas.

The second instance of Kipling emerging in the text is when Miriam is taking a tea break. While sitting for her afternoon tea enjoying the few moments off work, she finds herself distracted by the lyrics of a song that takes over her thoughts:

[...] Miriam sauntered, warm and happy almost before she was inside the door, into the den. With her eyes on *the tea-tray* she felt the afternoon *expand*.... 'There's a Burma girl a settin' and I know she thinks of me' ...

³⁷ Drawing on music, Said argues we should re-read the cultural archive "not univocally, but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (*Culture and Imperialism* 51). The task of contrapuntal reading attempts to unearth the forgotten or silenced histories, demonstrating "there was always some form of active resistance" (*Culture and Imperialism* xii).

‘Come you *back*, you British soldier, come you *back* to Mandalay.’ (*II The Tunnel* 67, emphases mine)

The direct reference is to the second line of the lyrics to Kipling’s ballad, “On the Road to Mandalay,” published the same year as “Gunga Din,” available in sheet music in 1907, and recorded in 1912 and 1913. “Mandalay” speaks of the discharged British soldier’s nostalgic longing to return to the charming Burmese girl he had met by the old Moulmein Pagoda, creating a sensuous orientalist atmosphere and giving us “the romance of the East” (Lackey 18). The soldier dislikes the cold weather of England and wants to be dispatched “somewhere east of Suez,” so that he can return to the “spicy garlic” and the “tinkly temple-bells.” The ballad has been read as promoting love for the east and desire for the “different” life.³⁸ In fact, it justifies the return of the Westerner to Burma as the plea dictated by the native love-struck girl (“come you *back* to Mandalay”), underlining Said’s comment in *Orientalism Reconsidered* about the “correspondence between suppressed Victorian sexuality at home” and the Empire’s “fantasies abroad” (12). Charles Allen notes that, ““Mandalay” now sounds almost maudlin; Kipling’s cockneyfication seems contrived and the racial insensitivities contained in such poems as “Gunga Din,” “Loot,” and “Fuzzy Wuzzy” are embarrassing, even when taken in context, which is Kipling giving voice to the Victorian working man” (307).

Whereas “Gunga Din” emerges during work, “Mandalay,” now in the form of a song often associated with leisure, is tellingly inserted in the break time of Miriam’s working day. This second dialectical image that aligns the latent inter-racial sexuality of the poem with the iconic English ritual of tea-drinking draws attention to the imported tea enjoyed in England as a commodity, which is mainly brought from India, and whose circulation presupposes an elaborate network of colonial exploitation. Englishness entails the rationale of imperialism, the violence and pleasures of colonization. In specific, the tea-tray becomes Miriam’s “passage

³⁸ In his edition of *Barrack-Room Ballads*, Charles Carrington describes the poem as: “Perhaps the favorite among the ‘Barrack-Room Ballads,’ written to a popular waltz tune, set to music as a tenor song, and long since passed into folklore ... Recently it has been copied by Bertolt Brecht” (162). Interestingly, Brecht incorporates the “Mandalay Song” Scene 14, Act 2 of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*: it is sung by a line of impatient men waiting to make love to Jenny and the other whores, warning that love does not last forever, and urging those ahead of them to make it snappy.

to India”³⁹ affirming but also evading colonization, as its material presence bespeaks of Burma girls and infinite geopolitical and temporal “expansion.” While waiting for her tea to arrive, Miriam observes the room around her. Not surprisingly, the reproduction of the orientalist lyrics is followed by the wandering of the heroine’s observing gaze towards an array of colonial exotic curiosities: “the large cool placid gold Buddha,” “the Japanese cabinet,” “the Japanese cupboard fixed above Mrs. Orly’s writing table,” “Mr. Orly’s African tobacco pouch,” and finally her reflection rests on “the strange smooth gold on the strips of Burmese wood fastened along the shelves” (*II The Tunnel* 68). As Benjamin notes, citing Kierkegaard, in the interior “[f]oreignness transforms itself from alienated things into expression; mute things speak as ‘symbols’” and the image of the orient constitutes “the homeland of yearning” (*TAP* 220). In her careful observation of the interior, Miriam fulfils the condition for the dialectical image to emerge: “Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions— there the dialectical image appears” (*TAP* 475). Absorbed in the visual revelry of colonial objects around her, she sustains the image propelled by Kipling’s lines. Therefore, even when the song is well out of Miriam’s mind, the colony persists through material traces in her surroundings and her train of observation concludes with a metaphorical return to Burma.⁴⁰ Englishness then is regulated by what Ian Baucom calls an “occult instability” between the colonized and its colonial counterpart produced by the trafficking of commodities, whose surplus value is effected by the exploited labor of the colonized.⁴¹ The luxury commodities betray the traces of these—“invisible” and phantasmal in the novel—others haunting the London-based consumers of tea. In other words, the specters of the exploited colonies are doubly contained in this Englishness: there is, on the one hand, the containment in the

³⁹ Many thanks to Athanassios Dimakis for offering this point through his enlightening reading of Forster’s novel.

⁴⁰ It should also be noted that Kipling himself fervently wished to return to Burma where he had only spent three days.

⁴¹ In fact, Baucom (*Out of Place* 3) borrows Frantz Fanon’s term “the zone of occult instability” (*desequilibre occulte*) to discuss the space of contact between colonizer and colonist (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 227). Baucom argues that over the last two centuries Englishness has been redefined both “here” and “there,” in Britain and the dominion states, emphasizing an expansion and decentering of Britishness as opposed to the effort to contain and restrict the purity of Englishness. (See also Simon Gikandi [xv]).

context of imported luxury consumer products and, on the other, the repressive containing of the colonized other. The tea-tray that triggers Miriam's "expansive moment"⁴², her perception of the dialectical image, is a disruption of spatiotemporal stability, a collapse of the boundaries between the two distinct but *de facto* affiliated poles of London and the colonies.

Kipling's poetry reappears to reveal a third dialectical image of convergent geographies further on in *The Tunnel*, when, commenting on the Eurasian origin of Jan and Mag's landlady, supposedly a prostitute ("She's Eurasian. She was born in India"), Miriam answers,

'That accounts for a good deal. Eurasians are awful; they've got all the faults of both sides.'

'East is East, and West is West, and never the two shall meet.' (85)

The latter phrase is an almost exact replication of Kipling's line in "The Ballad of the East and West" ("Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,/ Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat"). It is not clear whether Miriam ironically quotes the phrase that one of the dentists has already used previously in the novel, or if she unconsciously reproduces Kipling's colonial unapologetic discourse—which is certainly ubiquitous in *The Tunnel*.⁴³ Kipling's "Ballad of East and West" features the friendship and respect between an English officer and the Afghan horse-thief Kamal. When Kamal steals a prize bay mare, the Colonel's son follows him into enemy territory where after a lengthy pursuit his horse collapses from exhaustion. Kamal helps the Colonel's son and as a token of his appreciation the Colonel's son offers him the mare which Kamal does not accept since it should be rightfully returned to its master. Rather Kamal also offers other gifts and introduces his son to the Colonel's son and orders the boy to serve and protect him until death. After both the stolen horse and the native boy have been given to the Colonel's son—as if the two were on a par—Kipling finally

⁴² I use the term, following Miriam's characterization of her perception of the occasional elasticity of time (see "expansive moments" in *III Revolving Lights* 282).

⁴³ Kusch notes that the repetition of Kipling's refrain both "by Richardson and in British popular culture of the time affirms imperial divisions in a blatant rejection of the cross-cultural complexities of the poem" (59).

resorts to celebrating courage regardless of “border... breed... birth.” “But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,/ When two strong men stand face to face though they come from the ends of the earth!”

The lines in question have been the topic of considerable controversy, since Carrington notes they are “often misquoted in exactly the opposite sense which Kipling gave them,” arguing that “the first couplet is an echo from the Psalms where the figure of speech is used to express the universality of the divine law in spite of estranging seas” while “the second couplet is Kipling’s commentary, with the same theme as the psalmist” (136). David Gilmour admits that “[t]he charge of racism is commonly accompanied by the quotation of these lines ... which imply that the peoples on opposite sides of the globe are so different that they will never understand each other until the Day of Judgement” (89). Yet he goes on to argue that “the apparent message of these lines is contradicted by the rest of the verse which asserts that two men of equal courage and ability can be equals despite multitudinous differences of class, race, nation and continent” (Gilmour 89). Whether the strength and bravery of the two men are mutually recognized or not, Kamal is the only one to sacrifice a son to the English rule. For Forster also, “though the border thief is an attractive fellow, the colonel’s son, the other character in the poem, is surely a bit of a stick:”

Though he talks a great deal, he never lets one forget that he is a strong silent man, who says so little and feels so much and feels all the more for saying so little. [...] I can never believe [...] that he wanted to do anything at all except to illustrate the good qualities of the British Army. However, the Colonel’s son does not much matter and “East and West” remains a fine poem, though debarred by him from its full measure of human interest (15).

Richardson’s use of Kipling in all three occasions is marked by the hidden and haunting geography of the colonized periphery that surfaces in the text. In Said’s words, “[j]ust as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography” (*Culture and Imperialism* 7). All three dialectical images also bear the trace of Benjamin’s emphasis on temporality

in understanding the function of the image. Miriam's present can recognize the British colonial past and read its subtext in her present. Thus, space comes across as the "overlapping territory" which attests to the fact that the "metropolitan centre" and the "metropolitan economy" are "dependent upon an overseas system of territorial control, economic exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 69).

Even though Richardson criticises nationalism in numerous instances throughout the three novels—rightfully earning the title of a "step-daughter of England," that Garrity has attributed to her—she nevertheless cannot escape the oscillation between critique and endorsement. In London, the capital of the British Empire if not *caput mundi*, Miriam's metropolitan wandering often assumes the form of an exploration of nationalist and imperialist discourses that shaped the late Victorian society (Frigerio 6). While searching for her place in the Empire in an ontological sense, as a woman, and in a political sense, as a subject of history, Miriam is also in the process of deciphering the function of urban space as *the locus* for the reproduction of the capitalist order through colonial sovereignty:

Englishmen; the English were the "the leading race." "England and America together—the Anglo-Saxon peoples—could govern the destinies of the world." *What* world? ... millions and millions of child-births ... colonial women would keep it all going ... and religious people ... and if religion went on there would always be all the people who took the Bible literally ... and if religion were not true, then there was only science. Either way was abominable ... for women. (*II The Tunnel* 251-2)

This passage is characteristic for challenging the rhetoric of the English Imperium in its totality—religion and science, the cornerstones of the empire, are read for what they are in their role of proliferating patriarchal order for both Englishwomen and, much worse, for the "colonial" women overseas. The ongoing nexus of power/knowledge is depicted as ultimately serving the purposes of imperialism. The diversity of experience in the metropolis provides a pretext for Miriam to reflect on and question the constitutive parts of the imaginative construction of Englishness

(Frigerio 7), and the articulation of her inner thoughts occasionally reaffirms certain perceptual fallacies.

Despite the fact that Miriam is forced to “negotiate a complex network of race, class, and empire” (Kusch 4), it seems that her reflection on the British Empire and its colonial politics is consistently mediated by her views on the position of women:

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world? The Future of the Race? What world? What race? Men.... Nothing but men; for ever. [...] It will all go on as long as women are stupid enough to go on bringing men into the world ... even if civilized women stop the colonials and primitive races would go on. It is a nightmare. (*II The Tunnel* 220-1).

It is noteworthy that the text first reproduces colonial discourse by capitalizing the nouns “Future,” “Race,” and “Men,” presenting the reader with the triad of notions of colonial discourse. The patrilinear phallogocentrism of the empire is predicated on female subordination and submissiveness. Significantly, immediately after, the capital letters are lost so that Miriam’s critical voice comes to the fore to undermine the exceptionality of their status. Additionally, the threefold repetition of the word “men,” a colonial triumvirate infinitely reproducing itself, adds to the binary formed on masculinity and imperialism, on the one hand, and Miriam’s feminist critical agenda, on the other. In the end, it is as if Miriam accepts the sad state of affairs. Frigerio has already noted “the fundamental tension between gender and race, and at times a primacy of race over gender” (17):

Admittedly, Miriam’s considerations on race and colonial women—blamed for giving birth to endless generations of men and thus guaranteeing the spread of their despicable theories—casts a shadow on the text and prevents it from being read in a univocal, anti-imperialist and progressive key (17).

The rhetoric of racial supremacy is present in Miriam’s thoughts (“primitive races”) and even though the idea of “a boys’ empire” persists, it is nevertheless surpassed

by a veritable imperial ethos of differential allocation of importance shown in the distinction between “civilized women” versus “colonials and primitive races.”

As Frigerio argues, Miriam wonders “what English identity means, how it was formed, and whether it is being eroded and modified by imperial expansion” (7) and comments on *Interim*’s Christmas eve scene, in the Brooms’s household, a scene which echoes that of the dentistry: “[...] the picture of Queen Victoria leaning on a walking-stick between two Hindu servants,” surrounded by Satsuma vases and bowls (*II* 293-4 qtd. in Frigerio 9). Although Kusch reads the scene as “an abstract and aestheticized meeting of East and West” (56), I argue that, in fact, it very concretely and specifically teems with the tangible material realities of colonial economies. Apart from London presented as “the point of access” to a cornucopia of colonial goods—always within the security of the bourgeois salon—the valuable element in Frigerio’s reading is the “variety of different (‘subordinate’) cultures [...] incorporated as fragments into the ‘museum/library archive’ of the modernist city, the site of a new kind of transnational ‘metropolitan perception’ within the boundaries of national culture” (9). The prominence of the bourgeois living-room at home is thus contingent on the influx of colonial luxury items from the colonies. Moreover, the representation of colonial reign is celebrated within the household through the picture of the Queen and her Hindu servants and denotes the political supremacy of the empire sustained by the ongoing import of the colonial goods into the metropolis.

The intertextual narrative politics of *Pilgrimage* in *The Tunnel* and *Interim* discloses the colonial hauntings that interrupt Miriam’s mundane pilgrimage in the city. The text thus shows how the alignment of the national with the masculine and the imperial is a disjunctive alignment that represses, hides, and attempts to silence the interruptions: women, colonial subjects and their humdrum, labor-centered realities. Richardson’s New Woman narrative critiques the middle-class values which Miriam both, endorses and defies, aspires to and resists, by way of exposing the fissures of the imperial-metropolitan thread whose spatial order stretches beyond the visible boundaries to worlds it can neither include nor suppress.

In fact, all three detours through Kipling's poetry in *Pilgrimage* and the material commodities that attract Miriam's attentive reflection are responsible for the creation of these fissures which enable this symptomatic reading of the sign. They open up an added space in the text which can be read between the lines and which attests to the inevitable impregnation of popular culture, metropolitan literary and socio-political discourses by the successful continuation of imperial campaigns and concerns about race or gender.

While Benjamin and James chronicle Berlin and New York as the amalgams of current and former realities, intertwining the personal with the public, Richardson maps the capitalist city as a space for the woman-worker and the author-in-becoming since, as Pilar Hidalgo observes, Miriam is "one of the first women in fiction to walk extensively about the modern city" (95). The text of *Pilgrimage* never loses sight of the imperial background and its indelible mark on city life. The three texts, in their critical and reflective powers, bespeak different experiences of modern space. Yet, urban space in all three texts is invariably characterized by both its palimpsestic layers recognized and read by the three authors and the operation of the capitalist market. Thus, while the urban experience of the turn-of-the-century subject is represented as being inescapably mediated by capitalism, the sites of "what has been" (*TAP* 463), the places that the subject chooses to commemorate, emerge as equally shaping these site-specific narratives.

Chapter Two

2. A Historical Document in *The Arcades*, “The Real Thing,” and *Pilgrimage*: Class and Labor in the Market Archives of Benjamin, James, Richardson

2.1 Introduction

In an 1885 letter to the novelist Minna Kautsky (1837-1912), Friedrich Engels, while referring to her book, *The Old and the New* (*Die Alten und die Neuen*), tenderly and politely comments on the author’s display of superfluity in the declaration of her personal political convictions:

Evidently you felt the need in this book to declare publicly for your party, to bear witness before the whole world and show your convictions. Now you have done this; you have it behind you and you have no need to do so in this form. (Baxandall and Morawski 113)

Engels here argues that *tendentious* writing (*Tendenzpoesie*) should “spring forth from the situation and the action itself” rather than from the author offering “historical solutions of the social conflicts he depicts” (Baxandall and Morawski 113). The rationale behind Engels’s literary commentary can also be detected three years later, in what has become a famous letter sent this time to the English radical investigative journalist and novelist Margaret Harkness: “The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art” (Baxandall and Morawski 115).⁴⁴ As is well known, the German philosopher, social scientist, journalist, and son to a wealthy textile manufacturer was extremely partial to Honoré de Balzac whom he considered “a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas *passés, présents et à venir*, [past, present, and future]” (Baxandall and Morawski 115).

⁴⁴ This 1888 letter is Engels’s famous “realism letter” to Margaret Harkness about her first novel *A City Girl: A Realistic Story*, which features the love story of a working-class seamstress and a middle-class married man leading to her abandonment and single parenthood” (Janssen and Robertson, n.p.). Engels finds the book to be “a small work of art” (ein kleines Kunstwerk), yet advises the novelist that a successful realist novel should not depend only on “truth of detail,” but mainly on “the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances” (Baxandall and Morawski 114).

Despite Balzac's political alignment with Legitimism,⁴⁵ his work as "a constant elegy on the irretrievable decay of good society," disclosed to Engels the fate a class "doomed to extinction," namely, the nobles (Baxandall and Morawski 115).

Benjamin is aware and appreciative of this critical approach to literature: he is "all too conscious of the futile hypocrisy of the bourgeois artist 'adopting a kind of mimicry of proletarian experience without thereby being in the least allied to the working class'" (Buck-Morss, *Seeing* 290 qtd. in Spiropoulou 10). As Spiropoulou avers, "the bourgeois artist might better serve the cause of revolution by drawing on bourgeois material rather than posing as a master of proletarian art, on behalf of the deprived" (11). The textual politics that Engels reads as Balzac's insurmountable success, is what this chapter attempts to trace in the work of James and Richardson, with a view to bringing their texts in dialogue with Benjamin's cultural theory. I attempt to delve deeper into the politics of their texts, rather than draw on their expressed beliefs and positions as articulated in their texts, in order to explore the representations of class divisions and the labor power of the working subject as an indispensable part of the modern experience. I will read the situations in which the literary characters' actions entangle them in social and political impasses that reinforce the authors' literary archives of the relevant class and labor realities.

Having explored the representations of the urban space as one of the three main thematic poles that constitute James's and Richardson's archive of the modern condition, I will turn to class status and labor power as the second constituent of the archival thread in the two authors' works. To explore the ways in which their texts represent the tenuousness of class status and the circulation of labor power in the market, I will read the texts against the backdrop of Benjamin's archival practice in *The Arcades*. "Goethe's Elective Affinities" and *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* also lend a critical tool here in that they offer glimpses into the Benjaminian critical paradigm. Thus, the chapter explores the perplexities of class position, class consciousness, and labor materialities that are represented as the hidden details and minutiae of everyday life in James's "The Real Thing," Richardson's *Pointed Roofs*, *Backwater*, *Honeycomb*, *The Tunnel*, *Revolving Lights*, and *Deadlock*, and

⁴⁵ Royalists in France who adhered to the rights of the dynastic succession of the descendants of the elder branch of the Bourbon dynasty that was overthrown in the 1830 July Revolution.

Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. I attempt a reading of the manifestations of class in the texts, evidenced in the characters' relation to the labor market and, thus, their labor status, in order to highlight the defining omnipresence of the social and economic circumstances of the literary characters, which potentially reflect the material conditions of the authors' lives. The literary characters are turn-of-the-century subjects who oscillate between unstable class positions while moving in the labor market in different kinds of professional arenas. Drawing on Benjamin's discussion of nineteenth century dialectical figures—the flâneur, the sandwich-man, and the prostitute—I read the texts with a concern not so much for the accuracy of the description of the characters' real historical conditions, but mostly for registering and representing diverse impressions and experiences of modernity. The texts reveal the conditions and challenges that the characters face as subjects who partake the labor market, as well as the concept of class as fundamental to the development of the plot and action.

Besides the many manifestations of the burden and privilege of class, I am interested in the ways that characters occasionally seem to be renegades in their social stratum or to unsettle the stark polarity between classes. Benjamin's use of the term "asocial," when writing of Baudelaire, ties in with this idea: "Baudelaire's poetry draws its strength from the rebellious pathos of this class [the *bohèmes*]. He sides with the asocial. He realizes his only sexual communion with a whore" (*TAP* 10). Although the *bohème* could be best described as the expression of a social stratum rather than a class, the Benjaminian context of "asociality" becomes clearer in another citation, in which emphasis is put on the relation of the *bohème* to the hegemonic bourgeoisie:

Baudelaire had the good fortune to be the contemporary of a bourgeoisie that could not yet employ, as accomplice of its domination, such an asocial type as he represented. The incorporation of a nihilism into its hegemonic apparatus was reserved for the bourgeoisie of the twentieth century (*TAP* 385).

The bohemian lies at the margins of social space and retains an ambivalent position between “a legal opposition and an anarchist opposition” (*TAP* 896). The marginality of position, that is, the factor of a-sociality, characterizes both the bohemian and the prostitute, yet the prostitute is relevant to my argument for an additional reason. Benjamin notes that the commodity form emerges in Baudelaire as “the social content of the allegorical form of perception: Form and content are united in the prostitute, as in their synthesis” (*TAP* 335). If the commodity is pronounced as the ultimate “social content” in Baudelaire and allegory as the form, the prostitute synthesizes form and content as a subject at work. Despite her commodification in the sex market, the prostitute transgresses the line between object and subject, by potentially occupying a subject position that subterfuges the process of commodification. No process of commodification can simply reduce the complexity of the subject to the functionality of the object as the figure of the prostitute showcases. She is “unable to mask the social contradictions and to succumb to illusions. She may well be, indeed, the worthiest heroine of modernity” (Leslie, “Ruin and Rubble” 112). Leslie underlines that the prostitute is “a victim of commodity culture: a commodity to be bought and a consumer of its trappings, in order to enhance her commodity appeal” (“Ruin and Rubble” 97). Nevertheless, the prostitute embodies the *Zeitgeist* of modernity, in that she becomes an Ur-form of the era; the prostitute “epitomizes the fleeting nature of urban relations, the lack of permanent connection. In her sexuality, she marks ‘the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent,’ those very qualities that Baudelaire associates with modernity” (Epstein Nord, *Walking* 5).

The Arcades Project is here read against the tradition of literary scholarship that argues that Benjamin has omitted and ignored the female subject. The chapter begins with the examination of a petition signed by Paris prostitutes in 1830, which Benjamin cites in his *Convolute* “Prostitution, Gambling.” The petition, addressed to the prefect of the police, enters the bureaucratic files of the French regulatory system which “made prostitution the most-documented working-class profession in that country” (Anderson 106). The text registers the complaint of the *filles publiques* against the atypical, unofficial prostitution of bourgeois women, indulged

and protected by institutions and society. Acknowledging Benjamin's inclusion of such archival material for its documentation value, the chapter begins with a discussion of the text of the petition as a manifestation of the prostitutes' liminal, but dissident, subjectivity. The signees identify themselves as a non-privileged stratum with limited rights and while they never explicitly enunciate the concept of class, they turn against the "elegant" women of upper classes. Neither Mrs. Monarch of "The Real Thing" nor Miriam of *Pilgrimage* could possibly be read as prostitutes. Yet I will use Benjamin's paradigm in order to explore the politics of commodification of the wage laborer, since both characters are forced to enter the labor market under conditions that their former class status had consistently allowed them to eschew. Benjamin's prostitute is pertinent here since she preempts and exemplifies all hired labor as prostitution. Workers like prostitutes occupy the double position of subject and object. As subjects they sell their wares (labor power) in the labor market, while in the process of labor they, too, become objectified.

In this reading, class will not be reduced only to economic factors. The characters' cultural capital, their class consciousness, and the social relations of production play a role in defining class status, or as Terry Eagleton argues in *Why Marx Was Right*, "it is significant that we speak of social classes, not of economic ones" (120). Value, as Marx avers, "does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a *social hieroglyphic*" (*Capital* 167, emphasis mine). In his discussion of "The Value Form, or Exchange Value," Marx explains how the "objective character" of value is social, therefore value constitutes a social relation (*Capital* 138-9). Value may be immaterial, yet it is certainly objective. The product of labor may be seen as the process of labor that gets objectified in the thing. Otherwise put, labor power "in its fluid state" is not itself value, but creates value "in its coagulated state, in objective form" (*Capital* 142). The fact that the product of labor, namely the commodity, becomes a social hieroglyphic points to two different assumptions: the first has to do with its resemblance to "sacred writing" which would correspond to a rough definition of the Greek word for the system of writing mainly in pictorial characters, and to the difficulty of its decipherment. The second pertains to the fact that any

commodity, labor power included, may assume varying forms within the social context of the market. Such social aspects of the process of exchange will be read in James's and Richardson's texts as bespeaking class differentiations and power struggles.

Moving on to James's 1892 short story "The Real Thing" which has consistently been read as a diatribe on mimesis and representation,⁴⁶ I will argue that the story revolves around the labor power of its characters: the unfulfilled labor power of the Monarchs who seek employment as portrait sitters, of Oronte and Miss Churm who are already successfully selling theirs on the market, and the labor power of the illustrator/artist/narrator whose artistic product, in the end, suffers "a permanent harm" ("Real Thing" 210). Although it was largely thought that the third Reform Bill of 1884 signalled the demise of the power of landed aristocracy, more recent historical studies show that this decline has been overstated (Chung 224-5). Even if this is the case, as June Hee Chung argues "[m]any of James's stories from this period document the reorganization of class power between wealthy capitalists and the aristocracy" (225). Although the story stages no shift of power between the aristocrat and the capitalist, it does sustain the idea of the reorganization of class roles among the upper echelons of British society, or even the tenuousness of class distinction. The labor power of the Monarchs is put on the market on account of their economic instability: despite being "true thoroughbreds" (Llewellyn Smith 2), they appear as humbled by financial hardship, and thus attempt to become models for illustrations. The Monarch's labor power fails to attain its realization and exchangeability in the market. Since they are too real to impersonate anything their market dealings end in a flop. Yet, their cultural capital manifest in the manners, style, and knowledge they have accumulated due to their former aristocratic class status is the only manifestation of labor power that is momentarily bought by the artist/illustrator. Likewise, the illustrator's product, though still marketable, subsequently turns second-rate according to market standards. Nevertheless, the

⁴⁶ I am here especially thinking of Earle Labor's "James's 'The Real Thing': Three Levels of Meaning" (1962), Suzan Bazargan's "Representation and Ideology in 'The Real Thing'" (1991), and Sam Whitsitt's "A Lesson in Reading" (1995).

narrator's story authored by James that enfolds the above narrative like a series of Chinese boxes *valorizes*⁴⁷ the capital produced by the characters' labor power.

The third part of this chapter discusses *Pilgrimage* in light of the text's representation of the complexities of class and labor in order to explore Richardson's archiving of Miriam's class consciousness, and how it reflects the gendered subject's labor power within the job market. The idea that subtends this and all other chapters is not only that literary texts are valuable sources for historians of class and labor consciousness but, perhaps most importantly, that these texts complicate the experience of the everyday and thus transform the Marxist understanding of class division and labor consciousness. My wish is to contribute to the recent scholarship that has tried to challenge previous readings of *Pilgrimage* as a text that emphasizes the more inward aspects of femininity, leaving somewhat aside its more social, and political aspects (Bluemel 85). I read Miriam's professional trajectory—initially a teacher who is then employed as a children's governess, and then a dental secretary—as a literary depiction of women's working life at the turn-of-the-century London. Having already explored the heroine's experience of urban space and her reflections on London as a centre of capitalism (Chapter One), I will now focus on the condition of labor and the character's social and political frictions owing to her presence in the public sphere and the professional field. Much like the Monarchs—yet with a lower social starting point—Miriam has to rely on wage earning because of her economically degraded status. She manages to get a job and, through the process of salaried labor, develops and demonstrates a class consciousness that attacks and symptomatically criticises class stratification. Her cultural capital, also formed by her former status as in the case of the Monarchs, provides her with the opportunity to unsettle rigid class distinctions and, on occasions, move through class identities: the text will be read to highlight both her working class politics and her middle-class aesthetics.

⁴⁷ *Verwertung*, the original term in German, is often also rendered as “realization of capital.” Marx's specific concept refers, on the one hand, to the process in which a capital value is bestowed on something, and on the other, to the increase in the value of capital assets, within the sphere of production, through value-forming labor.

2. 2 “From Sex to Text:”⁴⁸ The inclusion of a 1830 petition of the *filles publiques* in *The Arcades Project*

In “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” Buck-Morss comments on Benjamin’s critique of Charles Baudelaire for not taking the prostitute into account: “Baudelaire never wrote ... about whores from the whore’s viewpoint” (*TAP* 347 qtd. in Buck-Morss 49). Yet despite noting Baudelaire’s reluctance to embrace the perspective of the whore, he “proceeds to do likewise” (Buck-Morss, “Flâneur” 49). In the same vein, Deborah Epstein Nord argues that Benjamin by and large masculinizes the modern, and observes that in his work, the female “is always objectified” and the individual woman or prostitute exists only within the confines of spectacle for the male observer (“Urban Peripatetic” 352-3). In retrospect, we know that the prostitute was to outlive other dialectical social types, such as the flâneur, as a social type: the prostitute remains timeless as the city pariah and Benjamin notes her role as a “precursor of commodity capitalism” (*TAP* 348). She becomes the fulfillment of commodity capitalism in that she represents “the outmost extension attainable by the sphere of commodity” (*TAP* 348). Her liminal position inside and outside the drama performed in the metropolis brings out a rupture, a discontinuity that enables her broader understanding of the metropolitan context.

My reading here attempts to bring to the fore a moment in *The Arcades* material when the voice of the female prostitute is documented and presented word for word. I argue that along with his accumulation of numerous observations on women and especially prostitutes in Paris, Benjamin includes a text of specific female authorship in keeping with his “merely show” method: he does not proceed to draw correlations and unearth the hidden dynamics of the female figures behind the petition but rather extends an open invitation to the reader to do so. In this manner, *The Arcades Project* offers a registry of female subjectivity on a par with James’s and Richardson’s partial archives of class tensions and labor power preoccupations.

⁴⁸ I borrow my title from Amanda Anderson’s book review “Prostitution’s Artful Guise. *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* by Charles Bernheimer,” *Diacritics*, 21. 2/3, A Feminist Miscellany, (1991): 102-22.

Although Buck-Morss and Epstein Nord convincingly read the image of the prostitute in *The Arcades Project* as “the embodiment of objectivity, not subjectivity” (“Urban Peripatetic” 50),⁴⁹ I will argue that the following excerpt from the 1830 petition that Benjamin includes in Convolute O, “Prostitution, Gambling” marks a moment when such objectivity is unsettled, granting the prostitute a space for expression, a textual space where the unrepresented female voice of the prostitute is heard as the voice of the liminal subject. Pursuing a contrapuntal reading of Benjamin’s inclusion of the text signed by the *filles publiques* of Paris and addressed to the Prefect of the police, I am interested in the usually omitted, latent voice that is articulated in their text. As Farge argues, discussing the judicial archives of the “long eighteenth century” in France, when women “came in to file a complaint or petition, women told their pain and their disgust differently from men” (35) and featured “a sense of politics” (38). I suggest that this sample of female authorship bespeaks the marginalized female subject in the *polis* of Benjamin’s arcades:

From the *Pétition des filles publiques de Paris a MM. le Préfet de police etc., rédigée par Mlle. Pauline et appostillée par MM. les épiciers, cabaretiers, limonadiers et marchands de comestibles de la capitale...*: The business in itself is unfortunately quite ill-paid, but with the competition of other women and elegant ladies, who pay no taxes, it has become wholly unprofitable. Or are we all the more blameworthy because we take cash while they take cashmere shawls? The city charter guarantees personal freedom to everyone; if our petition to Monsieur le Préfet proves unavailing, then we shall...apply to the Chambers. Otherwise, it would be better to live in the kingdom of Golconda, where girls of our sort formed one of the forty-four divisions of the populace, and as their sole responsibility, had only to dance before the King—which service we are prepared to render His Honor the Prefect should he ever wish it. Friedrich von Raumer, *Briefe aus Paris und Frankreich im Jahre 1830* (Leipzig, 1831), vol. 1, pp. 206-7. (*TAP* 508)

⁴⁹ Commenting on Baudelaire’s “A Une Passante,” Beryl Schlossman similarly notes that the “feminine object is not anchored in a source or a history; she does not belong to monumental or collective memory, and her intimate or personal history is unknown” (1014).

The petition is addressed to the prefect of the police, already inscribing the signees within a power nexus.⁵⁰ Mademoiselle Pauline appears as the author/editor of the petition and the grocers, lemonade makers or sellers, and ‘merchants of edibles’ of the capital co-sign the document.⁵¹ The document reveals that the prostitutes of Paris not only practice forms of sociability but also have social and professional links to different kinds of food sellers, whose privileged terrain is the street, as well; they are part of a social *milieu* that shares a community of interests.⁵²

The signees are protesting against an atypical, unofficial form of prostitution, protected by established institutions and society: the unofficial and concealed prostitution of bourgeois women. Without ever explicitly enunciating the concept of class, these prostitutes do turn against the “elegant” women of upper classes, suggesting that a class antagonism is at stake here. The signees do not oppose the patriarchal social order which “pimps out” both bourgeois women and themselves; the community of gender that would produce cross-class solidarity founded in gender is not enunciated. As Antonio Gramsci notes, “the consciousness of the oppressed is usually a contradictory amalgam of values imbibed from their rulers and notions which spring more directly from their practical experience” (Gramsci qtd. in Eagleton, *Ideology* 36). These prostitutes have practically experienced the “competition” of bourgeois women as a threat. As such, their class interests are given priority over a general attack on patriarchal tenets.

The petition’s oriental twist is also noteworthy since Golconda was the name of a city near Hyderabad, India, famous for its diamonds. In the nineteenth century,

⁵⁰ Historically speaking, the year is full of changes in the hierarchy for the Paris police since four successive prefects take hold of its reins: from August 13th 1829 to July 30th 1830 Claude Mangin is in charge, from July 30th 1830 to August 1st 1830 the prefecture goes to Nicolas Bavoux, followed by Achille Liberal Treilhard (August 1st to December 26th), and Jean Jacques Baude (December 26th to February 31st 1831).

⁵¹ In fact, there is no way of saying whether the petition was indeed authored by prostitutes; one could claim that this was the work of a pimp, lawyer, or any other kind of man that Pauline, or one of the other prostitutes, was in contact with. Yet, given the content of the petition, even if male authorship is the case here, what interests me is that these women endorse the views expressed and appropriate the text as their own. The French association “Autour du Père Tanguy” in its online blog (<http://autourduperetanguy.blogspot.com/archive/2008/12/01/les-dames-du-temps-jadis-c-etait-mieux-hier-suite.html>) provides the cover of the petition from a later publication (fig. 1), an important finding because it reveals the reason behind authoring the petition.

⁵² As Thompson notes, “[f]emale merchants were frequently compared to prostitutes, who could be seen openly plying their trade in the streets of the most populous and run-down quarters, most notably around the Halles and in the Cite” (541).

the toponym was used as a short-hand for a source of wealth, material advantage, or happiness. Golconda is brought up in a utopian context given that the signees acknowledge themselves as a non-privileged group that enjoys only limited rights. Furthermore, shawls—the alternative for remuneration in cash in the case of bourgeois women performing sexual favors—is a luxury commodity of exotic origin. According to Benjamin’s citation of “*Paris chez soi* (Paris), p.139 (A. Durand, ‘Châles—Cachemires indiens et Francais’),” in 1798 and 1799, generals from the expeditionary army of the Egyptian campaign started sending Indian shawls to their wives and lady friends, a gesture that evolved into “cashmere fever” (*TAP* 56). This “disease,” which attended French colonization, spread throughout the nineteenth century and “reached colossal size under the July monarchy” (*TAP* 56). Needless to say, due to their financial marginality, the prostitutes who signed the petition could not partake in the consumption of such luxury goods that came from colonial exploitation abroad. Yet, in the year of the July revolution, 1830, they were well aware of the expensive gift economy in which upper-class women participated.

Social, economic, and legal perplexities of the lived experience of prostitution in 1830 Paris are evident in the petition, which is significant in that it sheds light on a peripheral, under-documented and silenced female figure of the nineteenth century. As Christine Buci-Glucksmann argues in her discussion of the feminine as an allegory of modernity, the prostitute is “one of those monads that open the way for the archeological work of reconstructing history” (223). The appearance of the figure of the prostitute as author, in the text cited by Benjamin, evokes a thick network of social relations. The petition’s discourse is truncated since Benjamin only includes an excerpt from the petition in an act of exclusion that is typical of the practice of the archivist. Yet, in the text he does select to archive, the voice of the prostitute becomes audible and illuminates the urban class stratification in a new way, rupturing the hegemonic interpretations of that specific city reality.

On April 14th 1830, Claude Mangin, chief commissioner of the Parisian Police, issued an ordinance forbidding the circulation of prostitutes in public

thoroughfares and their entrance to the Palais Royal.⁵³ Mangin's (1786-1835) tenure was characterized by his will to restore older regulations that mainly affected minor commercial activities within the city, on which a great part of the urban population depended. He forbade merchants to showcase their products in front of their boutiques, limited the number of permits given to lemonade makers, tried to regulate the presence of coachmen, controlled the theatres, surveilled road singers and even attempted the regulation of the number of butchers in Paris (Michel Aubouin, Arnaud Teyssire, Jean Tullard, 756-7). In "Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris," Victoria E. Thompson explains that "the (former) First Arrondissement was the commercial heart of the capital; those seeking pleasure were directed to the Palais Royal and the Boulevards des Italiens" (530) adding that "in the streets surrounding the Palais Royal one would see the attractive young women employed in the clothing trade" (531). In the months before the July Revolution, with Palais Royal being located in the commercial heart of Paris, the backlash that Mangin's ban created is understandable.

Mangin's decision to ban the strolling of prostitutes in the galleries of Palais Royal and in the greater area of central Paris ban was answered by an abundant correspondence of the *filles publiques* who resided in the metropolis, along with an important relevant corpus of poems and prose that explored this issue, produced in the same year (Lecour 389-99). In the end, the measure was applied for three months, only to vanish along with its initiator, under the force of the July barricades.

⁵³ The order should be contextualized within the broader fragile political framework of Paris: In July 1830, the French king Charles X encouraged by the prestige acquired after the conquest of Algeria, introduced a series of decrees, the July Ordinances, also known as the Four Ordinances of Saint Cloud. The decision can be read as a show of political force against the French Chamber of Deputies, annihilating its supremacy, and manifests the king's latent fear for the state of the monarchy, after the economic crisis of 1829. The Four Ordinances, published in *Le Moniteur* on July 26th suspended the liberty of the Press, dismissed the new Chamber (which had not yet been formed), changed the electoral law so as to limit the number of voters and set the new elections dates (September 6th and 13th). The new measures politically threatened mainly the liberals on a political level, but also a wide range of the petite bourgeoisie and the working-class elite (journalists, typographers, merchants). The response was given by a collective protest, written at the office of the *National* and signed by 44 politicians and journalists: the text characterized the royal decision as a "coup d'Etat," and was printed on the following day by four newspapers which had decided to disobey censorship. The starting shot for a general uprising was given when the police, under the orders of Claude Mangin, invaded the newspapers offices, leading to the *Trois Glorieuses*, three days of riots and barricades that concluded to the change of the regime. (Dominique Barjot, Jean-Pierre Chaline, and André Encrevé, *La France au XIXe siècle, 1814-1914*, 173-177).

It is from this corpus of nineteenth-century texts that Benjamin salvages the excerpt from the petition written by the prostitute known as Pauline. Although I have not been able to locate the entire text of the petition, I think that the text was written sometime in the period of April-July 1830, in response to the above measures. The front cover of the petition (fig. 1) appears in the study of a Paris Police functionary in 1877, who states he has consulted the specific petition found in an 1830 file in the Paris Police Archive. The file contained brochures, songs and letters which protested Mangin's ban. Mangin lost control of the city during the July Revolution, and realizing the changes to come, burnt his documents and fled the country (Aubouin, Teyssire, Tullard 756-7). Thus, Pauline's petition must have been written and addressed to the Paris Police sometime after the ban and before Mangin's departure.

Inserting the figure of the prostitute into a wider framework of Marxist analysis, Buck-Morss claims that the prostitute comes to realize the figuration of "the ur-form of the wage laborer, selling herself in order to survive" (*Seeing* 184), in an era when every kind of labor is about to be compared to prostitution. Buck-Morss acknowledges the common ground shared by prostitutes and the working class, and adheres to Benjamin's view that

prostitution can lay claim to being considered "work" the moment work becomes prostitution. In fact, the *lorette* was the first to carry out a radical renunciation of the costume of lover. She already arranges to be paid for her time; from there, it is only a short distance to those who demand "wages." (*TAP* 348)

Even though prostitution is now regarded as wage labor—the widely used term "sex-worker" bespeaks this acknowledgement—prostitutes are often thought to

have been denied access to the working-class subjectivity.⁵⁴ Yet, the petition's alignment of prostitutes with street sellers and food merchants of the city presents prostitution as a guild. In the petition, the reference to the prostitutes addressing the 'Chambers' as their last resort may be read in this context. Nevertheless, the Marxian analysis would tend to consider prostitutes as linked to the lumpen proletariat rather than view them as integral part of the working class. In Paris, the registering of prostitutes begins as early as the 1810s; A. J. B. Parent-Duchatelet's cumbersome study *De la Prostitution Dans la Ville de Paris*, which was published a few years after the petition (1836), covers prostitutes who had been inscribed over a fifteen-year period (1816-31) and offers abundant information about the policing and regulation of prostitution. As Amanda Anderson argues, the bureaucratic files of the French regulatory system very closely surveilled prostitution in France (106). Although Buck-Morss maintains that the "politics of this close connection between the debasement of women sexually and their presence in public space, the fact that it functioned to deny women power is clear" ("Flâneur" 49), I would argue that this moment of female authorship reminds us that these women were not fully contained. Since prostitutes, unlike their "respectable" sisters, occupied the public space and broke out of domesticity, they functioned "as part of the visible urban scene" (Epstein Nord, *Walking* 74). The petition registers a moment when the prostitute formally penetrates the public sphere and invades state bureaucracy; the prostitutes come across as an embodiment of the aporia of imperial politics, that is, of the growing number of subjects reduced to the position of the pariah, viewed as redundant or waste. Socially and politically, the prostitute dwells in the margins and her mere existence reveals the workings of state oppression and the fate of an abject category of women whose voice is not usually heard.

⁵⁴ In fact, the prostitutes' ties with the working class—at least in England—are ritualistically cut off with the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s. This exceptional legislation meant to control the spread of venereal disease quickly culminated in medical monitoring and police regulation:

This medical and police supervision in turn created an outcast class of "sexually deviant" females, forcing prostitutes to acknowledge their status as "public" women and destroying their private associations with the general community of the laboring poor (Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian* 5).

With the exception of the figure of the prostitute, Benjamin does not seem to be preoccupied with women specifically as an object of thought and analysis in *The Arcades Project*. By and large, women are not seen to pass through the streets, to inhabit the domestic and the private sphere, or to work in market stalls, workshops, and shops. It is the bourgeois life and imaginary that monopolize Benjamin's interest, yet to speak of another kind of woman that is rarely mentioned in *The Arcades*, I would now like to turn to the other working-class women walking the streets to and from work, and how these women are linked to the prostitute's liminal subjectivity. Although Leslie does cite Benjamin's reference to nineteenth-century women partaking "in large numbers the production process outside the home" and their subsequent assuming of "masculine traits" ("Ruin and Rubble" 99), other such excerpts are scarce in *The Arcades Project*. The female worker is far from central to *The Arcades*, yet she does haunt the text in different guises. The working-class woman is present yet unseen, spectral: "The feminine becomes the inevitable sign of a new historic regime of seeing and 'not-seeing:' of representable and unrepresentable" (Buci-Glucksmann 221).

Benjamin's citation which showcases the "feminine fauna" of the Parisian arcades presents a rather selective assortment of women: "Prostitutes, grisettes, old-hag shopkeepers, female street vendors, glovers, *demoiselles*. This last was the name, around 1830, for incendiaries disguised as women" (*TAP* 494). To examine these representatives of the female sex one by one, one has to momentarily put aside the *filles publiques* of the petition. The word "grisette" presents a complicated class genealogy. It originally stood for the young working-class Frenchwoman (*OED*) and derives from "gris" (grey) and the diminutive suffix -ette; the term is coined from the grey dress material typically worn by such women. However, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, its meaning is enriched and it refers to independent young women (often working as seamstresses or milliner's assistants) who form relationships with artists and poets and are part of bohemian circles. In his seminal *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, Harvey notes the emergence of the figure of the *grisette* as linked to the influx of students from the provinces to Paris: it was customary for them to take mistresses who looked after them, "even managed the

budget, in return for relief from dull and ill-remunerated employment” (187). Leslie observes that “[t]he erotic ideal is supposed to be not the *grisette* who gives herself to men but the *lorette* who sells herself to men” (“Ruin and Rubble” 103). As a matter of fact, the *grisette* was indeed gradually displaced by the *lorette*:

Named after the quarter of Notre Dame de Lorette (where they were presumably concentrated), *lorettes* were women of pleasure who used their powers of seduction for shorter-term gain (meals, entertainment, and gifts as well as money). (Harvey, *Paris* 187)

The economy of gifts, often combined with money in exchange for sex takes us back to the prostitutes’ denunciation of bourgeois prostitution in the petition, while the reference to “meals” underlines the class divide. “Old-hag shopkeepers” are added to Benjamin’s equation as if there could be no such thing as young respectable shopkeepers. Lastly, there are “female street vendors” and “glovers” (the makers or sellers of gloves), both of whom are workers who belong to the lower social strata. This—not so motley—crew of women is to my mind of interest for Benjamin because they all constitute spectacles; all of them are associated with the phantasmagoria of fashion, consumption and appearance. From hats, to gloves, to clothes and shop-keeping, the array of female activities sustains the imagery of commodities consumed by the rich, albeit produced by the poor. Benjamin’s gender specific diversified industry seems thus to be related to fashion and services.

The absence of the female factory worker from his list can be explained as these workers lived away from the city centre (factories were in the suburbs keeping the male and female industrial proletariat *en dehors du text*) and could not possibly fit into the bourgeois imaginary so aptly explored by Benjamin. The socialization of women, which inevitably follows their aforementioned joining the public sphere, renders them more threatening to the order of things. Yet, Benjamin’s brief list ends with a final figure with a more explicitly political function: “incendiaries disguised as women.” The reference is to male individuals who mingled with the crowd, and contrived schemes of arson. Leslie is quick to recognize this “feminine moment of

political action (albeit transvestite or performed)” (“Ruin and Rubble” 98), and to take her point further, I would argue it is a moment charged with revolutionary connotations. Masquerade can be read as being used for politically subversive purposes in the sense that incendiaries disrupt the norm of urban life either by setting actual fires or by disseminating incendiary ideas. In the years to follow, the term would assume its literal meaning in order to describe “les pétroleuses,” the female communards who played an active role during the 72 revolutionary days of the 1871 Paris Commune, and whose demonization culminated in the *pétroleuse* being the most notorious figure to emerge from the Commune (Gullickson, “Pétroleuse” 241-265).⁵⁵

There is a latent threat entailed in the figure of the prostitute: While realizing the fantasy of bourgeois sexuality, she also conceals a potential subversion of the hegemonic social order. Drawing on the seminal work of the French novelist, archivist, historian and journalist Edith Thomas, Harvey discusses the term *femmes isolées*, which by and large designates dissident, independent women living “outside the protection of the family” (*Paris* 183). Harvey traces the associations of gender, sexuality and revolution:

In their association with prostitution, these women carried “the moral leprosy” that made large cities “permanent center of infection;” they permitted expression of or simply expressed those “tumultuous passions” that, in time of political upheaval—as in the revolution of 1848—threatened to overturn the entire social order. (Thomas qtd. in *Paris* 183)

The plethora of references to the dialectical image of the prostitute or whore in Benjamin is, according to Buck-Morss, explained on the grounds of her being marginal, economically precarious and ultimately threatened with extinction by industrialism (“Flâneur” 35). The prostitute intensifies the delusion of the commodity in that she produces a “fictive pleasure” that supposedly corresponds to that of her partner (*TAP* 361). Benjamin is attentive to the fact that the commodity

⁵⁵ Also see *Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune*, Cornell University Press, 1996, in which Gullickson explores the representations of these female revolutionaries employing the original texts of journalists, memoirists, and political commentators of the time.

form emerges in Baudelaire as “the social content of the allegorical form of perception” wherein form and content are synthesized in the prostitute (*TAP* 335). If the commodity is pronounced as the ultimate “social content” in Baudelaire and allegory as the form, the prostitute brings form together with content as a subject at work. Rather than being a commodity, a mere object, she complicates the borders between object and subject. While the workers sell their labor power, the prostitute consciously puts herself up—her body and her sex—for sale. No process of commodification can simply reduce the complexity of the subject to the functionality of the object as the case of the prostitute showcases. The text of the *filles publiques* ties in with what Leslie maintains about the prostitute in Benjamin: she does not comply with the “masking” of social contradictions and becomes modernity’s “heroine” (“Ruin and Rubble” 112).

Thus, I read the prostitute as the “quintessential female figure of the urban scene, a prime example of the paradox...that what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central” (Walkowitz, *Dreadful Delight* 21). When Pauline and the rest of the *signees* decide to draw up the petition, there is a passage from sex to text⁵⁶ which Benjamin’s gesture of inclusion acknowledges. If the practice of prostitution is read as the elastic thread that includes all potential positions of the prostitute between the two dialectical poles of object and subject, the petition as a moment of authorship marks a shift of weight to the side of subject. Then perhaps the prostitute poses the threat of social disorder not just because she circulates in the crowd, ill-reputed, and abject. Pauline and the other prostitutes pose a threat precisely because they act as workers, who have social and professional relations with other workers that also protest against an authoritarian *status quo*. The petition then shows the prostitute as part of the masses and therefore linked to what Jameson in his *Political Unconscious* calls “a primal nineteenth century middle-class terror of the mob” (175).

⁵⁶ This last sub-chapter, “From Sex to Text,” along with my heartfelt thanks, is for Mina Karavanta, who encouraged me as early as 2013 to work on this idea. More than a supervising Professor, she remains the intellectual that never loses sight of what is humane. Sincere thanks are also owed to Sam Dolbear and Hannah Proctor, the editors of *Arcades Material Yellow: Subterranean to Street* (Aldgate Press, 2019), a series of pamphlets on the less explored aspects of the works of Benjamin, whose insightful comments helped me shape an earlier and shorter version of this piece.

Figure 1: The Petition signed by the *filles publiques* of Paris. The front cover of the petition shown in the figure appears in the 1877 study of a Paris Police functionary, who states he has consulted the specific petition found in an 1830 file, at the Paris Police Archive. The Police file reportedly contains brochures, songs and letters, all of which were written in protest of chief commissioner Claude Mangin's banning measure.

PÉTITION

DES

FILLES PUBLIQUES

DE PARIS

A M. LE PRÉFET DE POLICE,

AU SUJET DE L'ORDONNANCE QU'IL VIENT DE RENDRE

CONTRE ELLES,

Leur interdisant la circulation dans les rues et promenades publiques,

ET DE CELLE QUI PRÉCÉDEMMENT LEUR A INTERDIT

L'ENTRÉE DU PALAIS-ROYAL;

Rédigée par M^{lle} Pauline,

ET APOSTILLÉE

PAR MM. LES ÉPICIERS, CABARETIERS, LIMONADIERS ET MARCHANDS DE
COMESTIBLES DE LA CAPITALE.

Prix : 50 c.

Paris,

CHEZ LES LIBRAIRES DU PALAIS-ROYAL,

ET LES MARCHANDS DE NOUVEAUTÉS.

—
1850.

2.3 Class Trouble and Labor Power in “The Real Thing:” Archiving the Limits to Art and the Confines of the Market

“It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation (*Darstellung*)” (Benjamin, *OGTD* 27).⁵⁷ I suggest that this sentence, which dramatically inaugurates Benjamin’s *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), might as well be employed to describe James’s subject matter in the 1892 short story, “The Real Thing.” Albeit not a piece of philosophical writing, the story deals with the problems of representation from the artist’s point of view and comments on the evaluation and hierarchy of artistic expression, as well as the interaction of the artist with the art market.⁵⁸ Yet, as I will argue, it also registers a subtext of fluid class status and the subsequent necessity of wage labor that accompanies such instability.

Tzvetan Todorov, who characterizes the story “a simple parable,” summarizes the plot as follows:

The narrator, a painter, is visited one day by a couple [Major and Mrs. Monarch] who *show every sign* of belonging to the nobility; they ask if they can pose for any book illustrations he might be doing, for they are reduced to a state of extreme destitution. [. . .] The couple are in fact “the real thing,” but this property makes the painter’s task no easier. [...] Art requires quite different qualities, so that being “real” can even [. . .] be disastrous. (167-8)

Todorov’s wording is intriguing because, while referring to the Monarch’s class position, he uses the expression “show every sign.” Showing or failing to show signs is a prevalent trope in the story. Indeed, when the Monarchs arrive at the painter’s studio, they are so well-dressed and properly behaved that he mistakes them for potential clients, that is, sitters for a portrait. He is amazed to learn they

⁵⁷ *Darstellung* has been translated as representation in the English version of the text, despite the fact that the German terms *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung* are usually rendered as “presentation” and “representation” respectively.

⁵⁸ In her “Representation and Ideology in “The Real Thing,” Susan Bazargan argues that the story “adumbrates the postmodern ‘crisis of representation,’ the shift, as Jameson says, from a realistic epistemology to a non- or post-referential representation” (135). Stuart Burrows, on the other hand, suggests that the story “identifies the real thing with photography, a medium he supposedly despised” and “insists on the impossibility of clear-cut distinction between the real and the represented thing” (256, 257).

are, in fact, offering themselves as models for his work on illustrations. They actively advertise themselves as being “the real thing” for the creation of pictures of aristocrats, yet the artist’s efforts to draw and paint them are to remain fruitless: coming across as “larger than life,” the Monarchs devour everything in the composition around them and make it disappear. What is more, unlike the “freckled cockney” Miss Churm (“Real Thing” 197), the Italian “bankrupt orange-monger” Oronte (“Real Thing” 203), and an unnamed boy with big feet—all of whom are other models of his—the Monarchs fail to be anything else but themselves. As Linda Simon notes, the Monarchs “challenge the artist’s mimetic skills while deflating his power to interpret them; no interpretation is necessary if all he has to do to represent upper-class individuals is to render the details of their appearance” (65). In fact, their class status seems to sabotage both their newly acquired labor power and their futile attempt to sell it on the labor market.

Early on in the story, James’s narrator expresses “an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I liked things that appeared; then one was sure” (“Real Thing” 195). The artist clearly favors a dichotomy between the real subject and the represented one in that things that appear cannot possibly be the real ones. He differentiates between what is and what appears because one is more certain about what appears. The artist forces that into being through representation, although it seems to be untenable and equivocal. According to Burrows, the Monarchs are “caught in a curious double bind: the fact that they look like something proves that they are not that thing, yet the fact that they look like that other thing is precisely what prevents the narrator from representing the Monarchs *as* that thing” (257, emphasis in the original).⁵⁹ Scholarship on “The Real Thing” has often fallen into a binary of either arguing about the limitations of artistic mimesis and identifying the narrator’s views as James’s own (Leon Edel, F. O. Matthiessen), or separating the narrator-artist from James with a view to exploring “the political economy of artistic representation, an economy that goes beyond the familiar motif of the break between professional and public interests, the opposition between the ‘sublime’

⁵⁹ Burrows significantly argues that “The Real Thing” is a turning point for James, because the interchangeability of things and objects that the market disseminates is applied to people.

economy of art and that of public consumption” (Bazargan 134)⁶⁰. More recent critical attempts read the story as “producing what the artist vainly tried to do” (Vieilledent 37), concluding that the tale stands as an allegory about writing itself. In his *Notebooks*, James states that “The Real Thing” should be, among other things, “a magnificent lesson” (104 qtd. in Whitsitt 304).

With the questions of reality and representation in mind, James’s stated wish about the didactic purpose of his story may be read in conjunction with Benjamin’s argument in “Goethe’s Elective Affinities:” Criticism should reveal the “truth content of a work of art,” which is inextricably linked to its “material content” at the outset of the work’s history (297). Benjamin is here preoccupied with the work’s inner secret, and the task of criticism is to introduce the truth content of the work into our realm of experience. James, in turn, delivers a story in which the framework of fruitless or successful representation is built around the materialist need to survive.

James’s story abounds in professional transactions, references to commodities, the need to make a living, market dealings, and other materialist concerns that characterize the aesthetic politics of the text. The story is much more than a comment on “the inadequacy of mimetic art” (Simon 66). As James Pendleton observes, the story is also about a basic drive that all characters have in common: the desire for survival (5). Pendleton explains that while “the publisher camouflages his desire for survival as desire to produce a fine series of books and the artist defines his as desire for recognition and money, the Monarchs are consciously aware of the problem of living from the one day to the next” (6). Indeed, the narrator perpetually strives to be commissioned to do a major project, while the fallen Monarchs try to make a living out of posing, in much the same way that Miss Churm and Oronte do.

Jennifer A. Greenhill, who traces James’s original inspiration for “The Real Thing” in a story that the illustrator George du Maurier tells James sometime in the 1880s, cites James’s relevant entry in his *Notebooks*: “The little tragedy” of such

⁶⁰ Susan Bazargan’s “Representation and Ideology in ‘The Real Thing’” reads the story as a case in which the consumer society is “heralding what Walter Benjamin has called ‘the age of mechanical reproduction’” (135).

“gentlefolk, who had been all their life stupid and well-dressed, living on a fixed income, at country-houses [...] could only *show* themselves” (James qtd. in Edel and Powers 55-57 qtd. in Greenhill 261). It is telling that James decides to fictionally archive the real incident narrated by his friend; thus, the “material content” of the story, in Benjamin’s terms, is the actual incident with the gentlefolk. Starting with James’s somewhat demeaning and ironic description of his characters and his aphorism about showing themselves, I read the story focusing on what the Monarchs can offer as labor power in their attempt to enter the labor force. According to Marx’s analysis of the valorization process in Chapter Seven of *Capital*, when a person (in this case the artist) purchases labor-power, he sets that labor-power to work. The employment of the Monarchs thus turns them into workers, who are to produce use-value. The use-value (successful posing) will, in turn, be embedded in the labor of the artist/illustrator who will produce and sell his illustrations to the periodical press. The end-product, the illustrated magazine, entails all former stages of the labor process, including that of the persons who distribute and sell it. In our case, the problems arise when, unable to successfully pose, the Monarchs disrupt the process that eventually leads to the valorization of value. If the illustrator cannot use them as models, he will not manage to sell the product of his labor, and thus no surplus-value will be created. In short, the production of commodities is a process of creating values.

James elaborates on the Monarchs’ need for employment by accurately offering the picture of their financial dire straits as well as their previous wealth. Rather than simply introducing himself, the husband hands the narrator his card visit—a representation, if not a metonymy, of his identity—“inscribed with the words ‘Major Monarch,’” and goes on to briefly summarize how he left the army and “had the misfortune to lose [their] money” (“Real Thing” 191). With the army being a privileged professional terrain for the British aristocracy, Major Monarch’s explanation of their mishap lends additional verisimilitude to the text. Accordingly, understanding that the Monarchs are “gentlefolks,” the narrator discusses the paradox of seeing “such people apply for such poor pay” (“Real Thing” 191, 192). Mrs. Monarch looks “as if she had ten thousand a year” and the illustrator cannot

help acknowledging that, at least at a first glance, the lady is the perfect model: “her waist was surprisingly small; her elbow moreover had the orthodox crook. She held her head at the conventional angle; but why did she come to me? She ought to have tried on jackets at a big shop” (“Real Thing” 193). The artist-narrator equates the occupation of modelling for a painting, an activity specifically located within the art world, with that of modelling garments in a department store of the world of consumer culture. He then visualizes the couple as part of the market: “There was something in them for a waistcoat-maker, a hotel-keeper or a soap-vendor. I could imagine ‘We always use it’ pinned on their bosoms with the greatest effect” (“Real Thing” 192).

The narrator’s momentary fantasy of the Monarchs as walking-talking advertisements can be compared to Benjamin’s much later configuration of the dialectical type who walked the streets sandwiched between two advertising posters, the sandwich-man. The sandwich-man is for Benjamin “the last incarnation of the flâneur” (*TAP* 451), in other words, a transformation of the well-known dialectical figure deprived of his comfort and ease in observing the market and not partaking of it. What the Monarchs share with the sandwich-man is certainly not class origin: Benjamin’s sandwich-men in Paris as a rule came from the homeless proletariat. Yet proleptically echoing the figure of the sandwich-man, the text presents the Monarchs as effective in animating the inanimate and becoming “an allegory of the body reified by capitalism” (Feldman 7). In downgrading the Monarchs from portrait-sitters to models for promoting commodities, the text of “The Real Thing” turns the characters to what the sandwich-man was, “half-man, half-commodity” (Gentili 110).

Observing the flâneur’s trajectory from leisure and idleness to the harshness of hired labor, Carlo Salzani rightfully argues that the sandwich-man embodies the ruin of the flâneur, in which the truth-content of the figure finally emerges (60). In her own discussion of the genealogy of the term, Buck-Morss explains that the sandwich-man was a familiar figure in Paris of the 1930s, yet a figure closely associated with poverty; sandwich-men “were casual labourers, part-time and non-unionized [...] recruited from the ranks of the clochards, 12,000 of whom were

registered in Paris in the mid-1930s as *sans domicile fixe*” (“Flâneur” 42, emphasis in the original). The element of the *déraciné*, the subject who has fallen from their proper class, or who oscillates between class statuses is common among Benjamin’s dialectical figures. But the historical reference here is relevant because James’s text alludes to the employment of the Monarchs as walking-talking mannequins appropriate for coat makers and soap vendors, but not for artists. The way the leisurely figure of the flâneur slowly disintegrates into the position of the impoverished and hired sandwich-man reflects the way the Monarchs descend from the more respectable portrait-sitting to the modeling of clothes and advertising of goods. Intriguingly, they are pictured as becoming animate advertising texts or reified vendors (“We always use it”).⁶¹

James’s narrator offers the following reading of the Monarchs’ class status and actual financial means, which is reminiscent of his comments about a dying aristocracy that is being slowly dried of its resources in *The American Scene*:

Their good looks had been their *capital*, and they had good-humouredly made the most of the career that this resource marked out for them. It was in their faces, the blankness, the deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting which had given them pleasant intonations. I could see the sunny drawing-rooms, sprinkled with *periodicals* she didn’t read, in which Mrs. Monarch had continuously sat; I could see the wet shrubberies in which she had walked, equipped to admiration for either exercise. I could see the rich covers the Major had helped to shoot and the wonderful *garments* in which, late at night, he repaired to the smoking-room to talk about them. I could imagine their *leggings* and *waterproofs*, their knowing *tweeds* and *rugs*, their rolls of sticks and cases of tackle and neat *umbrellas*; and I could evoke the exact appearance of their servants and the compact variety of their *luggage* on the platforms of country stations. (“Real Thing” 194, emphases added)

⁶¹ In her “Illustrating the Shadow of Doubt: Henry James, Blindness, and ‘The Real Thing,’” Greenhill reads the Monarchs as “oscillating between subjecthood and objecthood, between their competing claims to being impenetrably ‘real’ and to being objects already—the figures of a photograph, an advertisement, or an illustration” (265).

This long passage records the material prosperity formerly enjoyed by the couple—now irrevocably gone. Despite the initial declaration that “their looks had been their capital,” James goes on to register actual indexes to wealth, commodities enjoyed in their “twenty years of country-house visiting.” The tragedy of the Monarchs is that, while they bloomed in well-off surroundings, drawing-rooms, shrubberies, and smoking-rooms, they initially seem to be reduced to the status of mere objects in the illustrator’s studio. Instead of being sitters of a portrait, a condition that entails the agency and subjectivity of commissioning a painting, they offer themselves to be utilized as reified anonymous models for the purpose of illustrations. Ironically, whereas Mrs. Monarch would shun reading the periodicals that were lying around in the sunny drawing rooms, she is now applying for work hoping to *become* a picture in a periodical, or else hoping to assume the form of one of the commodities she used to lavishly enjoy.

The distinction between illustrative work and painting calls attention to another prominent aspect of labor in “The Real Thing.” Throughout the story, there are certain subtle references to a specific sort of artistic hierarchy and evaluation. Already from the first pages, the painter-narrator states that his illustrations were his pot-boilers: “I looked to a different branch of art (far and away the most interesting it had always seemed to me), to perpetuate my fame” (“Real Thing” 191). He thus situates the whole story within an artistic condition that falls short of what he really aspires to do, but has to be carried on for reasons of financial gain. In the words of Adam Sonstegard, “[b]oth James and the narrator of “The Real Thing” would rather be elsewhere, rendering grand portraits. But thanks to financial demands, they settle temporarily with the potboiler press” (180). Attempting to work with Mrs. Monarch, the illustrator concludes that what “made her good” for the purpose of photography, “unfitted her” for his, and “after a few times” he begins “to find her too insurmountably stiff;” as a result his “drawing looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph” (“The Real Thing” 199-200). This juxtaposition of his illustrations to photography as a lesser kind of artistic product is the second instance when the reader is offered a clue to the painter’s artistic *credo*. Illustrations come across as more artistic than photographs, while the reference to the practice of making painted

copies of photographs draws attention to *a representation of a representation* (a copy of a photograph).

Tellingly enough, the painter's work is to appear in the *Cheapside*, a magazine that publishes fiction. The title of the magazine re-emerges six times in the story, ringing with low-quality echoes. Near the end of the text, when the painter's friend Jack Hawley surveys his work and criticizes its devaluation, the painter attempts to defend himself by asserting that "the Cheapside people are pleased" ("The Real Thing" 206). Yet as Whitsitt observes, "[i]f the 'dingy' word of 'models' doesn't seem to 'fit' the Monarchs, that is because the artist, having invested himself with the cloak of portraitist, does not see himself as fitting into the dingy case of 'illustrator'" (309). Hawley erupts in a final act of assessment: "Come on, don't pretend, at this time of day, to have pretty illusions about the public, especially about publishers and editors. It's not for *such* animals you work—it's for those who know, *coloro che sanno*" ("Real Thing" 206). Whereas the painter highlights his observation and awareness of the demands of the market, Hawley's passionate comment on the idea of expertise and mastery attests to a return to the notion of artistic creation for a limited community of connoisseurs rather than the broader public.

Soon after, the narrator discusses his current project, that is, an "*édition deluxe* of one of the writers of our day—the rarest of the novelists," the fictitious Philip Vincent ("Real Thing" 195). Philip Vincent, appropriately a potential *alter ego* for Henry James, "long neglected by the multitudinous vulgar and dearly prized by the attentive [...] had had the happy fortune of seeing, late in life, the dawn and then the full light of a higher criticism" ("Real Thing" 195). The narrator-artist does not conceal his admiration for Vincent, practically siding with his practice of high-brow art. Although he is to do the first of the books, "Rutland Ramsay," his "participation in the rest of the affair—this first book was to be a test—was to depend on the satisfaction [he] should give" ("Real Thing" 195). The artist's devotion then to high art does not suffice on its own to secure him the wished-for contract. At the same time, the emergence of "one of the most independent representatives of English letters" in the story perhaps points to James's distancing

himself from the narrator, or imposing a level of mediation: rather than having the narrator expressing views as his spokesperson, James may be the Philip Vincent whose only presence in the story is by reputation.

Charles Johanningsmeier, who has elaborately discussed the publishing history and original readership of “Real Thing,” persuasively argues that the story, published first in “multiple American newspapers” and then serially appearing in the British periodical *Black and White* (75),⁶² may have been a certain kind of “pot-boiler” for James; judging by the “differing educational levels and circumstances,” “these readers did not necessarily share the negative views of mimetic realism espoused by James, the Modernists, or the readers of Little Magazines” (Johanningsmeier 96).⁶³ Sonstegard similarly draws attention to the fact that when the narrator says he works “in black and white, for magazines, and for storybooks,” James is implicitly joking as the story “first appeared for British audiences in a semimonthly periodical entitled *Black and White*, and it appeared accompanied by simple, single-color illustrations, which were known as paintings in “black-and-white” (173). More than that, James’s correspondence with Edmund Gosse shows that he went to Paris in 1891 to work on an “organized pot-boiling basis” (*Selected Letters* 74 qtd. in Sonstegard 174).

The narrator’s highly prestigious task, “planned by a publisher of taste” (“Real Thing” 195), is, in fact, better served by lower class models. Reportedly, Miss Churm “was only a freckled cockney, but she could represent everything, from a fine lady to a shepherdess; she had the faculty, as she might have had a fine voice or long hair” (“Real Thing” 197). The narrator-artist takes pains to culturally situate the cockney young lady in rather simplistic but lively terms: “She couldn’t spell, and she loved beer, but she had two or three ‘points,’ and practice,

⁶² In his discussion of the publishing history of the story, Burrows notes that its appearance in *Black and White* was “accompanied by illustrations by the splendidly named Rudolph Blind” (260). Also when James’s narrator says that “in those days there were few serious workers in black-and-white,” he might be, as Robert Gale argues, referring to actual “black and white illustrations to accompany published prose” (65).

⁶³ Johanningsmeier’s “How American Readers Experienced ‘The Real Thing’” contextualizes the story within James’s efforts “to raise enough money” while in a general state of discontent over the fact that “[His] books just don’t sell” (*Letters, Fictions, Lives* 284 qtd. in Johanningsmeier 95). Interpreting James’s motives for pursuing mass-market publication, the scholar argues that James both wished for popularity with the mass reading public and the increase of his income (95).

and a knack, and mother-wit, and a kind of whimsical sensibility, and a love of the theatre, and seven sisters, and not an ounce of respect, especially for the *h*” (“Real Thing” 197). Miss Churm, may be in the antipode of Mrs. Monarch, but, as her name suggests, represents the potential for true artistic inspiration and expression. Similarly, the Italian Oronte, whose name vaguely alludes to the Italian word for gold “oro,” is described as “a bankrupt orange-monger, but [...] a treasure” (“Real Thing” 203). The readers soon learn that he “had wandered to England in search of fortune, like other itinerants,” and “wore tight yellow trousers with reddish stripes,” but when the artist “put him into some old clothes of [his] own he looked like an Englishman” (“Real Thing” 203). Schematically put, while the glittering Monarchs are definitely not gold, the bankrupt peasant is. The adventurer, circus-like appearance of the young man is readily turned into the efficient type who can be transformed into anything; as a result, Oronte is deemed “as good as Miss Churm, who could look, when required, like an Italian” (“Real Thing” 203).

Needless to say, the Monarchs’ shortcomings that sabotage their labor power are punctuated by the special skills of their rivals. In the words of Ali Taghidadeh, “the problem with the Monarchs is that they are too real to suggest reality” and “their severe reality nullifies the strategy of representation” since representation requires “sign, figuration, or appearance” (87). Given that the artist gradually becomes reluctant to let the couple pose, the Monarchs end up, busying themselves as servants in the studio, striving to appear useful. Realizing their fall from grace, the artist’s eyes are filled with tears (“my drawing was blurred for a moment—the picture swam” (“Real Thing” 210). Nevertheless, he quickly concludes that “if [his] servants were [his] models, [his] models might be [his] servants” (“Real Thing” 210), an inference that pinpoints the unsettling of the British highly stratified class system within the context of the artist’s studio. Burrows reads this reversal that is “to expose the working of stereotypes;” yet “the narrator reveals that, in rejecting the Monarchs, he has merely replaced one set of stereotypes with another” (261). To expand on this point, I think the reversal played out in the artist’s studio is primarily social and imposed by market demands: While the ordinary models are posing, the extraordinary Monarchs start doing chores in the studio, a defeat marked by the

gesture of Mrs. Monarch who “stooped to the floor with a noble humility and picked up a dirty rag that had dropped out of [the artist’s] paint-box” (“Real Thing” 210).

Yet the gesture is preceded by another, which can be read as Mrs. Monarch’s last affirmation of her cultural capital. The end of the story scene between Mrs. Monarch and Miss Churm is much more than a moment of contact between the “real thing and the make-believe” (“Real Thing” 201), the *grande dame* and the commoner. While the artist is sketching Miss Churm, Mrs. Monarch’s voice is heard: “‘I wish her hair was a little better done.’ [...] ‘Do you mind my just touching it?’” (“Real Thing” 209). The artist is startled, momentarily fearing Mrs. Monarch might harm Miss Churm, but is reassured by her:

[...] she quieted me with a glance I shall never forget—I confess I should like to have been able to paint _that_—and went for a moment to my model. She spoke to her softly, laying a hand upon her shoulder and bending over her; and as the girl, understanding, gratefully assented, she disposed her rough curls, with a few quick passes, in such a way as to make Miss Churm’s head twice as charming. It was one of the most heroic personal services I have ever seen rendered. (“Real Thing” 210)

Mrs. Monarch, having accepted her defeat, decides to become useful by styling the model’s appearance. Putting aside her class superiority, she commits herself to the service of the younger lady and paradoxically, this is the only moment when the artist really wishes to paint her. Consequently, his initial statement that “[t]heir good looks had been their capital” (“Real Thing” 194) is here unsettled since Mrs. Monarch’s real and employable capital seems to be her cultural capital. None is more suitable to “correct” and “justify” Miss Churm’s hair, clothes, or even posture; her “deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting” (“Real Thing” 194) has certainly equipped her with such capacities.

The only service Mrs. Monarch can offer the narrator-artist does not result from her effort to show that she has accepted the change of her class status as in the example of her cleaning the floor of the studio, but from her putting to use the

cultural capital she has accumulated as a well-off woman. Things are much the same for Major Monarch. As the story moves on and the artist-narrator fails to make a successful use of him as a model, he makes a remark acknowledging Mr. Monarch's gifts: "I remember telling him that if I were only rich I would offer him a salary to come and teach me how to live" ("Real Thing" 199). Unable to capitalize on his wished-for labor power as a model, Mr. Monarch could make an excellent instructor of lifestyle.

At the end of the day, though, the narrator-artist cannot offer the Monarchs a position. His reluctance to dismiss them, his keeping them out of sympathy that gradually grows into respect (Llewellyn Smith 3) eventually culminates in offering them a sum of money so that they leave, in other words a compensation for firing them. Although the Monarchs are sacrificed to "the perverse and cruel law by virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal," the couple is responsible for what he terms "a permanent harm" in his work, according to the narrator's friend Hawley ("Real Thing" 210). Although the Monarchs have ushered him "into a second-rate trick," the narrator-artist, in the last line of the story seems to be "content to have paid the price—for the memory" ("Real Thing" 210). The text's wording thus retains its economic hues to its last line, while, in a telling way, the artist acknowledges that the Monarchs' failure to sell their labor power has taken a toll on the remuneration for his own labor power. Discussing representation in his Baudelaire chapter in *The Arcades*, Benjamin quotes a phrase by Paul Desjardins: "Baudelaire does not give us a lifelike representation of objects; he is more concerned to steep the image in memory than to embellish or portray it" (306). Thus, if the powers of representation in "The Real Thing" are tantamount to the artist's labor power, then perhaps James's ultimate success is not only that he steeps the image of the Monarchs as the image of the real thing in the memory of his narrator. His ultimate success is that he steeps the overwhelming image of class position and labor power in the memory of his readers.

2. 4 Miriam Henderson's Class Politics in *Pilgrimage*: Dialectics at Work

In her 1995 *Dorothy Richardson*, Watts asserts that “Miriam’s predicament crucially concerns the relation of her class status to her desire for autonomy” (41). Indeed, there is no doubt that Miriam’s path to autonomy is paved with class tensions and labor relations. The structure of labor is central to the formation of Miriam Henderson’s class consciousness and the shaping of her politics that evolve as she crosses the streets of London, the centre of capitalism and labor. Miriam’s position in the capitalist order—her economic and social status as well as the negotiations between different social strata that constitute her class consciousness—are all defined by her working life. In the process of analyzing Miriam’s relation to labor and class and her development of a class consciousness, I argue that Richardson’s text constructs the figure of the *archivist*, a role the author assumes through her sequence of novels, *Pilgrimage*. The author as archivist provides a challenging—even radical—commentary on labor and class divisions which the reader observes following the trials and tribulations of Miriam and her fictional role as the modern collector of images of social life. As John Mepham notes, Richardson “portray[s] the life and consciousness of a young woman living beyond the scope of traditional romance and marriage plots, living with work, trauma and a life of white collar urban poverty” (462).

Miriam’s involvement in the realm of work enables her to perform a differentiated reading of capitalist realities. Her active engagement, as a subject *in* history rather than only *of* history, in the capitalist economy excessively accumulated in metropolitan London, enables Miriam to generate a dialectics of resistance to and critique of the capitalist order. Her dialectics is manifested in Richardson’s archive *in progress*, which symptomatically represents another experience of the turn of the century metropolis that challenges the hegemonic discourse of a “natural” class stratification. Miriam’s social displacement is visible in her necessary departing from the comfort of the middle-class. Being obliged to seek employment and becoming subjected to poverty trigger both her coming of age within the market and the articulation of her critique. In Garry’s words, “like the

Victorian governess, Miriam is a figure of contradiction, occupying the boundary between the gentle-woman and the working-class servant (102).

I pursue the thread of Miriam's class consciousness and what her class politics entails to examine the extent to which her worldview might contribute to a materialist historiography in the Benjaminian sense. Before proceeding to the text of *Pilgrimage* itself, I focus on what Richardson had to say about her work in relation to the notion of class. In a 1935 letter to her friend Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), Richardson states that

My books, in their substance, do belong to 'the workers,' the bourgeois working-class into which M. was pitched headlong without training and suitable preparation & wherewith she is a sympathetic onlooker. She fails to recognize herself as 'a worker,' always, though quite unconsciously, assuming that life should be leisure & should be lived in *perfect surroundings*. (Fromm, *Windows* 304 qtd. in Bluemel 85, emphasis added)

The author's particular comment about "the workers," immediately explained as "the bourgeois working class," further obscures, rather than clarifies, her protagonist's social status. I suggest that by "bourgeois working class" Richardson describes newly impoverished middle-class subjects with Miriam being a case in point. As Anita Levy observes, the turn of the century is a time when economy grew "and the Empire underwent unprecedented expansion, the tertiary sector—service, administrative and professional jobs—grew right along with them" and consequently, "middle-class women entered the labor force in numbers hitherto unknown in the history of their class" (Levy 53). Moreover, Miriam's alleged failure to recognize herself as "a worker" is, as I hope to show, unsettled by the text itself. Miriam does believe in the right for leisure and gladly enjoys the benefits of "perfect surroundings," yet she is conscious of the contradictions that class generates and of the anomalous position she finds herself in—impoverished but educated, patronized by employers, but endowed with cultural capital.

Miriam is embedded in a long literary tradition of heroines whose fathers' impoverishment or bankruptcy obliges them to make a living and emancipate

themselves to the extent they can; James's Kate Croy in *Wings of the Dove* (1902) would be another representative example. The first novel of *Pilgrimage, Pointed Roofs* (1915), socially situates Miriam and exemplifies her class instability in the following phrase, "...If pater had kept to grandpa's business they would be trade, too—well-off, now—all married" (*I* 32). As far as her father is concerned, Miriam is convinced that "he was playing the role of the English gentleman. Poor dear. It was what he had always wanted to be. He had sacrificed everything to the idea of being a 'person of leisure and cultivation.'" (*I Pointed Roofs* 28). In the wake of her father's financial mishaps, Miriam is obliged to enter the world of labor and accepts a post as a student teacher at a private school in Hanover, a development that Parsons describes as an "enforced departure from her comfortable middle-class upbringing in *Pointed Roofs*" (*Theorists* 61). She then finds herself in a North London school (*I Backwater*), and, finally, in "an English suburban middle-class household," where "she takes up and subsequently abandons a position as a governess" to the Corrie children (*I Honeycomb*) (Levy 58). It is at this point where the "disjunction between the prospect of emancipation and the world of work" gradually unravels (Watts, *Dorothy Richardson* 41): "I suppose I am a new woman—I've said I am now anyhow," is Miriam's expression of the conundrum of how to "reconcile the role with her work as children's governess" (*I* 436 qtd. in Watts 41). Later, in *The Tunnel*, she will find employment as a secretary for a Harley Street dentist, Mr. Hancock, and will have to make do on one pound a week⁶⁴, a barely average salary as Levy explains. It is this kind of labor that interests me the most since it shows "the respectable female crossing over from domestic economy to

⁶⁴ Levy draws on *The Cheapness of Women* (1909) where Dora Jones complains of the low salary level for middle-class women in the labor market. She argues that female employees "belong to the educated middle class" and "have been accustomed to the little comforts and refinements of their class:"

Their natural friends and associates are with incomes of from 50 to 800 pounds a year. Fresh air and cleanliness, pretty clothes, little social pleasures, the small refinements of the table and the toilet, have come natural to them from their birth. One must remember all this before one can realize what it means for a girl with these habits and this training to live in London, year in and year out on 25 s. a week. (235-36). [*Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions* XL:4 (1909) (New York, rpt. 1985), 235- 42.]

On the other hand, working-class women, were often obliged "to feed, clothe and shelter a family of six for the same week" on that amount (Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (London, 1913 qtd. in Levy 67).

political economy, or put another way, from reproductive to productive domains” (Levy 51).

In *Victorian Writing and Working Women*, Julia Swindells discusses working women autobiographers and their initial experience of class between 1800 and 1880, arguing that, their work is characterized by “a common experience of gender-specific work which tends to override the distinctions in class which might apply to analogous men’s work” (172). Many of these women autobiographers notably

work in jobs from both working- and middle-class categories, for instance, a short term job in a factory or taking needle-work into the home might be followed by a short-term one as a governess. What is most significant in women’s work is the separate sphere (sexual ideology determining sex segregation and type of work available) and, most typically, a pattern of work characterized by the short term, by interruption, by low pay, by intervening demands from all kinds of structures of kin (by no means confined to marriage and children) and most signally, by the absence of any kind of predictable or secure route. (Swindells 172)

In a world where money matters, Miriam’s relationship to capitalist economics is primarily shaped by the practice of working and by the varying hired posts she manages to obtain. In the second novel of the sequence, Miriam becomes a resident governess in a North London school, mostly attended by middle-class offspring. The initial description of her job interview juxtaposes “the old thoughts” of the ladies to Miriam and her mother who seemed “quite modern, fussy, worldly people” (*I Backwater* 189). The remuneration for her services amounts to “twenty pounds a year” and Miriam’s naïve statement to her mother is “I never dreamed of getting such a big salary” (*I Backwater* 191, 193). Needless to say, she soon realizes what her salary means and the views she consequently fosters are based on the sense of not having, her sense of lacking privilege.

Teaching in a basement space, despising the three spinsters who run the school, and never feeling at home in North London, all amount to her increasing dissatisfaction with the job. Her impression from the North London crowd is that

they are so different to what she has been used, to the point that they become socially indecipherable: “The people [...] were unlike any she knew. There were no *ladies*, no *gentlemen*, no girls or young men such as she knew. They were all alike. They were . . . She could find no word for the strange impression they made” (*I Backwater* 195, emphasis mine). The absence of the habitual lady and gentleman points to Miriam’s struggling to adapt to a new social and class reality, while at the same time trying to be thankful for what she already has: “Perhaps it was rather a happy fate to be a teacher in the Banbury Park school and read newspapers” (*I Backwater* 244). Reflecting on Gladstone’s liberal views about the people of England being uneducated “on the whole,” she resorts to her father’s view that “people who wanted book-learning could get it, there must always be hewers of wood, drawers of water; *laissez-faire*” (emphasis in the original, *I Backwater* 244). A few lines later she is to undermine it with a telling wordplay: “*Laissez-faire*. Lazy fair” (*I Backwater* 244, emphasis in the original). Having initially internalized her father’s motto about the division of labor, Miriam’s “lazy fair” alludes to the inequalities and discrepancies of the society of learners, on the one hand, and wood-hewers and water-drawers on the other.

Notwithstanding her original naïveté about her earnings, she gradually comes to recognize her poverty. When internally reflecting on the nature of familial bliss, she associates it with affluence: “... That is what is meant by happiness... happiness. But these things could only happen to people with money. She would never have even the smallest share of that sort of life” (*I Backwater* 285). Her feelings of exclusion from the happy “sort of life” derive from a very materialist reading of how money defines one’s existence. Her letter of resignation to Miss Perne is very much driven by the need for increased earnings: “I am obliged, however reluctantly, to take this step, as it is absolutely necessary for me to earn a larger salary at once” (*I Backwater* 322).

Her next job as governess to the two children of the Corries in the 1917 *Honeycomb* marks a slightly differentiated take on money. While taken to the Corries’ house in a carriage, she pinpoints the major change in her life as primarily economic:

... a sudden strength [...] tiding over the passage into new experience and held her back, at the same time; it lifted her and held her suspended over the new circumstances in rapid contemplation. [...] this is me; this is right; I'm *used* to dainty broughams; I can take everything for granted.... [...] There was a life ahead that was going to enrich and change her [...] Poverty and discomfort had been shut out of her life when the brougham door closed upon her. (*I Honeycomb* 351)

As Penny Brown observes, "Miriam's senses respond immediately to the beauty, opulence and security of Newlands, the Corries' house" (*Poison* 166). Miriam's longing for comfort and her desire for a life of luxuries ("dainty broughams") expressed by her aesthetic orientation are further punctuated by her poverty and lack of power, while Richardson's emphasis on the word "used" points to Miriam's former wealth, the habit of being transported in pleasant carriages. The former post of being one of the teaching staff is now replaced by an intensely personalized labor environment that Miriam gladly enjoys. While entering the Corries' dining room, Miriam observes: "There was a faint rich exciting odour in the warm little room ... cigars ... leather ... a sort of deep freedom" (*I Honeycomb* 366). Affluent surroundings here clearly stand for unlimited possibilities and the absence of being coerced.

Yet, while Mr. Corrie is a successful lawyer, a Queen's Counsel involved in high-profile cases in London, his somewhat shallow wife tends to the house and is associated with the kind of "sheltered" life that Miriam despises. She gradually comes to realize that there is a gap between the Corries' social circle and herself, a conflict which she does not wish to reconcile. Discussing the Darwinian theory, Mrs Craven, a family friend, asserts that having descended from monkeys is not "natural" (*I Honeycomb* 380). Miriam thinks that "this was how *cultured* people *with incomes* talked about Darwin" and replies that Darwin's great accomplishment "was to point out the power of environment in evolving the different species—selecting" (*I Honeycomb* 380, emphases mine). Mrs Corrie, being the perfect hostess, deflects the situation by exclaiming: "Let's all select ourselves into the droin'-room" (*I Honeycomb* 380). Miriam's observation that such are the views of

“cultured people with incomes” underlines the class divide between herself and the Corries’ society and establishes an “us and them” rhetoric.

What is more, she quickly finds out that the politics and class status of the family have an impact on her job and that the two children are spoilt, privileged and immature: “For years life had been for them just what it was to-day — breakfast in bed, chirping at their mother from the dressing-rooms where they slept, and scolding at Stokes as she waited on their toilet” (*I Honeycomb* 363). Her teaching time is restricted to a couple of hours per day, after which children are allowed to spend their day as they please. She swiftly comes to the conclusion that “it was impossible and would always be impossible to make two hours of application anything but an irrelevant interval in their lives” (*I Honeycomb* 389). Miriam feels “instinctively and at once” that she cannot talk “at large about general ideas,” which was the case in the Banbury Park school where she had taught the “children of tradesmen” who “were allowed to take up the beginnings of ideas” (*I Honeycomb* 390). Over the course of the third novel, as her thoughts betray, Miriam is fully aware of the social gap between her employers and herself as an employee: “[she] knew as she went on upstairs that her attitude had said, ‘I am the paid governess. You must not talk to me as you would to each other; I am an inferior and can never be an intimate’” (*I Honeycomb* 431). The phrase sounds polemical, underlining Miriam’s differentiation, rather than presumably concedes to the Corries’ superior status.

Interim (1919) finds Miriam about to spend Christmas at the Putney home of Grace and Florrie Broom who used to be her students in *Backwater*. Commenting on the Perne sisters and their sympathies towards them, Miriam asserts: “‘You know it does make a difference,’ she pursued, obsequiously collecting attention, ‘when people are your employers. You can never feel the same.’” (*II* 307). Miriam seems to perceive the professional relation as an obstacle to intimacy and real attachment. A couple of pages later she makes a point of understanding that her leisure at the Brooms’ house is produced by somebody else’s labor. After hearing her hostesses giving instructions to their maid, she ponders: “Why should she stand advantageously there while Christine unwillingly labored? Why should Christine be

pleased to be spoken to? She thought ‘A Happy Christmas’ in several different voices. They all sounded insulting.” (*II Interim* 309). Having expressed her remoteness from the Pernes, she now seems to somewhat identify with the Broom’s “help,” perhaps because she feels that she, too, is a sort of servant. When she finally summons the courage to address Christine with a ““Good *morning*, I wish you a happy Christmas,”” Christine’s face remains “closed and expressionless and her eyes downcast” (*II Interim* 310, emphasis in the original). Their brief interaction attests to the fact that even if Miriam is eager to express her thoughtfulness and solidarity, Christine remains alert to the reality of having to wait upon one more person.

Her labor experience as a live-in governess has already prepared Miriam for another kind of employment explored in *The Tunnel* (1919), the fourth volume in the series. Miriam now takes a room in a Bloomsbury house and works as a receptionist at a dental surgery. This is a definite step towards a more market-oriented labor and at the same time a gesture to an “unsheltered” life. This novel follows Miriam as a proper working woman who develops a differentiated understanding of work conditions, social class, and power struggle. Not surprisingly, her reaction to work ranges from relentless loathing to enthusiastic appreciation. Early in the novel, on a busy day at the dentistry, she contemplates the division of labor which robs her of her time:

Was it right to spend life cleaning instruments? ... the blank moment again, of gazing about in vain for an alternative ... all work has drudgery. That is not the answer.... Blessed be Drudgery, but that was housekeeping, not someone else’s drudgery. (*II The Tunnel* 40)

This is a defining moment for Miriam’s relation to class and labor precisely because it archives her detestation of job tasks assigned to her. Miriam does not react to the drudgery of the tasks *per se*, but to what she terms “housekeeping.” The fact that in order to describe the banes of the profession, she resorts to a lexicon that is associated with the realm of the household attests to the fact that she does not yet feel securely cut-off from her previous work environment.

Much later in the same novel, when she has come to perceive of her new post as more fulfilling, her focus shifts to money, and being paid for offering services is burdened by a sensation of guilt:

She pocketed the heavy purse. Why was there always a feeling of guilt about a salary? It was the same every week. The life at Wimpole Street was so full and so interesting; she was learning so much and seeing so much. Salary was out of place—a payment for leading a glorious life, half of which was entirely her own. (*II The Tunnel* 182)

Actively engaged in the urban realm of labor, which for her is a brave new world, Miriam now considers money an added boon that comes to top her new-found knowledge and job satisfaction. Her feelings do not mean that money becomes something to be ignored. On several occasions, she manifests her appreciation of having enough, like when she thinks that “her afternoon beckoned, easy with the superfluity of money” (*II The Tunnel* 183), because the money is to be spent on the spectacles of the city.

Despite her marked fall in class position, Miriam insists on enjoying certain very material things that translate into class status, such as her meals at the ABC bakery chain⁶⁵ that feature on numerous occasions in *Pilgrimage*. The ABC cafés appeared in the mid-1880s and provided “moderately priced and efficiently served fare” (Cucullu 49). Lois Cucullu argues that for Miriam, “these teashops become sought destinations” (49) where she can assert her independence though this food consumption outside the home. Cucullu is right to suggest that Miriam’s dining out registers the tension between her class positions, “that of a female clerk earning a pound a week” and “the status she desires (the leisure and entitlements that middle-class affluence formerly provided)” (50). Even if, as McCracken points out, “Miriam’s boiled egg, roll and butter and small coffee represent the cheapest available meal that allows her to eat out” (“Embodying” 67), I would argue that still

⁶⁵ The Aerated Bread Company started as a bakery which then turned into a café chain and expanded through London. Their commercial success was largely owed to the innovation of “aerating dough with gas injected cylinders instead of the traditional and more time-consuming yeast fermentation” (Cucullu 44). Their expansion quickly led to “the sit-down teashops known as ABCs, which figure prominently in *Pilgrimage*” (Cucullu 44).

her eating out does count as a marker of class.⁶⁶ When in *The Tunnel*, Miriam discusses with Mag and Jan at Slater's restaurant, she argues that at an ABC "[t]he food is honest; not showy, and they are so blissfully dowdy" (II 150). The plainness of the restaurant is quickly transferred to the realm of clothes and Miriam finds her friends to be "smart," able to "keep in the fashion," and "more sociable" than she is. What initially comes across the page as an admission to her shortcomings is readily subverted by the text:

[...] If I could afford it I should be stylish—not smart. Perfect coats and skirts, and a few good evening dresses. But you must be awfully well off for that. If I can't be stylish I'd rather be dowdy, and in a way I like dowdiness even better than stylishness.' (II *The Tunnel* 150)

Besides the fact that there is a certain aggression in how Miriam explains her penchant for ABCs to Mag and Jan, the manner in which she sidesteps the initial subject in order to provide her own definition of style draws attention to the fact that she clearly values individuality over standard or expected appearance. The looks that she would desire for herself presuppose one must be "awfully well off;" below that standard, she would rather look dowdy. Thus, both enjoying meals outside the domestic confines and clothing are registered in the text as complex class indicators.

Over the course of *The Tunnel*, Miriam becomes accustomed to the dental position and eventually grows weary of it. Reflecting on Dr. Hancock's professional space she divests the place of its former uniqueness: "a West End surgery, among scores of other West End surgeries, a prison claiming her by the hands of the loathsome duties she had learned" (II 207). In the same vein, she eventually separates herself from Dr. Hancock, saying he belongs to "that side of society" (II *The Tunnel* 205, emphasis mine). Miriam thus gradually sheds any sympathy she might have felt for her employers and their class. In the wake of having lost any social privilege her family enjoyed due to her family's impoverishment and after the defining experience of making ends meet, Miriam displays certain radical class

⁶⁶ In "Embodying the New Woman: Dorothy Richardson, Work and the London Café," Scott McCracken discusses the growth of the ABC and J. Lyons coffeehouse chains and analyzes Miriam's double status as consumer and worker. As he notes, this is "the meal of the white-collar worker on round about a pound a week" (67).

readings of the conditions that surround her. The fact that Miriam, being caught in a maelstrom of varying positions, cannot be unequivocally classified within the social stratification of Londoners, enables her perceptive take on things.

The sixth novel, *Deadlock*, exemplifies the intensification of Miriam's class consciousness. Richardson scholars—Maria Francisca Llantada Díaz and Kristin Bluemel among others—have already argued that, although Miriam displays knowledge of economic hardship, she also struggles to differentiate herself from both the working and the middle classes, an effort that stresses her subjectivity and self-definition. Díaz notes that, as a middle-class woman, Miriam “cannot undertake manual work, because this would lower [her] to the level of working-class women” (*Form* 25). She further suggests that Miriam shares “the feelings of superiority over the lower classes of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century intellectuals, despite the fact that she has been lowered to poverty” (*Form* 25-26). Indeed, there is evidence in *Pilgrimage* of such superiority, very characteristic in Miriam's adherence to the “right pronunciation” and her observation that “there was some awful meaning in the way English people missed the right sound of the English language; all the names in India, all the Eastern words” (*I Honeycomb* 378). Although a first reading of the excerpt might point to arguing about a certain Anglo-centrism on the part of Miriam, the fact that she is annoyed also at foreign words being mispronounced bears testimony to her preoccupation with language *per se* rather than to her embracing of an arrogant imperial Anglo-Saxon agenda.

Drawing a parallel between Miriam's “attempts to distance herself from other people” and Richardson's modernist agenda of “singularity and superiority,” Díaz notes that the heroine “leads a modest life” but invests all the money she can save “in a process of continuous intellectual development, reading, attending lectures and going to the theatre” in order to “keep her pride and consider herself a highbrow well above affluent people” (*Form* 25-26). To Miriam's differentiation from the middle-class, Díaz also adds a social insularity from the working class which, according to the critic, is evidenced in Miriam's demeaning representation of the working-class subjects: “in *Pilgrimage* people on buses and trains are described as dehumanized beings, below the level of consciousness attributed to

persons” (*Form* 25-26). Although I am in agreement with the suggestion that Miriam represents upper middle-class aesthetics, I find that especially *Deadlock* discounts the view about Miriam’s dehumanizing representation of the working class. Miriam’s train of thought while riding the train speaks for itself:

In the train I saw the whole *unfairness of the life of employees*. However hard they work, their lives don’t alter or get any easier. They live cheap poor lives, in anxiety, all their best years and then are expected to be grateful for a pension, and generally get no pension. (*III Deadlock* 179, emphasis added)

In this passage, Miriam contemplates the precariousness and insecurity of the life of employees, underlining that their labor power is never fully remunerated. She counter-intuitively realizes that however hard employees work, their quality of life does not improve, nor do they have anything to look forward to; they are alienated and disincarnated, sharing the life of the commodities they labor to reproduce and consume. Marx and Engels’ 1848 *Communist Manifesto* theorizes what the text of *Pilgrimage* depicts:

[the working class is] a class of laborers who live only so long as they can find work and who find work, only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market. (68-9)

Thus, I agree with Bluemel that Miriam “resides in the borders of the English class system” in that she is “a working woman who is not a member of the working class” and “an educated woman who is not a member of the middle-class” (85). Miriam moves between and beyond fixed identities because she never stays still and this renders her able to be snobbish and critical of the class system at the same time. Socialist ideas circulating at the time in London strongly inform the text and constitute a part of Miriam’s cultural capital. She gradually develops a political consciousness and occasionally endorses a radical outlook, now aligning

with partisan politics, now denying them. After reading an essay about employers and a clerk given a pension, Miriam reflects on her own job and the condition of employment in general:

‘ [...] It is not funny that prosperous people can use up lives on small fixed salaries that never increase beyond a certain point, no matter how well the employers get on, even if for the last few years they give pensions. [...] Well, I suddenly thought employers ought to know. I don’t know what can be done. I don’t want a pension. I hate working for a salary, as it is. They ought to have their complacency smashed up.’ (*III Deadlock* 178)

Miriam’s thought is shaped by her contact with anarchists, socialists, Fabians (disguised in the text as Lycurgans), and suffragettes, more than she cares to admit. She realizes how her class labor provides for her employer’s leisure: “They sail off to their expensive week-ends without even saying good-bye, and without even thinking whether we can manage to have any kind of recreation at all on our salaries” (*III Deadlock* 179). Appropriately enough she gets fired for complaining in an episode that one could read as a manifestation of her class consciousness: “I also said all sorts of things that came into my head... a whole long speech. About unfairness” (*III Deadlock* 179). The delivery of this “long speech,” as the response of a poorly paid female employee who dares to complain, constitutes Miriam a resisting subject. Her getting fired offers a glimpse into her class hatred: “I *hated* them, with their resources and their serenity, complacently pleased with each other because they had decided to smash an employee who had spoken out to them” (*III Deadlock* 180).

Class in *Pilgrimage* also returns in other guises. What is seemingly an exploration of her female identity and her refusal of the conventional role reserved for women, is also class related, as the following excerpt shows:

What was the secret of the everlasting same awfulness of even the nicest or refined sheltered middle-class Englishwoman? [...] The “lady” was the wife for the professional Englishman—simple, sheltered, domesticated, trained in

principles she did not think about, and living by them; revering professional and professionally successful men; (*II The Tunnel* 200)

Miriam does not hesitate to turn against other women, just as long as she is able to distance herself from the middle class. Evidently the act of “disposing” of her sex relates to a critique of her contemporaries. The excerpt attests to the way femininity and gender are interpellated by space, Englishness, and class in Miriam’s thought. Despite being a subject of the British Empire, Miriam finds that even the nicest or refined specimens of Englishwomen inescapably live under the shadow of men. The “awfulness” attributed to the “sheltered middle-class Englishwoman” and the interiority of shelter and domestication both reveal the subjugation of disenfranchised women but, at the same time, point to the middle-class mores that are developed to further consolidate the patriarchal politics of the Empire. Similarly, she finds that her intelligence sets her apart from others, women and men: “Intelligent people. I suppose I am intelligent. I can’t help it. I don’t want to be different. Yes, I do--oh Lord, Yes I do” (*II The Tunnel* 211). Being intelligent and eventually an intellectual is part and parcel of Miriam’s notion of the New Woman, and/or of Richardson’s idea of a novel femininity.

Yet, her lack of “gender-solidarity” is also later revealed in the episode of her interaction with a consumptive nurse. When in the later part of the novel, she meets Miss Dear, a nurse suffering from tuberculosis, Miriam sets out to look after her through her illness, but finally her own poverty prevents her from continuing to provide for her:

‘But you must apply to someone. Something must be done. You see I can’t, I shan’t be able to go on indefinitely.’

Miss Dear’s face broke into weeping. Miriam sat smarting under her own brutality... poverty is brutalizing, she reflected miserably, excusing herself. It makes you helpless and makes sick people fearful and hateful. (*II The Tunnel* 264)

This recognition of helplessness on the part of Miriam has a twofold significance; besides providing a commentary on the dead end of this economic and political condition, it is also a moment when Richardson perhaps questions Miriam’s politics

by stressing the way the dialectics of resistance may turn into dialectics of complacency as Miriam appears to be reluctant to act. It constitutes an instance when Richardson displays a certain critical alienation from her own materialist critique, through her exposure of Miriam's limitations. Miriam's engagement in the capitalist economy produces a dialectics of resistance in her consciousness and results in challenging the hegemonic discourse of "natural" class distinctions. The experience of the combined evils of illness and poverty prevent her from caring for the nurse on account of financial hardships. Eleanor's economic dire straits is represented by the place where she lives, the Young Women's Christian Association hostel, a "dreadful little enclosure in the dreadful dark hive of women, collected together only by poverty" (*II The Tunnel* 245).

More importantly, Miriam's refusal to help Eleanor also stands out as a refusal to take up the supportive feminine role and gestures towards acknowledging the fact that her independence would require a degree of ruthlessness.⁶⁷ She gradually realizes that "Eleanor is a mistress of emotional blackmail" and "watches Eleanor's tenacious progress towards her foal of a secure life with appalled fascination," finally acknowledging her as an "artist" who creates her own life by manipulating others (Brown, *Poison* 179). Miriam resists assuming the responsibility of looking after the young woman, while articulating her claim to "selfishness:" "Domestic work and the care of the aged and the sick—very convenient—all the stuffy nerve-racking never ending things to be dumped on to women—who are to be openly praised and secretly despised for their unselfishness" (*II The Tunnel* 279). Miriam seems to reject "Pauline charity" and "Pauline ethics" (Hanscombe, 55) or, as Parsons points out, constantly struggles "against the demands of work, friendships and relationships" reaching "the point of breakdown before she decides that she must detach herself from all of them in order fully to realize her individual autonomy" (*Streetwalking* 86). Equally relevant is her comment on charity when she underscores how philanthropy in fact lacks solidarity: "'Philanthropic' people were never sympathetic. They pitied. Pity was not

⁶⁷ This complexity between Miriam's near cruelty to the nurse and her rejection of the role of the caretaker, traditionally assigned to women, is a point that was graciously brought to my attention by Scott McCracken.

sympathy. It was a denial of something. It assumed that life was pitiful.” (*II The Tunnel* 176). In Jameson’s words, philanthropy “seeks a nonpolitical and individualizing solution to the exploitation which is structurally inherent in the social system (*TPU* 179). For Miriam, just like work is determined within the processes of capitalist production, so should solidarity be wrenched away from philanthropy.

Class status and labor power may be read to leave their mark on the plane of form and language. Discussing *The Tunnel’s* innovations in form, Mepham comments on the use of reported speech which is “demarcated by quotation marks, located in the midst of long passages of stream-of-consciousness prose” (454). The scholar suggests that the text’s employment of punctuation is associated with the harsh realities of labor and finds that the practice is especially successful in passages concerned with Miriam’s working life:

Indeed, this may well be among the very first attempts to bring the distinctive experience of the busyness and stress of a certain kind of white-collar work onto the page in fiction. The experience, which we surely all recognize, is precisely of gapless demands being made on one’s attention, of the relentless flow of incoming tasks and the urgency and pace of the labor process under pressure. (454)

Mepham’s point is invaluable in that it contextualises Richardson’s experiment in form within Miriam’s professional life in the capitalist condition. It is a moment where form and content converge as reciprocal in their expression of the other part, as inextricably and interchangeably attached to each other. Richardson does away with introductory phrases in order to bring to life the *in the moment* feeling, and this feeling is defined by the realities of labor and the class position it is linked to.

In the same vein, Miriam’s attention to pronunciation is a marker of differentiation. During a meal at Mrs Bailey’s boarding house, Mrs Bailey shows her her plate saying, “‘That’s yorce, my child’” (*II Interim* 376). Miriam angrily thinks that “Mrs Bailey *could* not know that it might be said to be more correct than ‘yourz.’ It was an affectation. She had picked it up somewhere from one of those

people who carefully said ‘off-ten’ instead of ‘awfen’” (*II Interim* 376). Miriam interprets Mrs Bailey’s speech as an effort to sound more correct and socially superior than she really is; she thinks of it as pretentious. Much later, in one of her exchanges with Mr. Lintoff, the Russian revolutionary friend of Michael Shatov, she states that “deformed speech is increasing” and is appalled by people defying the use of correct language: “‘It’s not Cockney. It’s the worst there is. London Essex [...] Isn’t it *perfectly* awful?’ [...] [Lintoff] could not see its terrible menace” (*III Revolving Lights* 319, 318). Whereas the first passage challenges Mrs Bailey’s attempt to “upgrade” her spoken English, the second seems to have internalized the need for the language to be salvaged from “deformity.” It is difficult to say whether this ambivalent attentiveness to language camouflages a certain snobbism or the modernist agenda of the aspiring author. Be that as it may, pronunciation and the use of English mark in their own way aspects of the characters’ multifaceted social status.

The liminality of Miriam’s social status, the wavering between her upper middle-class aesthetics, her middle-class working life, and her working-class politics are more empowering than disabling. On the first page of *Revolving Lights*, the seventh novel of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam recapitulates her social observations:

Away behind, in the flatly echoing hall, was the busy planning world of socialism, intent on the poor. Far away in tomorrow, stood the established, unchanging world of Wimpole Street, linked helpfully to the lives of the prosperous classes. Just ahead, at the end of the walk home, the small isolated Tansley Street world, full of secretive people drifting about on the edge of catastrophe, that would leave, when it engulfed them, no ripple on the surface of the tide of London life. In the space between these surrounding worlds was the ever-lasting solitude; ringing as she moved to cross the landing, with voices demanding an explanation of her presence in any of them. (233)

Miriam thinks of herself as detached from all three worlds of “socialism,” the Wimpole Street of “prosperous classes,” and the unimportant “Tansley Street

world.” It is the “space between,” a solitary space, that seems to be reserved for her. Overall, it is this in-betweenness and mobility that allow Miriam to form her own “dialectics of seeing” (to use Buck-Morss compelling title) and attempt her own *history of now*. Her experience of the metropolis is comparable to that of Baudelaire and Benjamin who, setting off from urban observation, proceed to compose a cultural history of their times. It is telling that the *flâneur* (as well as the prostitute, the collector and other dialectic personalities) also displayed socio-economic precariousness “because the dynamics of industrialism ultimately threatened these types with extinction” (Buck-Morss, “Flâneur” 35).

Miriam, the working woman, much like the *flâneur*, has an ambivalent relationship to the masses, summarised by Eagleton as “one of simultaneous complicity and contempt” (*Walter Benjamin* 26). As part of the turn-of-the-century professional arena of employees she both identifies with the working class and sets herself apart from it due to her cultural capital. To speak of Miriam as the *becoming-author* means to view her as part of the intelligentsia; then, in Benjamin’s words she “come[s] into the market place. As [she thinks], to observe it—but in reality it [is] already to find a buyer. To the uncertainty of [her] economic position correspond[s] the uncertainty of [her] political function” (*TAP* 10). In Benjamin’s words, the intellectual, and thus the author, “willy-nilly, consciously or unconsciously works in the service of a class and receives his mandate from a class” (*SW* 2,1 20). If we return to Pauline, the *fille publique*, struggling to defend her rights in the public sphere, while selling herself in the nineteenth-century sex market, as a paradigm of the wage laborer, then the constellation of these texts that bespeak the conditions of the prostitute, the Monarchs, the artist/illustrator and Miriam offers insight into the nature of labor and class. To think about Pauline’s passage from sex to text, to ponder the difficulties of the artist’s visual storytelling and Miriam’s passage to authorship also means to begin to discern the politics of authorship. Like Pauline, and the artist of “The Real Thing,” when Miriam Henderson eventually turns to writing she *de facto* claims her right to self-narrative perhaps coming to terms with the idea that the storyteller remains the ideological *telos* of the narrative.

Chapter Three

3. The Material, the Commodity, and the Benjaminian Archive of the Modern in James and Richardson

3.1 Commodity Manifestations of the Object

Having discussed the notions of urban space and class status along with labor power as two seminal axes that exemplify James's and Richardson's archival practice, I now turn to objects featured as commodities in their texts. According to Karl Marx's 1867 definition: "[t]he commodity is, first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs" while "[t]he nature of these needs, whether they arise, for example, from the stomach, or the imagination, makes no difference" (*Capital* 125). The commodity stands at the core of this third chapter in all its materialist nuances; fictional and real universes are constructed through the accumulation of commodities desired, obtained, or lost. The commodity is examined here as a constitutive element of modernity, assuming different guises in the texts analyzed, and allowing us to consider the relation between the human subject and the object within the modern condition. As Philip Rosen notes in his introduction to the, now classic, 2003 *boundary 2* issue on Benjamin, the commodity is "a dominant form of the object that structures experience in nineteenth century sociality" (11). More than being a recurrent motif, the commodity develops as an analytical tool in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1927-40), through which I examine James's and Richardson's work. I suggest that the authors' focus on representing the object and the manifestation of the object as commodity becomes the means of salvaging the mundane which would otherwise be overlooked. The interplay between human subject and thing, which is registered in the texts, points to how the commodity dominates and even engenders the subject's experience of the modern.

I argue that the commodity is the third conceptual thread that links James's and Richardson's work and that, along with urban space and class and labor, it constitutes their archive of the modern. On the one hand, *The Portrait of a Lady* as

well as *Backwater*, *Honeycomb*, *The Tunnel*, *Interim*, *Deadlock*, *The Trap*, and *Oberland* will be discussed in view of their attention to the commodity and capital that are constitutive of the modern subject. My reading focuses on the notion of the commodity in order to discuss its materialist nuances and the central position it occupies in James and Richardson. Additionally, I examine James's and Richardson's prefatory texts to their books, the 1908 *Preface* to *The Portrait* and the 1938 *Foreword* to *Pilgrimage* as well as Richardson's 1924 essay "About Punctuation" as narrative sites that bespeak the politics of the author as producer and reveal the specifics of the author's engagement in the literary marketplace. By discussing the authors' accompanying texts to their novels, I attempt to bring these theoretical texts in dialogue with Benjamin's 1934 "The Author as Producer," hoping to read James's and Richardson's metanarrative testaments as archives of the two authors' involvement in the literary industry and of the position of their works within the relations of production: their works both find a place in the market and reconfigure the relations of production in terms of the artistic work. Drawing on Benjamin's homonymous essay, I am interested in the extent to which the two authors distance themselves from the work of art exclusively as such and approach it as a product of their labor. The product in turn, mediated by the publishing process, assumes the commodity form and enables authors to engage in the marketplace as producers.

Benjamin's fascination with the commodity is persistent in his work. Interestingly, it was only in the late 1930s when, encouraged by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Benjamin was convinced to displace the category of commodity and replace it with phantasmagoria (Jennings, "New Lethe" 96). In his 1935 résumé of the arcades project, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century,"⁶⁸ written for the Institute for Social Research, Benjamin distinctly associates the phantasmagoria with the category of commodity. Rolf Tiedemann notices the

⁶⁸ In "Walter Benjamin's Phantasmagoria," Margaret Cohen includes the definite article in the translation of the essay's title to distinguish it from Benjamin's 1939 essay entitled *Paris, Capitale du XIXième siècle*. She argues that Benjamin drops the article in his 1939 essay, responding to a comment in Adorno's Hornberg letter: "As a title, I should like to propose Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century, not The Capital" (Theodor Adorno, letter to Walter Benjamin, 2 August 1935, *Aesthetics and Politics*, 115). The 1935 essay appears in English in *Reflections*, whereas the 1939 essay appears as part of the *Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982 in Cohen 88).

interchangeability of the terms and sustains that “commodity fetishism was destined to form the central schema for the whole project” and that, “[t]he concept of phantasmagoria that Benjamin repeatedly employs seems to be merely another term for what Marx called commodity fetishism” (938). Peter Osborne also sustains that the commodity form functioned as a rhythm/motif that Benjamin traced in a variety of modern life aspects, such as mechanized labor, the jostling of the crowd, and gambling (Osborne, *Politics* 134-8 qtd. in Buse, Hirschkop, McCracken, and Taithe 104). As Margaret Cohen postulates, “the phantasmagoria fascinates Benjamin for its power to capture his own method of illumination” (87), and adds that “using a magic lantern called a photoscope, [the phantasmagoria] projected for its spectators a parade of ghosts” and, in that, was “literally illuminating” (90). Drawing on the elective affinity among commodity, phantasmagoria, and illumination, I will argue that the manifestation of the object as commodity in James and Richardson, with the entry of the object into the realm of exchange, sheds light on their texts in ways that allude not only to the materiality of the everyday existence of their heroines Isabel and Miriam as modern subjects but also to the reception of the modern condition through its capitalist nuances.

Notwithstanding Benjamin’s thematic and conceptual shift from commodity to phantasmagoria, my reading of his engagement with the commodity as a seminal manifestation of the modern experience stands opposed to what T.J. Clark has termed “the de-Marxification of Benjamin” (“Should Benjamin” 41). I often choose to go back to Marx and discuss his views as consonant with those of Benjamin. According to the latter,

Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. (*TAP* 460)

Benjamin acknowledges the economic origins of culture—part of what Marxism by and large has termed the superstructure. However, he dismisses the economic determinism that would characterize a clear-cut distinction between base (forces of

production, relations of production, division of labor, property relations) and superstructure. As Jameson suggests, “[t]he first peculiarity to note about the opposition between base and superstructure is that it already appears within the base itself” (*Valences* 44). He is referring to the “distinction between forces of production and relations of production” or, otherwise, “a given technology of production and the labor process that expresses, reflects, or corresponds to it” (*Valences* 44). In Benjamin’s schema, the superstructure expresses the base rather than reflects it. His aim is to describe the attempt to “grasp an economic process as perceptible *Ur*-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life” (*TAP* 460).

The commodity as part or fragment of the capitalist economy becomes the metonymy of the larger category of capital alluding to Benjamin’s formulation that the part may be recognised to stand for the whole. This tactic of beginning with the specific and the tangible with a view to inferring a larger schema is not rare in Benjamin’s works. His archival methodology reveals his observation of “the unassuming, the tiny, and the playful” (*SW* 2,1 114), which is consistently motivated by his belief that the particular “carries the whole in miniature form” (*SW* 3 51). As Hannah Arendt argues, Benjamin not only “had a passion for small, even minute things,” but, more importantly, “for him the size of an object was in inverse ratio to its significance” (17). Opening up this method to the plane of history, Benjamin sees the “crystal of the total event” as discovered “in the analysis of the small, individual moment” (*TAP* 461). It is this attention to the minute, this *obsession with the fold*, that I read in James and Richardson in connection with the commodity as a manifestation of the object and as an expression of the capital.

The social theorist Moishe Postone, in a 2016 interview, explains why capitalism, unlike other previous epochs of economic life, is uniquely mediated by the principle of commodity:

I think analysing Marx’s argument in *Capital* calls into question the notion that you have any unified modes of production before the historical emergence of capital, which is unified in the sense that you can begin with a singular principle, the commodity, and you can unfold that to encompass the whole. You cannot find something analogous in other forms of social life, in

part because the possibility of unfolding the social whole from a singular point of departure is possible only because, in capitalism, the mode of mediation is uniform. (509)

For Marx, the commodity transcends the economic and productive terrain and pervades all aspects of human life, thus dominating all spheres of human activity. In the words of György Lukács, the “commodity structure” is “constitutive” of society and “penetrate[s] society in all its aspects and remould[s] it in its own image” (85).⁶⁹

Through their circulation in the sphere of the market and the activation of their exchange value, objects become commodities; in other words, the commodity is a new life for the object. Besides its function as a cohesive substance which summons the entirety of the capitalist condition, the commodity as manifestation of the object is the starting point for all practises of collecting and therefore intertwined with Benjamin’s dialectical type of the collector. Yet Benjamin’s collector, unlike collectors such as Ned Rosier and Gilbert Osmond, does not collect in order to increase the exchange value of his collectible object-commodities but rather sabotages such a practice. Benjamin insists on the passion of the collector as “anarchistic, destructive;” the collector values attention to the object as “the wilfully subversive protest against the typical, classifiable” (Wizisla 5) and notes that, “in gazing into the distances of his object, [he] summons up the various stages of its history (*TAP* 7). To put it otherwise, the collector is in the business of transforming objects. When one collects, both the exchange value and the use value of the commodity recede to the background, what McCracken terms a “Sisyphian task.” Bestowing upon things only a connoisseur value,

[t]he collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one-one which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the everyday world, but in which

⁶⁹ Theodor Adorno also reads the commodity as a unifying principle that defines the condition of capitalism. In a 1968 lecture, Adorno forcefully argues that the exchange of commodities makes capitalist society a totality rather than just “an ordered agglomeration of facts” (*Introduction to Sociology* 32).

things are freed from the drudgery of being useful. (McCracken, “Old Work” 159)

Contrary to the common notion of collecting which increases the value of the collected item by removing it from circulation, when the Benjaminian collector acquires the item, s/he removes it from the market and ends its trajectory in the sphere of circulation, wherein the commodity is no longer monetized, sheds its commodity manifestation and becomes again an object placed under the collector’s care, most commonly as part of a larger entity, the collection. In that sense, the Benjaminian collecting opposes the bourgeois mentality according to which, with each new acquisition, the added item as well as the collection as a whole increase in value.

The Benjaminian collector is interested in the object *itself*. Its history, its trajectory in the market, what it has come to signify within a universe of events, which have led it towards the haven of the collection. Like the archivist, who collects the document, the shred of evidence, the fragment, or the ruin, the collector pays attention to the thing *per se*. Like the archive that can always be complemented by yet another piece, another document, another photograph, the collection is never complete. The collector’s passion is destructive precisely because it goes against the traditional politics of the typology of classification and the rules of the market: “For this is its dialectics: to combine with loyalty to an object, to individual items, to things sheltered in his care, a stubborn subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable” (Benjamin qtd. in Arendt 49). The practice of collecting, as seen by Benjamin, transcends the realm of marketability and shares the politics of archiving, that is, the collection of the fragments and traces of texts, visual material, or even memories. Archival work then becomes the incarnation of Benjamin’s credo that “the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects is the struggle against dispersion (*Zersteuung*)” (*TAP* 211). The practice of collecting, with its acts of inclusion and exclusion, is always a practice of archiving and salvaging or condemning things and events to oblivion. Thus, the Benjaminian collector may be argued to bring to life one of the roles the archivist may assume.

Having discussed the works of James and Richardson as textual archives that preserve the cultural memory of modernity with a focus on urban spaces and class and labor, I hereby turn to the specific function of the commodity in their partial literary archives. The centrality of commodities, objects, and the power of capital in *The Portrait of a Lady*, in their enabling and disempowering potential will be discussed as fundamentally determining the course of the story and Isabel's personal trajectory from her initial independence to her commodification in the confines of marriage and finally to her dialectical awakening towards the end of the book. The financial world of the novel frames and sets limits to the characters' course of action and to the course of the novel itself, an observation to which James himself was certainly not blind. His comments on the work of Balzac on two different instances indicate a certain ambivalence towards Balzac's handling of the material world. In an 1877–8 essay on the correspondence of Balzac, James noted:

his great characteristic, far from being a passion for ideas, was a passion of things. We said just now that his books are full of ideas; but we must add that these letters make us feel that these ideas are themselves in a certain sense "things." They are pigments, properties, frippery: they are always concrete and available. Balzac cared for them only if they would fit into his inkstand. (*LC* 83)

James's comment on the materiality of ideas and their essence as things is later unsettled in his 1902 critical introduction to Balzac's "The Two Young Brides," where his admiration for Balzac's representation of things gives way to a certain fatigue and he wonders about a Balzac of fewer things (xvi).

We can never know what might have become of him with less importunity in his consciousness of the machinery of life, of its furniture and fittings, of all that, right and left, he causes to assail us, sometimes almost to suffocation, under the general rubric of "things." (xvi)

James finds that things, with Balzac, “are at once our delight and our despair” (xvi), but then admits that he saw “character,” “passion, motive, personality [...] in the order of ‘things’ we have spoken of” (xviii).

The sense of James’s admiration for Balzac’s work on the material, also returns elsewhere:

There is nothing in all imaginative literature that in the least resembles his mighty passion for *things*—for material objects, for furniture, upholstery, bricks and mortar. The world that contained these things filled his consciousness and *being*, at its intensest, meant simply being thoroughly at home among them... To get on in this world, to succeed, to live greatly in all one’s senses, to have plenty of *things*—this was Balzac’s infinite; it was here that his heart expanded. (*LC* 48 qtd. in Miller, Andrew 217)

James’s awe for Balzac’s passion for things naturally registers in *The Portrait of a Lady* with its endless array of grand houses, properties, and luxury goods. My reading of *The Portrait* views it as a text that, on the one hand, builds on commodities and the capital they imply and, on the other, painstakingly registers the course of its heroine’s own commodification. At the beginning of the novel, Isabel sets out as an independent subject who is fixated on ideas and theories. Endowed with a consumer’s power by her cousin Ralph Touchett, who secures her a handsome fortune, she decides to see the world which, against her best intentions, leads her to being commodified within the context of the marriage market as a desirable *objet d’art*. Colonial goods, such as tea enjoyed in the opening scene of the book, possessions such as “the castle in the Apennines” (207), and the “venture capital” (Adams 485) offered to Isabel by Ralph, in fact, drive the action forward. When Isabel arrives in England she finds herself at the onset of her mobility, a geographical trajectory marked by travels for her development and knowledge. This mobility is reportedly funded by her aunt, Mrs Touchett, who decides to bring her to England. While she will travel, see new places and enrich her knowledge of the world, she will also unintentionally move along a path of being commodified,

towards the final transaction—marriage—that takes place in the Europe’s historical centre, Rome.

I suggest that along with Isabel’s commodification by her husband Osmond, the text also registers her immanent resistance to the realities of being commodified, which I read through Benjamin’s analysis of the commodity as symptomatically revealing both the politics of commodification and of the attention to the material that resists it. Isabel’s epiphanic scene during her long afternoon visit to the Roman campagna is a case a point that shows her resistance and goes against the injuries she has suffered: Isabel’s wandering among the Roman ruins offers a view of the site that allows for the reconfiguration of her personal misfortune in the setting of the Roman historically burdened environs. The conflation of Isabel’s story with history discloses what Benjamin terms as the moment when “history has physically merged into the setting” (*OGTD* 177-8). Isabel’s experience of the ruins triggers her understanding of her personal ruins of unrealized possibilities in a dialectical image where the historical interrupts the personal.

In the same vein, textual moments in Richardson’s *Backwater*, *Honeycomb*, *The Tunnel*, *Deadlock*, *The Trap*, and *Oberland* will be read as instances of the transformative powers of capital or the lack of it in Miriam’s life as well as the text’s reverence for the object. I argue that like Benjamin, the author consciously selects to bring forward the attention to the detail and the particular in constructing her *architecture of hues*, which shuns the rhetoric of a supposedly all-inclusive vision. As Sydney Kaplan argues, for Richardson, the essence of the female consciousness is crystallized in “the innumerable perceptions which change from moment to moment, at life seen in the concrete, in the particularities, never in terms of totalities” (915). Miriam and the text’s representation of her female consciousness do not offer a panoramic or panoptic gaze—which would unavoidably insinuate visual control,⁷⁰ but is forever engaged in the study and reflection of the microscopic. I have already discussed in Chapter One how the narrator of *Pilgrimage* offers her perception of London spaces, interiors, and even

⁷⁰ In “Constructing Paris: Flânerie, Female Spectatorship, and the Discourses of Fashion in *Französische Miscellen* (1803),” Karin Baumgartner reads Helmina von Chézy’s texts (1783–1856) in a similar manner.

psychic landscapes starting with the minute. Although it has rightfully been claimed that the novel offers “the best history yet written of the slow progression from the Victorian period to the modern age” (Bryher qtd. in Donald, Friedberg, Marcus 209)⁷¹, this feat is accomplished through Richardson’s tribute to the mundane and the insignificant, her “obsessive eye for detail and nuance” (Watts, Carol 4). According to Watts, “it is precisely *through* the seemingly superficial and trivial realm of everyday objects—the world of ‘forgotten things’—that another dimension of reality is shown to reveal itself: a personal and collective form of memory” (44). Thus, this chapter reads *Pilgrimage*’s attentiveness to the commodity and the object, while Richardson’s archival logic is discussed with reference to her preoccupation with the minute and her salvaging of the trivial or the mundane.

Benjamin’s notion of the dialectical image once again lends an analytical tool to this chapter. On the basis of the dialectical image that flashes in Chapter One to reveal the suppressed terrain of Burma, thanks to Miriam’s tea-taking ritual, I will argue that her perception in *Pilgrimage*, her reading of images of commodities, whose acquisition is determined by her consumer power, leads to epiphanic moments. In agreement with Buck-Morss’s affirmation that “the substance of dialectical images [is] to be found in everyday objects” (*Seeing* 249), I discuss Miriam’s preoccupation with clothes, fashion accessories, such as hats, and inexpensive commodities, namely, a cake of soap, as examples of the raw material with which she engages this dialectic.

The chapter comes to a close with a reading of James’s 1908 *Preface* to the 1881 text of *The Portrait* and Richardson’s 1938 *Foreword to Pilgrimage* (1915-1938) and her 1924 piece “About Punctuation” against the backdrop of Benjamin’s 1934 essay “The Author as Producer.” Here I trace the centrality of the commodity within the realm of the two authors’ literary production. The two paratextual pieces that share the element of retrospection, both written long after the first editions of the books, are read on the basis of Benjamin’s notion of the author as part of a literary industry as defined by the capitalist mode of production.

⁷¹ Bryher also describes that she always urged her friends to read *Pilgrimage* “if they want to know what England was like between 1890 and 1914” (*The Heart to Artemis* 168), and her metonymy of *Pilgrimage* as England may certainly be compared to “the arcade is a city, a world in miniature” (*TAP* 31).

Benjamin is careful to dispel political leanings which would most probably sacrifice quality at the altar of political correctness. Rather, quality and political tendency should be seen as bound together, and emphasis is shifted to the attitude of a work towards its contemporary relations of production—in James’s and Richardson’s case, the capitalist relations of production. Thus, I read their metanarrative contributions to their novels as indicative of the author’s place as producer within the mode of production and the product’s place within the literary market.

Following Benjamin’s understanding of the dialectical image as “legible, manifest, or recognized, not seen” (Friedlander 2), I think of the commodities and the overall materiality found in the three authors as emerging in a constellation that defies the boundaries of the different texts they come from. As Patricia McKee notes in her *Reading Constellations: Urban Modernity in Victorian Fiction*, “moments move in to realize a space simultaneously at its different times” (4). The commodity and the material as seminal tropes in the texts allow me to start from what is written on the page and proceed to attempt to Benjamin’s notion of “what was never written” (*TAP* 416) in order to explore James’s and Richardson’s *de novo* construction of a literary space for their respective heroines, Isabel Archer and Miriam Henderson. The texts’ focus on the material, the object, the commodity as part of the authors’ archival tactics becomes the strategy of representing the experience of the modern multidimensional female subject in the public sphere. Isabel and Miriam embody two different types of the woman in modernity. Isabel, as Ralph observes, has a “great deal of imagination” (*TPL* 190) and starts out as embodying an independent, “philosophically empowered self” (Izzo, “Portrait[s]” 108). Despite her gradual disillusionment about her commodifying marriage, she bears the traces of the tradition of the realist novel struggling to balance her self-sufficiency with the submissiveness imposed by others. Miriam, the single woman and urban wanderer, gradually exemplifies the model of the New Woman who tries to disassociate herself from the patriarchal norms; while being engrossed in the labor market, she tries to emerge as a writer. Additionally, James’s and Richardson’s accompanying texts to their novels and their theoretical essays register their views about the contemporary literary industry and their place in it. This last chapter,

discusses how the representation of the commodity and the material in James's and Richardson's fiction and the authors' understanding of their books as commodities offered on the literary market contribute to their archiving of human experience in capitalist modernity.

3.2 Isabel Archer in Commodity Land: Taking Things Seriously in *The Portrait of a Lady*

“Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea” (*TPL* 17). The inaugurating scene of *The Portrait of a Lady* invites the reader to inspect a portrait of utter Englishness: in the Gardencourt garden, on “the lawn of an old English countryhouse” (*TPL* 17), old Mr. Touchett, his son Ralph, and Lord Warburton are indulging themselves in their afternoon tea. This scene, which James outlines as what he calls an “English picture I have attempted to sketch” (*TPL* 17), foregrounds the historical setting of the narrative, the “long nineteenth century,” and the constitution of the English culture within the register of British imperialism. The scene revolves around tea-drinking as a specific form of sociability that is based on an imported commodity, namely tea. Tea is enjoyed in England, yet is mainly brought from India, and its circulation presupposes an elaborate network of colonial exploitation. Englishness thus arises as embedded in imperialism, and mediated by the violence of colonization—concealed, for instance, in the forsaken labor of slavery—as well as by the pleasures it contains, exemplified in the enjoyment of tea.

This opening garden scene not only registers a “consumption pattern within the home” (Fromer 10), the Gardencourt estate in this case, but is also suggestive of the imperial networks that facilitate the circulation of popular commodities from the colonies, such as “Indian cotton, Caribbean sugar, Chinese tea, Japanned trays and fans, Indian shawls, and American tobacco” (Fromer 10). Such Englishness is, nevertheless, regulated by what Gikandi calls an “occult instability” between the colonized and its colonial counterpart (xv) produced by the trafficking of commodities, whose surplus value is brought into effect by the exploited labor of

the colonized. The luxury commodities betray the traces of these, omitted in the novel, others, who are haunting the particular group of people enjoying their tea in the garden. In other words, the spectres of the exploited colonies are doubly contained in Englishness: on the one hand, there is the containment in the context of imported luxury consumer products, and on the other, the repressive containment of the colonized other.

The values that the members of this particular company enjoying their tea embody are symptomatically colonial. Old Mr Touchett is a very American, very rich expatriate banker who has retired from the money-making arena to enjoy his old age, and certainly his tea, on the English lawn. Lord Warburton is the wealthy and powerful aristocrat, explicitly associated with the British Empire. Warburton stands for the enlightened aristocracy as evidenced by his progressive views about aristocracy and by Isabel's description of him as "a nobleman of the newest pattern, a reformer, a radical, a condemner of ancient ways" (*TPL* 70). The tea party consists of members of the upper class in the well-ordered surroundings of the country manor, a scene that attends to these spectral others whose labor has produced the commodities necessary for the ritualistic "ceremony:" tea, sugar, cocoa, spices, known to be together with slaves, the first "global commodit[ies]" (Karavanta, "Injunctions" 44). The word "ceremony" underlines the respect for tradition, conformity, formality and grandness. The composition of the scene, devoted to the tea ritual, is recurrent in the text several times; for instance, on Isabel's Thursday evenings (*TPL* 326), when Pansy serves tea to her suitors (Fromer 7) and in scenes where American expatriates in Europe embrace the British lifestyle and upper-class affluence.

The house itself has "a name and a history" (20). Having been built under Edward the Sixth, it "had offered hospitality to the great Elizabeth [...], had been a good deal bruised and defaced in Cromwell's wars, and then under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged" (20). The evocation of such historic moments subtly contradicts the contemporary fate of the building: "after having been remodelled and disfigured in the eighteenth century, it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker" (20). It appears then that regardless of the English

aristocracy's glorious history, the new American money has come to the rescue of the building. Nicola Bradbury argues that *The Portrait of a Lady* shows James's "most articulate use of Englishness, in culture, ideology, but first and most memorably, in place" ("Britain" 408). The scholar highlights "the house and grounds, its geographical and historical location, its furnishings, even to the very dogs in attendance" citing James' description of the "bustling terrier who takes to Isabel, and a beautiful collie 'watching the master's face almost as tenderly as the master took in the still more magisterial physiognomy of the house'" to argue that the Gardencourt tea-drinking "is not a ceremony of innocence but of custom and concord" and perhaps "a wry postcolonial comment from a former Bostonian" (Bradbury, "Britain" 408).

In light of Said's reading of *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism* (69-73), I read James's "English context" as a manifestation of the subtext of bourgeois society and imperialism and, more specifically, of the undercurrent force of finance capitalism. My work aspires to follow in the footsteps of critical scholarship which has tried to refute previous views on James as immune to social reality and historical conditions (Freedman 1993, Gilmore 1996, Salmon 1997, Tintner 2000). Drawing on this tradition of contextualizing James's *oeuvre* within his contemporary social, cultural and political surroundings, I use Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* "as a crucial interpretative context" which is how Spiropoulou employs it in her reading of Benjamin and Virginia Woolf (3). I examine the way Isabel's coming of age is contingent on her entering the world, firstly by her commodification through marriage and secondly by her sensitivity to the spectral qualities that escape commodification in the materialist world that surrounds her, what the narrator calls the ability to "commune with the unseen" (*TPL* 388). Her recognition of the dialectical image at the Roman campagna grants Isabel more than impressive reflective powers: it brings to light her dialectical awakening to her present and past as a form of resistance to her commodification, pointing to the immanent resistance of the subject that can never be fully commodified.

Isabel's entrance to the scene where tea is served that I briefly described above puts her—and her "portrait"—within the "English," capitalist and imperialist

context where she is soon to discover the rules of the market. I suggest that Isabel Archer gradually becomes the *par excellence* “piece” among the artful commodities displayed in the shop window of *The Portrait of a Lady*. Though she originally appears as an agent who resists the ownership of human beings and defends her autonomy, she does so while fully acknowledging the proprietary context in which she acts. Bill Brown offers an example of Isabel’s special relation to things: “when Isabel’s friend, the coarse and aggressive (yet benign) Henrietta Stackpole, tours the National Gallery and declares that she has no “sympathy with inanimate objects,” she is contrasted with Isabel who has “an innate capacity to sympathize with objects and to elicit something like sympathy from them” (“Jamesian Matter” 294). Her arrival in England with no fortune means that she is “in a matrimonially disadvantageous position,” as Badford Booth subtly puts it (144), and completely lacks *consumer power* in the marriage market. Her uncle Mr. Touchett is persuaded by Ralph to give her a handsome inheritance in a gesture of confirming the fact that only when she becomes rich will she be able to *own* herself and more profoundly to “surprise” him with what she does with her life:

“Isabel’s poor then. My mother tells me that she has but a few hundred dollars a year. I should like to make her rich.”

“What do you mean by rich?”

“I call people rich when they’re able to meet the requirements of their imagination.” (*TPL* 190)

Ralph Touchett attempts to liberate Isabel from selling herself on the marriage market and his strategy for convincing his father reveals how Isabel as a woman is always already implicated in a marital transaction: “If she has an easy income she’ll never have to marry for a support. That’s what I want cannily to prevent. She wishes to be free, and your bequest will make her free” (*TPL* 191). Ralph’s “meeting the requirements of imagination” is linked to Isabel’s liberation from the marriage market and “soberly laid on solid economic foundations” (Izzo “Portrait[s]” 107). As Izzo argues, Isabel’s drama lies in the paradox of becoming enfranchised from

the need to enter the marriage market, still being subjected to her own imagination that drives her to Osmond (“Portrait[s]” 107).

In a similar vein, Richard Adams suggests that “Daniel Touchett’s fortune is nothing more” than “venture capital” (485), and it is this venture capital that will set Isabel’s mobility in motion. Buelens’s *Enacting History in Henry James* suggests that Isabel bestows her fortune on Osmond, “a man who possesses great civilization but not the money with which to translate his exquisite taste into the material possession of desirable objects” (174). Despite the fact that “Isabel has money” and becomes the “patroness who pays for her own and her companion’s—Madame Merle’s—travel costs, her own mobility has in actuality been commissioned by Ralph, her patron, who has funded her whole future (in)dependent life” (Despotopoulou, “No Natural Place” 148-9). Isabel’s mobility is embedded in the tradition of women travellers taking the *Grand Tour* as part of complementing their education. Her geographical trajectory, with travels of “increasing significance” (Meissner 100), includes consuming new places and proceeding on a path of reification of her own self, towards the final transaction—marriage—that will take place in the European historical centre, Rome.

Ralph has frequently been accused of commodifying Isabel for his own ends (Bollinger 144-5, Freedman 154) and it is in fact doubtful whether his motivation is entirely altruistic. He seems to regard his cousin highly uncommon and her initial self-assured, confident mood makes her even more enigmatic, therefore remarkable. Ralph has faith in Isabel’s strength manifested in her ability to critique, despite her original lack of economic and social power, and perhaps that what drives him to offer her the money. Laurel Bollinger refuses to exonerate Ralph, arguing that when he arranges for the money to be left to Isabel he is aware that she will be chased by fortune hunters; that is why he says that the “risk” is “appreciable, but I think it’s small, and I’m prepared to take it” (*TPL* 193) as if referring to an investment of his. Ralph then “speaks as if the ‘risk’ were his own, as if his amusement were more at stake than Isabel’s vulnerability” (Bollinger 145). More than that, Ralph treats his cousin as a valued spectacle:

If his cousin were to be nothing more than an entertainment to him, Ralph was conscious she was an entertainment of a high order. “A character like that,” he said to himself... “is finer than the finest work of art—than a Greek bas-relief, than a great Titian, than a Gothic cathedral” (*TPL* 65)

This allusion to classical art, which relates Isabel to what is larger than life, is also perhaps an indication that Ralph is blind to the fact that her imagination may become the cause of her fall. From a materialist perspective, Gilmore argues that people in *The Portrait* are constantly compared to works of art “and are appreciated as much for their economic as for their aesthetic value” (57). Even though reportedly finer than art, Isabel is apparently meant to be gazed at—as a rare American specimen equated to European sculpture, painting, and architecture.

Ralph inadvertently puts Isabel on display precisely by providing her with an inheritance. His representation of his cousin as high art is related to his thinking of her as “occupation enough” (*TPL* 53). Colin Meissner suggests that Ralph “echoes James’s prescriptions for true artistic experience” and does not reify Isabel in the same way with her husband Osmond. Instead, he “appreciates her living qualities artistically” (Tanner qtd. in Meissner 87). On the other hand, Ralph, an invalid, sees Isabel as his feminine other who embodies all the potential he lacks: physical power, proximity to the ruins and spectres of life, not to mention her compelling *joie de vivre*. Isabel strikes Ralph as

having a great love of movement, of gaiety, of late hours, of long rides, of fatigue; an eagerness to be entertained, to be interested, even to be bored, to make acquaintances, to see people who were talked about, to explore the neighbourhood of Rome, to enter into relation with certain of the mustiest relics of its old society. (*TPL* 390)

Ralph’s health condition is never referred to as “tuberculosis” and the use of the word “consumption” does produce non-medical connotations in the context of this economic reading of *The Portrait*. In a conversation with Isabel, he wonders, “[w]hat’s the use of being ill and disabled and restricted to *mere spectatorship* at the *game* of life if I really cannot see the show when I have paid so much for my

ticket?” (*TPL* 157, emphases mine). Ralph’s “mere spectatorship” goes hand in hand with his consumption since he belongs to the privileged part of society whose members can become observers of other people’s stories.⁷² From his health-consuming medical condition and the literal consumption he can afford to sustain, Ralph becomes the consumer of Isabel’s life story as *the* spectacle of a “game” that will entertain his spleen. Despite his reifying “watching” of Isabel, he remains liminal and ambivalent in that he is the only character in the novel who truly cares for her.⁷³ In a world of capitalism, corruption, and decay, in which Ralph participates, he also represents the one who stands between life and death, a kind of spectral presence capable of caring and gift-giving amidst a capitalist world of reification. From invalid, he becomes valid and valuable through his giving; by making Isabel rich and consequently powerful, he can watch her from a distance and live through her. Nevertheless, by securing an income for Isabel, he inadvertently brings about her ruin.

To speak of the other important male in Isabel’s life, Osmond is perhaps the prominent agent of commodification in the novel:

Osmond has the most James-like imagination of the book’s characters: he fully shares his creator’s penchant for reducing or equating other people with valuable pieces of art. Moreover, his triumphant courtship of Isabel is

⁷² As I argue in my introduction, Ralph resembles Poe’s *Man of the Crowd* in more than being a man of leisure. Especially if we take into account the reading that sees the man as not literally pursuing the man of the crowd but actually imagining the pursuit from the comfort of his coffee-house armchair while convalescing from an unidentifiable illness (Poe 97), then Ralph comes across as the key character who enables Isabel’s mobility and renders possible the writing of *The Portrait*.

⁷³ Nevertheless, it should not go unnoticed that Ralph and Isabel do demonstrate a certain complexity as far as their relation to the capitalist economics of the narrative is concerned. Ralph and Isabel form a spectral politics of resistance in the novel, in that—more than any other character—their motives also include emotions, beyond the omnipresent economics. Jacques Derrida argues that the spectral is what exceeds all ontological oppositions between absence and presence, visible and invisible, living and dead. Spectrality affects the present in that it makes the impossible future possible and in that it renders the resurfacing of the past feasible (the yet to come) (Derrida *Negotiations* 5). Ralph and Isabel attest to what capitalism cannot fully commodify and perform affects like responsibility, care, and generosity. Ralph remains ambivalent in that he both reifies Isabel as a spectacle and wants to free her from reification in the marriage market. Likewise, Isabel’s complexity is seen in the fact that—although commodified—if one assumes that she returns to her husband in the end, her going back can also be read as a manifestation of her love and responsibility for Pansy. The idea that Isabel and Ralph cannot be simplistically lined up with the rest of commodified characters, their complexity of character and agency is borrowed from Karavanta’s 1999 unpublished dissertation monograph *The Women of Apartness Re-Thinking the Post at a Global Moment*.

his own version of “the larger success,” the concurrent possession of beauty and wealth. He thinks of the young heiress as an “exquisite” rarity and is eager to add her to “his collection of choice objects.” (Gilmore 54)

Osmond, the art collector, wants to include Isabel, the rarest “object” in the treasures of his collection. Yet, he bears no similarity to the Benjaminian collector who frees objects from their adventure in the realm of exchange, abolishing both their exchange and use value. For Osmond, the collector who adds exchange value to his collection through each new acquisition, apart from Isabel’s beauty, it is most importantly her money that makes her a suitable collectible, since, as a heiress, she bears the promise of a handsome profit. An American expatriate, who has spent his entire life in Europe, he embodies the most negative traits of the Continent and is meticulously shown as completely Europeanized. He is ironic, bitterly experienced and greedy, while his sophistication and refinement stand out as his main “assets,” which he is always careful to exhibit in Isabel’s company.

Despite his expensive tastes, Osmond lacks money, the resources that can satisfy his desire for commodities. Beneath the seductive charm of the sophisticated *connoisseur*, the reader gets a full glimpse of his ego-maniac dilettantism. Osmond is also presented as a thing in the text: “He suggested, fine gold coin as he was, no stamp nor emblem of the common mintage that provides for general circulation; he was the elegant complicated medal struck off for a special occasion” (*TPL* 202). It is no accident that Osmond is compared to actual money, he is “carefully gilded and adorned” (Tintner 107) to bespeak what he is most after. This coin of course is not meant for wide circulation among unworthy hands, but must be saved for the special occasion. Madame Merle’s words to Osmond are telling: “I should have liked you to do so many other things,” explaining: “Things that were impossible” (*TPL* 246). Bill Brown comments on this brief statement, arguing that “[i]nstead of doing things, Osmond has made a career out of having things; the thing he has done is, with incomparable taste, to collect things” (“Jamesian Matter” 295). Indeed, inspecting Osmond’s “old cabinets, pictures, tapestries, surfaces of faded silk,” Madame Merle cannot but exclaim: ““Your rooms at least are perfect. I’m struck with that afresh whenever I come back; I know none better anywhere. You

understand this sort of thing as nobody anywhere does” (*TPL* 246 qtd. in “Jamesian Matter” 295).

In this economic context, Isabel’s mobility and travel are made possible by money: Isabel first goes to Rome when Madame Merle decides to spend the summer with Mrs. Touchett in Florence and advises Isabel “to assent to Ralph’s proposal” since “a good introduction to Rome was not a thing to be despised” (*TPL* 285). Not surprisingly, Isabel is left speechless before the beauty of the art displayed and enjoys in person “pictures and statues that had hitherto been great names to her” (*TPL* 250). Her experience brings to dialogue the valuable dated works of art with contemporary household items:

she felt her heart beat in the presence of immortal genius and knew the sweetness of rising tears in eyes to which faded fresco and darkened marble grew dim. But the return, every day, was even pleasanter than the going forth; the return into the wide, monumental court of the *great house* in which Mrs. Touchett, many years before, had established herself, and into the high, cool rooms where the carven rafters and pompous frescoes of the sixteenth century *looked down* (all emphases mine) on the familiar commodities of the age of advertisement. (*TPL* 250)

In the text’s juxtaposition of old precious works of art with contemporary commodities, there is a relation of hierarchy by which the commodity can be measured and evaluated. Isabel merges the impression she gets from the “fresco” and the “marble” she observes during her sightseeing trips with the “pompous” works of art in the residence of her aunt. Art in Rome, although of different quality, is presented as stretching throughout the landscape, from the monuments and the landmarks to the courtyards and the domestic interiors. Private and public spaces are conflated in Isabel’s consciousness thanks to the function of art. In fact, this “great house” borders on being part of the public sphere rather than of the private, since it constitutes an ideal example of the public stage set in drawing rooms. The last phrase of the excerpt where “the carven rafters and pompous frescoes of the sixteenth century” look down on the “familiar commodities of the age of

advertisement” registers the distinction between work of art and commodity, while simultaneously acknowledging the presence of the commodity. As Gyorgy Markus notes, “the world of commodity is not so much an impoverished rationality, but rather a world of re-enchantment which overlays everything with a spell” (16). Nevertheless, the phrase “looked down on” draws a line simply because what the commodity promises as enjoyment is “the alienation of the individual from his/her own product and from other individuals, a contemplative empathy with the aesthetic luster of exchange value” (Markus 16). In other words, Isabel’s experience of art is presented as parallel to her experience of “familiar commodities of the age of advertisement.”

As the arcade is a dream space that allows the activation of phantasmagoria of the commodity, so these Italian grand houses and other monuments that Isabel visits bear the trace of a living continental past that she and the rest of the expatriates in the novel seek to embrace. The ruins of modernity that are to be found literally everywhere from buildings to clothing give rise to images of a new *status quo*; these images “derive initially from the new, ultimately hark back to elements of the primal past or pre-history that are deposited in the collective unconscious” (Wolin 99). The European monuments are for Isabel like the “fossilized commodity” (Buck-Morss, *Seeing* 66) in the modern caves of the arcade for Benjamin. If Benjamin delineates an “archaeology of the debris” (Markus 13) in order to rescue the forgotten history, Isabel through a similar but unconscious “archaeology” largely owed to the function of the dialectical image, is able to decipher and read the subtext of her present.

Receptive of art displayed everywhere around her, Isabel comes across as overwhelmed by the sights:

I may not attempt to report in its fullness our young woman’s response to the deep appeal of Rome, to analyse her feelings as she trod the pavement of the Forum or to number her pulsations as she crossed the threshold of Saint Peter’s. It is enough to say that her impression was such as might have been expected of a person of her freshness and her eagerness.... Her consciousness was so mixed that she scarcely knew where the different parts

of it would lead her, and she went about in a repressed ecstasy of contemplation, seeing often in the things she looked at a great deal more than was there, and yet not seeing many of the items enumerated in her Murray. Rome, as Ralph said, confessed to the psychological moment. (*TPL* 312)

Isabel encounters various works of art as museum or domestic exhibits within the capitalist context. Thus, far from just contributing to her aesthetic education, her travels constitute the rite of passage to the recognition of her reification. In Isabel's sightseeing there is the latent wish to encounter the phantasmagoria of the Old World, the parade of the spectral images of European history. The Old World comes to light in the now because it is summoned through the praxis of recognizing and reflecting on sights and sites.

Rome's galleries and palaces function in a similar way because they offer ample distraction for Isabel who is finally drawn to Osmond's trap and accepts her commodification. Ironically, she makes the gravest mistake—accepting Osmond—at what is supposedly the zenith of the accumulation of her travel experience. Ralph's liberating scheme falls out and, after becoming Mrs. Osmond, Isabel seems to internalize her commodification; she begins to think of herself in finance capital terms: “Isabel is aware that marriage to Osmond has changed her. At first, she likes this transformation, feeling ‘as if she were worth more for it, like some curious piece in an antiquary's collection’” (James 281 qtd. in Bollinger 154, 377). Bollinger further elaborates on Isabel's internalized reification when the betrayal of Madame Merle and Osmond has finally sunk in (Bollinger 154-5). Isabel ultimately perceives that

the real offence... was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park. He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nosegay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching. (*TPL* 369)

Isabel realizes that Osmond assumes that he will be able to master and rule her mind. Osmond comes forward as the absolute proprietor who can rein in her ideas the way one arranges flowerbeds and cultivate her mind as if cultivating flowers, to think momentarily of Pansy's name. The image is dominated by dependency and control both due to the "attachment" of the garden to the park, standing for Osmond and Isabel's marriage, and due to their enormous difference in size: the tiny domesticated and appropriated "garden-plot," as contrasted to the "deer-park" which evokes impressions of wildness and freedom. Isabel gradually takes it all in; she understands "she had been an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron" (*TPL* 545). Being a valuable collectible has been disastrous for her: "When had it even been a guarantee to be valuable? Wasn't all history full of the destruction of precious things? Wasn't it much more probable that if one were fine one would suffer?" (*TPL* 553). Isabel herself has no alternative but to acknowledge the proprietary context in which she acts.

Anna Despotopoulou draws attention to the famous discussion between Isabel and Madame Merle about the importance of appurtenances ("Penetrating" 39). In her effort to defend the random suitor who would not have a "castle in the Apennines," Isabel argues that ownership of a castle is not important for her, inviting Madame Merle's fetishistic response:

That's very crude of you. When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell and that you must *take the shell into account*. By the shell I mean the whole *envelope of circumstances*. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for THINGS! One's self—for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive. (*TPL* 207, emphases mine).

“The whole envelope of things” clearly includes refinement, sophistication, and very importantly property—houses, furniture, clothes, books, collector’s items, luxury goods.⁷⁴ Madame Merle’s “taking account” literally refers to people’s bank accounts, but most significantly, to the “metaphysics” that enshrine her material world, what Gyorgy Lukács terms the “phantom objectivity” of the thing (83). For Lukács, commodity fetishism produces a “phantom objectivity” in the relation between people; men’s productive activity takes an alien form in the capitalist mode of production that brings about a distortion in consciousness (83-88). He argues that the essence of the commodity-structure is that it takes on “the character of a thing” thus acquiring a phantom-like objectivity, “an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (83). To refer to Marx, for Madame Merle, the relations between people assume the fantastic form of a relation between things, suggesting “the conversion of things into persons and persons into things” (*Capital* 209). The characteristics that Madame Merle attributes to objects reflect what she projects on them. Much like Aunt Maud, the “Britannia of the Market Place” in *The Wings of the Dove* (23), Serena Merle here arises as a Serena singing the enchanting song of capitalism.

Clothes are not important only to Madame Merle. Countess Gemini’s emotional comment, while describing the clothes of her mother, Corinne, is another example of the “great respect for THINGS:” “Her mother had been used to wear a Roman scarf thrown over a pair of shoulders timorously bared of their tight black velvet (*oh the old clothes!*)” (*TPL* 384, emphasis added). As Peter Stallybrass explains, “[i]n the language of nineteenth century clothes-makers and repairers, the wrinkles in the elbows of a jacket or a sleeve were called ‘memories;’” such wrinkles “recorded the body that had inhabited the garment” and “memorized the interaction, the mutual constitution, of person and thing” (“Marx’s Coat” 196). Picturing the Countess sighing nostalgically in remembrance of the fetishized old clothes, the reader understands the fetish here is precisely the oldness of the garments irretrievably lost, but still carrying the memory of the “phantom

⁷⁴ Madame Merle’s “envelope of things” is reminiscent of James’s description of the Monarch’s “capital” in the “The Real Thing.”

objectivity” (Lukács 83). The Old World (much like the old clothes) is ontologically obsolete. Instead, it is its haunting allure which magnetically attracts James’s assortment of American expatriates to Europe and which assumes the form of historical ruins that are to re-appear in retrospect. Isabel’s European experience is historically embedded within the condition of capitalist modernity.

Marx borrows the notion of the fetish from anthropology, where it refers to a sacred or symbolic object that is endowed with supernatural power. He argues that commodities are fetishes because people, in their belief in commodities, establish a hierarchy of value that may stand opposed to the usefulness of the commodity.

It is a physical relation between physical things. As against this, the commodity form, and the value relation between the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relation arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. [...] So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. (*Capital* 165, emphasis in the original)

Benjamin, who was very much aware of the enchantment produced by material culture, discusses the World Exhibitions and suggests that they are “places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish” where the working classes are entertained and they “become for them a festival of emancipation. The worker occupies the foreground, as customer” (7). Benjamin’s reading complements and returns to the Marxian notion of the commodity presented in the first chapter of the *Capital*. World Exhibitions as spaces of display “glorify the exchange value of the commodity” in a framework where its “use value recedes into the background” (*TAP* 7 and 18). Commodity fetishism, in *The Arcades Project*, anachronistically, reveals Benjamin’s meticulous pursuit of an “archaeology” of the term. Commodity fetishism can also be read with reference to social relations, since the producer and the consumer of a commodity have no necessary relation with each other. Marx sees the transformation of human labor into a commodity, as

brought by the change of productive forces via industrialization. On a similar path, Benjamin makes out that the “entertainment industry *elevates* the person to the level of commodity,” contributing to the “phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted” (*TAP* 7 and 18, emphasis added). He shares Marx’s view of commodity fetishism as “an aspect of the mystification, the pervasive self-deception, of bourgeois society which would inevitably be dispelled by the transformation of the capitalist system” (Gelley 948) and thus deduces that, “capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-filled sleep came over Europe, and, through it, a reactivation of mythic forces” (*TAP* 391). Benjamin follows the Marxian lead in fostering the notions around the powers of the commodity, but transcends Marxism in that he approaches the commodity as enabling and empowering within the metropolitan space.⁷⁵

Yet, when Benjamin speaks of a fetishism that “does away with the boundaries separating the organic world from the inorganic,” he also echoes Lukács’s concept of reification in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). According to Lukács, when “objectivity” comes to characterize people’s relation, they become alienated from their productive activity within the capitalist mode of production (83-88). Asserting that Lukács’s reification “shifted the focus from economics to the sphere of experience and consciousness,” Alexander Gelley suggests:

For Lukács the commodity relation is not restricted to the dimension of human needs but “stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can “own” or “dispose of” like the various objects of the external world.” (949)

Gelley’s reading of modern subjects vesting and divesting themselves of “qualities and abilities” does reiterate Madame Merle’s market-oriented opinions in that the individual understands the self as an ensemble of disposable things.

⁷⁵ Although the city for Benjamin—a threshold between the private and public spheres—is determined and remapped according to systemic capitalist imperatives (e.g. the “Haussmanization” of Paris), it does allow the liminal existence of resistance and subversion.

Discussing *The Portrait* in terms of its contemporary context, Despotopoulou argues that besides exposing Isabel's idealism and "anticipating her uninformed misjudgements," James "contextualizes his novel within the socio/historical framework of the rise of consumerism:"

Madame Merle's marked preference for commodities ranging from the "castle in the Apennines" to clothes—appurtenances that literally and figuratively envelop our being—reflects the late nineteenth century revision of the self in terms of the new laws of the marketplace.... As the marketplace invades the private drawing rooms of Europe and America in James's time, the self can no longer assert its autonomy from the commodities that have started to define it. It yields to the predatory (to use James's own metaphor) advances of the marketplace, redefining itself according to the new norms which rely on exchange. ("Penetrating" 39)

What Isabel does not know when she renounces property and wealth is that it is precisely on those terms she has been weighed and selected by Osmond. Needless to say, it is Isabel and not Madame Merle that seems to be out of time, or better put, wishes to be out of modernity. The market has invaded her world even if she is blind to that realization. Despotopoulou's point about the annihilation of the autonomy of the self by commodities paves the way for a further exploration of the relationship between individual and object, person and commodity. Benjamin offers insight into the phenomenon of fashion as standing "in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world" (*TAP* 9). For Benjamin, the "vital nerve" of fashion is "the fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic" (*TAP* 9) in the dialectical exchange between "women and ware—between carnal pleasure and the corpse" (*TAP* 62). In other words, Madame Merle's "shell" is the absolute expression of fetishism because it "does away with the boundaries separating the organic world from the inorganic" (*TAP* 69). Likewise, Countess Gemini's reference to the clothes of her mother, Corinne, is bracketed by James "(*oh the old clothes!*)" (*TPL* 384) in a gesture that creates a separate typographical space to accommodate the memory of the "phantom objectivity" (Lukács 83). The

Countess's reminiscence of the old garments underlines the fetish which is there only *in absentia*.

In Isabel's coming of age, there is the latent driving force of the phantasmagoria of the commodity, the spectral parade in which she enters while internalizing her reification. The Old World, embraced and sustained by the American expatriates, much like the old clothes of the Countess's mother, exists in the present through its spectral presence in the lives of James's American expatriates. Isabel cannot escape her role in the capitalist order of things. When she fails to put her inherited venture capital to good use, she crosses the threshold between what Gilmore calls "thought" and "execution" (73). Thus Isabel's "renunciation of action" stands as a manifestation of her having *de facto* embraced "the legacy of the subdivision of labor" (Gilmore 73). To return to her initial statement in the novel, when Ralph speaks to her of "throwing herself into" life and "draining the cup of experience," Isabel returns, "I don't wish to touch the cup of experience. It's a poisoned drink. I only want to see for myself" (*TPL* 171). "You want to see but not to feel" is the final remark by Ralph that ties in with Benjamin's mere window-shopping and never-buying of *flânerie*. However, whereas the *flâneur*, according to Benjamin, remains distant from transactions and does not proceed to actively becoming engaged in the chain of consumption, Isabel is head-to-toe sunk in the capitalist vicious circle, as the consumer of commodities, train tickets, museum fees, carriage rides, travel impressions, but most of all, as the fetishized commodity. Isabel, who is originally introduced to the readers as an avid consumer of sites and views, gradually appears to have a debilitated consumer power precisely because commodification has come full circle; in having become the absolute commodity, she is no longer a consumer.

The Image-as-Text at the Roman Ruins: Isabel's "Dialectics of Seeing"⁷⁶

Despite Isabel's transformation into a collectible, fetish object by her aesthete husband, the text resists the politics of commodification by empowering Isabel with a certain dialectical seeing. Near the closing of the novel when Isabel has already

⁷⁶ I here borrow Buck-Morss's powerful title. A revised and extended version of this sub-chapter has been published as a contribution to the volume *Ruins in the Literary and Cultural Imagination*. Mitsi et al (Eds.) for Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

accumulated experience in the course of her trajectory from the New to the Old World, in a long afternoon drive at the Roman campagna, she observes that, “in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe” (*TPL* 511). This epiphany arrives as the outcome of the illumination accomplished due to her active seeing of the ruins of monuments that stand before her. Ruins or “things that had crumbled for centuries” (*TPL* 512) emerge in the text as the springboard for Isabel’s dialectical seeing. Her seeing the image of the ravages of time on Roman architecture generates the reading of her past—her entrapment by Madame Merle and Osmond, her loveless marriage to the cruel aesthete, and her unfulfilled potential—through the actuality of her present. In her epiphanic moment, Isabel resists both her own commodification by Osmond and the commodification of Rome, exemplified in her husband’s museum-like house. Osmond, unlike the Benjaminian collector, collects Roman works of art and artefacts as values; his gaze on things is *par excellence* commodifying and debilitating. By contrast, Isabel seems to identify with the materiality of the Roman landscape of ruins and, in doing so, she is granted historical perception as well as an understanding of her own history.

As Max Pensky suggests, the ruin is “rune: a cipher or mark” that warns us about the omnipresence of guaranteed oblivion” (68). Warned of such oblivion, Isabel’s reflective seeing becomes a form of practical memory that commemorates suffering at large. Reflecting on her life’s misfortune she thinks: “*Small* it was, in the large Roman *record*, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her *from the less to the greater*” (*TPL* 511, emphases mine). The excerpt contextualizes the heroine’s predicament within the historical suffering that is embedded in the site, while the word “record” points to an archivization of pain and alludes to the practice of historical documentation. The Roman ruins trigger her awakening to her life’s ruins; thus, the image of ruins becomes the text that enables the “recognizability” of the past at the specific moment of the present. I read Isabel’s convergence of the long and discontinuous history, embedded in the materiality of the ruins, with her personal history, or otherwise put, her act of

conflating the fate of the ruins with her own fate, as the recognition of Benjamin's dialectical image.

Drawing on Benjamin's discussion of ruins in *his Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, I discuss Isabel's attention to the materiality of the site as a space that becomes an image-as-text, awaiting to be read. For Benjamin, the image begets *profane illumination* and *awakening* and emerges to be read in "the now of recognisability" (*TAP* 464). Isabel's dialectical awakening to the events of her life signals her effort to read her present as part of a larger present-time made of multiple sedimented historical tenses. Foretelling his heroine's engagement with history, in the *Preface to the Portrait*, James notes the historical load of Rome and is concerned that the richness in life of historical places, the grand narrative, may outweigh the life represented in his smaller narrative: "romantic and historic sites, such as the land of Italy abounds in, [...] are too rich in their own life and too charged with their own meanings [...] they draw him away from his small questions to their own greater one" (3). In fact, grand narratives and history are consistently commodified in Osmond's hands, a process that Isabel undoes through her seeing of the ruins. Thus, in foregrounding the smaller narrative, the text reconfigures the grand narrative with the minor (her)story of a woman.

Ralph's observation about Rome "confess[ing] to the psychological moment" (*TPL* 312) foreshadows Isabel's epiphany. It epitomizes the Old World in that while it embodies high culture and the potentiality of "endless knowledge" (*TPL* 197), at the same time it bespeaks a loss of innocence, as it is here that Isabel reaps the benefits of knowledge. The intertwining of the personal and the public is characteristic of James's "persistent interest in transatlantic and pan-European crossings," which according to Despotopoulou, sheds light on the "Rome scene" as "one of the many in which James explores the melding of the local and the global, the personal and the universal" ("No Natural place" 150). In this context of intertwining paths, Isabel's thinking reconfigures the personal with the historical past, conflating active seeing with reflective processes in the present, and eventually perceiving the ruin as the "remnant" (Benjamin, *OGTD* 178), which enables the dialectical movement between the extremes of human subject (Isabel) and history.

The image of ruins she comes to read, that is, the image in the “now of its recognizability” (*TAP* 473), “bears [...] the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded” (*TAP* 463). Commenting on Benjamin’s formulation in his essay “Lapsus Imaginis,” Cadava agrees that “there can be no reading of an image that does not expose us to a danger” and emphasizes that reading the image-as-text can show “the non-contemporaneity of the present, the absence of linearity in the representation of historical time, and therefore the fugacity of the past and the present” (42). In Cadava’s words, images are “about destruction and survival, and this is especially the case in the image of ruin;” the image of ruin “bears witness to the enigmatic relation between death and survival, loss and life, destruction and preservation, mourning and memory” (35). Isabel’s critical moment relies on the praxis of reading her story through the illuminating lens of the ruin; it is a reading through seeing “that emerges suddenly, in a flash” (*TAP* 473). The striking suddenness of the flash is evident in chapter 49, when Isabel feels “she seemed to wake from a long pernicious dream” (508) and realizes what has happened to her: “she fell back, covering her face with her hands. It had come over her like a high-surgng wave that Mrs. Touchett was right. Madame Merle had married her” (511). This epiphanic realization of having been ensnared in her marriage with Osmond, understanding that Merle has “made a convenience of [her]” (564), is the prologue to her reading of the ruin scene.

Earlier in the novel, Isabel is appropriately described as “bookish” and having a “reputation of reading a great deal” (47). Despite her reported discontent at this characterization, it is her reading skills that enable her to read the dialectical image, which is that wherein “what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (*TAP* 462). Benjamin’s reference to the image’s “historical index” does not mean that the image belongs to a specific time, but rather signifies the moment in time when the image enters into legibility (Cadava, “Lapsus Imaginis” 38). In acknowledging and understanding her past through the flash of the now, Isabel actualizes her present. Her moment of reading is the time when the ruin-site becomes a sight, or else an image that is rendered legible.

The space that was previously part of the Roman landmark now resonates with Isabel's distress. Despite her early impression of Rome as that of "a land of promise, a land in which a love of the beautiful might be comforted by endless knowledge," when she leaves Rome, indifference and detachment have replaced her curiosity and excitement: she takes "little pleasure in the countries she traversed" (197, 474). Her perception changes in the wake of realizing what has happened to her:

She rested her weariness upon *things* that had crumbled for centuries and yet still were upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, where its very modern quality detached itself and grew objective, so that as she sat in a sun-warmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. *Small* it was, in the *large* Roman *record*, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become *deeply, tenderly* acquainted with Rome; it interfused and moderated her passion. But she had grown to think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered. (511, emphases mine)

I suggest that Isabel's "things" are not just the ruins of monuments and works of art; they rather confront the readers as the ruins of the entire "realm of things" (*TAP* 179) of *The Portrait of a Lady*: Isabel's new-found wealth, Osmond's art collection, the small cup on Madame Merle's chimney mantel that "already has a small crack," Ned Rosier's enamels, and his chimney-piece which is "better draped than the high shoulders of many a duchess" are only a few of the material objects that parade the pages of the novel (*TPL* 483, 220). Isabel expresses the feeling of being burdened by history and in having been made "a convenience" (*TPL* 564), she empathizes with the ruin/object. The contextualization of her specific experience in the entirety of the Roman historical record, the positioning of the part within the whole, go hand in hand with the extent and profoundness of her "acquaintance" with Rome: the adjectives "deeply" and "tenderly" indicate her felt knowledge and the fact that she identifies with this man-made landscape composed of ruins/things. Isabel's focus on

the materiality of her surroundings is a gesture that conjoins the animate to the inanimate and dialectically positions her lived experience within a larger social and historical framework.

Ruins also point to a world that lies dismantled in fragments and stand as the telltale remnants of destruction, but also of the human subject's immanent resilience in the face of calamity. In the image of ruins, the frozen time of destruction brings forth a "time-space which becomes separated from the continuous idea of history" (Lindroos, 231-2). If the closing of the novel is read as the resistance to complete the frame of Isabel's portrait (Freedman, 165), then there is something ruinous and yet redemptive in the text's ending—what Despotopoulou graphically describes as characteristic of James's "female protagonists in mid-air, about to make their most decided leap toward an unrepresentable future" ("No Natural Place" 154). James goes against the novelistic prevalence of happy endings, what he called the "distribution of prizes, pensions, husbands, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks," or the experience of a nice dinner with "a course of dessert and ices" ("Art of Fiction" 27-28 qtd. in Buitenhuis 219). Through Isabel's attentiveness to the material, her transient experience of seeing the ruins and reading their image-as-text brings to the fore the conflation of past and present, thus opening the literary space for her new way of seeing. Her dialectics of seeing is her victory over Osmond's commodification of herself as a collectible item placed in Osmond's collection. It is also her victory over Osmond's commodifying gaze over the Roman landscape, its history and Isabel's own story.

I have tried here to demonstrate the way in which Benjamin's cultural theory and James's fiction reconfigured in a contrapuntal reading reveal an array of dialectical schemata. Benjamin sees the object or thing and the commodity as intrinsic in modernity. James, on the other hand, tells a story whose singular fragments—the tea ritual, Isabel's relationship to the market, and the ruins of an empire—are semantically burdened by a distinct spectrality. In that sense, the specific fragment studied in each of the two works can be read as symptomatically unearthing buried history. Isabel's *maxima culpa* is that unlike Benjamin's prostitute, she never attains the double status of a seller *and* a commodity. When she

chooses Gilbert Osmond, she brings her desire for him with her to the market as a consumer does, an act that prevents her from owning the exchange value of her commodified self. But just as history cannot be fully commodified and thus, fully narrated, so the materiality of the ruins and the recognition of their palimpsest as potentially liberating empowers Isabel with the dialectics of seeing that make her understand and rise above her predicament. *The Portrait's* ending, open to interpretation and embracing Isabel's "unrepresentable future" (Despotopoulou, "No Natural Place" 154), in a manner breaks the frame of her portrait, enabling the possibility for Isabel's undecided trajectory.

3.4 Richardson's Architecture of Hues: Hats, Soaps, and Writing Tables, the Minute and the Material

After my reading of Richardson's archive of urban space (chapter one) and her documentation of the tenuousness of class positions in conjuncture with the complications of labor realities (chapter two), I now shift my focus to what my introduction schematically delineates as the "obsession with the fold," the *pars pro toto* principle which Richardson seems to share with James and Benjamin, wherein the representation of the part may be taken for the whole. I hereby explore the ways in which *Pilgrimage* engages with the material and, through the minutiae of its details, exposes numerous manifestations of the commodity. I argue that Richardson's text reveals an aesthetic relation with Benjamin's archival work and functions in the direction of preserving cultural memory. In Benjamin, both the writing *of* history and the writing *about* history are tasks carried out in a typically Marxian method, namely, dialectics: the juxtaposition of elements that contradict one another in a creative dialogue that unearths all possible discrepancies, rather than the opposition of elements that finally affirms a preconceived thesis. Benjamin's "dialectics at a standstill," as the crucial process of the reconfiguring of tensions, past knowledge, and present perception lends a critical view to *Pilgrimage*. Drawing on *The Arcades Project* with its literary montage of book excerpts, street signs, various photographs and illustrations, and Benjamin's commentary, I focus on *Pilgrimage* as dramatizing the individual experience of the

turn-of-the-century female subject through an accumulation of minor elements often overlooked in the subject's everydayness. I also argue that the text's representation of Miriam's attention to the material is closely linked to her path towards authorship. If Isabel's identification with the ruin/object and the site/sight resists her commodification and opens the way for her dialectical seeing and for subjectivity, Miriam Henderson's attention to the thing—in this case the book and the writing desk—similarly awakens her to her material conditions and propels her to write. I will examine how Miriam's thoughts about various commodities, fashion accessories (a hat) and everyday objects (a cake of soap) become a collection of dialectical images that refract, rather than simply reflect, her perception of the thing and the commodity. Miriam's collecting of these material images and Richardson's recording of her heroine's experience of modernity engender a separate thematic in *Pilgrimage*, that of attention to the minor which reveals the prevalence of the commodity both for its disabling and liberating potential in the experience of modern life.

Richardson's passion for the minute did not go unnoticed by her contemporaries. In both the early and later Richardson scholarship, Katherine Mansfield and George H. Thomson register what they describe as the cinematic quality in her writing, the first commenting on the overall effect of speed and the latter describing the exploration of detail. Mansfield's review of *The Tunnel* in 1919 notes Richardson's "passion for registering *every single thing* that happens in the clear, shadowless country of her mind" ("Three Women Novelists" 309, emphasis added). Criticizing Richardson for a lack of "memory" and the inability to "select" what to put in the book she argues that "Miss Richardson [...] reproduces a certain number of ... treasures—a pair of button boots, a night in spring, some cycling knickers, some large, round biscuits—as many as she can fit into a book" (*Novels and Novelists* 6). Mansfield does not distinguish between things (e.g. knickers) and situations (e.g. a night in spring), yet her ironic tone foregrounds the fact that objects—what she terms "treasures"—emerge in the foreground of *Pilgrimage* occupying a distinct textual space.

Commenting on Richardson's choice to underline the specific, Thompson's 1996 *Reader's Guide to Pilgrimage* makes a connection between *Pilgrimage's* narration and the intermittence of visual episodes:

The result is somewhere between the product of the still camera and of the camcorder, a series of *windows on experience*, each vivid and detailed, but isolated. Thoughts, feelings and memories flood the scene, by turn distancing the focus or plunging it into *close-up, until expansion exhausts the moment or episode*. Curtain. A new episode. Frequently with no transition either in Miriam's thinking or in the reader's expectations. (7, emphases added).

Richardson's "registering" of "every single thing," pinpointed by Mansfield, certainly goes beyond events to include everyday objects. Thompson's comment on the exhaustive close-ups also seems to acknowledge this. Likewise, in a 1947 critical piece, Ford Madox Ford notes that Richardson concentrated on the "minuteness of rendering of objects and situations" (773) and moves on to describe her as the "abominably unknown" but "most distinguished exponent" of impressionist realism in the early twentieth century novel (773 qtd. in Parsons *Theorists* 31).

Later scholars, who extensively discuss the cinematic in Richardson (Susan Gevirtz among others), proceed along the lines of her film theory as presented in her writings in *Close-Up*. As Gevirtz notes, "for Miriam Henderson, the future, the present, the past, and fictive time all exist simultaneously in various vertical palimpsestic arrangements" (38 qtd. in Morall 18). Although her comment identifies Richardson's palimpsests according to the temporal paradigm, in *Pilgrimage* these arrangements by and large compress space and its material contents as well. A step further, Heather Morall focuses on *Pilgrimage* and relates visual technologies—lantern slides and film—with Richardson's concentration on "Miriam's exceptional perception of details" (16), again highlighting the author's reverence for the minor. I argue here that what Mansfield playfully, if not ironically, terms as "treasures" are

indeed treasures hidden in the lines of *Pilgrimage* especially when the objects portrayed are commodities.

In highlighting Miriam's peculiar relation to consumer culture, such portrayal of commodities serves the enrichment of Richardson's literary archive not just with everyday objects but also specifically with the commodity manifestation of things, their market character. Pursuing a reading in accordance with Benjamin's credo that ragpicker (*chiffonnier*) and poet are both concerned with refuse ("Paris of the Second Empire" 48), I read commodities and their function in *Pilgrimage* as an attestation to the thingness of the novel that allows for the materialist poetics of Richardson's text. In an intriguing passage that describes the social function of the ragpicker, Benjamin offers a glimpse into Baudelaire's poetic method and, I dare say, his own archival practice:

'Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. [...] He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser like a miser guarding a *treasure*, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry.' This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. ("Paris of the Second Empire" 48, emphasis added).

Mansfield's argument about the accumulation of "treasures" and Thompson's "windows of experience" offer more when read together with the lines of Benjamin's excerpt. The text places Miriam, Richardson's alter ego, in the position of the ragpicker in that, in her role as a persona for Richardson, she "catalogues and collects" a sea of seemingly trifle details and, more importantly, commodities. Even though Miriam comes across as no miser, she "guards" her treasure of accumulated objects and "selects judiciously" since nearly every object-episode in the novel will be shown to illuminate a certain aspect of her being and acting, her perception of herself and of her agency.

Early in *Pilgrimage*, in *Backwater*, the second novel of the sequence, Miriam admits to having a deep-rooted respect for things: “Her feelings and thought, her way of looking at things, her desire for space and beautiful things and music and quietude would never be their desire. Reverence for things—had she reverence? She felt she must have because she knew they had not” (*I* 322). Miriam is here differentiating herself from the students and staff of the North London private school a few moments before closing her resignation letter to her employer Miss Perne, in which she mentions “it is absolutely necessary for [her] to earn a larger salary at once” (*I* 322). This proximity to *things*, be it money, objects, or commodities, is one of the many instances in the novel that, in a typically modernist trope⁷⁷, thoroughly helps to sustain Miriam’s materialist understanding of the world and highlights Richardson’s tactics of archiving the material. There are two kinds of preoccupation with the object in *Pilgrimage*: one is regularly found in literature and has to do more with things reflecting the mood of heroes such as the instance when, in *Dawn’s Left Hand*, the “early morning light pouring from the high window along the green pathway and reflected, in their different ways by the bureau, the mirror, the crockery” (*IV* 193). The night before, Miriam and Amabel have had a long discussion that has touched Miriam’s “very root of [...] being” (*IV* 192). This sort of attention to the material invariably paints a psychic landscape affecting thus Miriam’s social and political being. The other, on which I focus is Miriam’s awareness of the life of the object in the sphere of circulation, that is, in its commodity form.

As I have argued in Chapter Two, Miriam enjoys affluence and the consumer power that results from it, not so much due to an abstract aspiration of becoming financially accomplished, but because she directly links wealth to the opportunity of experiencing new things. In this vein, Penny Brown suggests that Miriam’s “valorizing of material things” corresponds to things as essential stimuli for spiritual

⁷⁷ Virginia Woolf, for instance, in *A Room of One’s Own*, discussing how literature always springs from its historical moment, “still attached to life at all four corners”, explains that by “life”, she means “grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (*AROO* 50). In the same vein, as Parsons notes, James Joyce declared to his brother Stanislaus “that an epiphany revealed ‘the significance of trivial things’ (Ellmann 169), endowing the most common object with value” (*TMN* 38). Although for Joyce, an epiphany could also emerge from “an abstract aesthetic revelation” (*TMN* 38), my focus here remains the material, especially in its commodity form.

growth;” Brown quotes the heroine’s thoughts on “luxuries, beautiful gleaming things: Any life that had not these things she would refuse” (*I Honeycomb* 403 qtd. in *Poison* 166). The following passage from *Honeycomb* bespeaks both a tribute to the detail as well as a differentiated experience of the material and attests to the range of her perception:

... Miriam had once bought a hat in a shop in Kensington. As long as it lasted it had kept for her, whenever she looked at its softly dyed curiously plaited straw, something of the *exciting fascination* of the shop, the curious faint flat odours of millinery, the peculiar dim warm smell of silks and velvets—silk, China and Japan, silkworms weaving shining threads in the dark. Even when it had become associated with outings and events and shabby with exposure, it remained, each time she *took it afresh from its box of wrappings, a mysterious sacred thing*; and the soft blending of its colours, the coiled restraint of its shape, the texture of its snuggled trimmings were a support, refreshing her thoughts. (*I Honeycomb* 407, emphases added)

Not surprisingly, Miriam’s reflection on the hat commences within the context of the shop where she originally bought it, thus the hat as an object becomes a commodity upon entering the sphere of circulation in the market. The shop as part of the marketplace holds an “exciting fascination” for Miriam, the buyer. The hat is apparently vested with multiple meanings that shroud the object itself: it is a symbol of Miriam’s fascination with the shop, which alludes to the far-away exotic places of China and Japan, thus summoning their discrepant geographies; despite, or precisely because of its oldness, the hat remains “a mysterious sacred thing.” The excerpt focuses on the materiality of the hat, underlining the blending of colors, the shape, and the texture as the key elements that work magic, i.e. support and refresh Miriam. At the beginning of “The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret,” Marx pinpoints that the commodity “abounds in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (*Capital* 163). Miriam’s attention is drawn in particular to the manufacturing process that integrates nature in human productivity: “silkworms

weaving shining threads in the dark.” Miriam ponders on the object itself and its acquired qualities, thus the hat’s use value gives way to its fetishist aspects.

The excerpt shares allusive ties to Benjamin’s analysis of the commodity. When he acknowledges that the function of World Exhibitions is to “glorify the exchange value of the commodity” in a framework where its “use value recedes into the background” (*TAP* 7), Benjamin apparently revisits the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism. The use value of things in primitive pre-capitalist societies is put aside when, in the process of capitalist production, the producer becomes alienated from the product of his labor and is unaware of its final recipient, in the same way in which the buyer-consumer is unaware of the producer. Whereas the relation between things is for Marx “physical,” the relation between commodities loses its “material [dinglich]” nature:

It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. [...] I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (*Capital* 165)

Marx regards the transformation of human labor into a commodity as brought about by the change of productive forces via industrialization. His “flight into the misty realm of religion” is perhaps Marx’s attempt to expose the fact that to explore capitalism one has to probe deeper than what meets the eye. If, for Marx, religion itself is an ideological phenomenon, materially conditioned by the economic structure of capitalism, religion as a nexus of relations is entirely secular and the well-kept secrets of the nature of the commodity are to better understood through a theology of capitalism.

In accordance with Marx’s gesture, in his 1921 three-page fragment, “Capitalism as Religion,” Benjamin argues that capitalism is “an essentially religious phenomenon,” “a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme that ever existed,” precisely because it is founded upon a psychological relationship to

fetishized objects (288). As Thanasis Giouras explains, Benjamin's *oeuvre* cannot be possibly characterized as religious or even theological: "religious perception itself is, not just immersed, but rather potentially reconstructed with the critical awareness of capitalist modernity (an awareness that assumes foundational dimensions in his late work), and with the multifaceted effects, which it induces in religion" (227).⁷⁸ While drawing on theology, Benjamin profoundly embeds his analysis in history thus secularizing the theological or metaphysical elements in his work. To return to Miriam's hat, when Benjamin discusses the notion of phantasmagoria, the analytical tool that displaces the commodity, he argues that the entertainment industry *elevates* "the person to the level of commodity" thus contributing to the "phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted" (*TAP* 18). Richardson's description of the "hat experience" converses with Benjamin's and Marx's view of commodity fetishism as "an aspect of the mystification, the pervasive self-deception, of bourgeois society" (Gelley 948).

To briefly address the hat passage, Miriam's taking the hat "afresh from its box of wrappings" also gestures to the Benjaminian concept of renewing the old, already discussed in Chapter One. Benjamin argues that the task of the childhood collection that filled his drawer was "not to retain the new but to renew the old" (*BC* 156). Miriam's exposition of the hat here attests to its mysteriousness and sacredness every time she pulls it out from the oblivion of the box. Discussing the same novel, Lorraine Sim has contrastingly argued that when Miriam "does recognise objects in the window in terms of their commodity status they are described in negative, threatening terms ('forests of hats,' 'sly, silky, ominous furs,' 'close prickling fire of jewels')" (Richardson, *I* 417 qtd. in Sim 72). I would argue that what Sim reads as negative or threatening is, in fact, Richardson's depiction of

⁷⁸ Giouras's title pays homage to Benjamin's 1921 essay "Capitalism as Religion" in which he exposes capitalist economic organization as a theology of guilt:

Capitalism is entirely without precedent in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction. It is the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation. God's transcendence is at an end. But he is not dead; he has been incorporated into human existence (289).

For a thorough exploration of Benjamin's secularization of concepts, see Howard Caygill's "Non-Messianic Political Theology in Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'" (in Benjamin, Andrew. *Walter Benjamin and History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2005). The translation of excerpts by Giouras is mine and has the author's approval.

Miriam's initial street encounter with the mystery of the commodity, the coming into contact with the market.

Much later in *The Tunnel*, Miriam again returns to her relationship with clothes and their transformative powers:

It was the lilac that made them a good whole, the fresh heavy blunt cones of pure colour. In the distance, the bunched ribbon looked almost all green. She drew the hat nearer to the light, and the ribbon became mauve with green shadows as it moved. [...] Those might be *someone else's* things.... The sight of the black suede gloves and the lace-edged handkerchief and the powder-box laid out on the chest of drawers made her eager to begin. This was dressing. The way to feel you were dressing was to put everything out first, and then come back as *another person* and *make a grand toilet*. It makes you feel free and leisurely. (153-4, emphases added)

All items mentioned in the two passages, the hat, gloves, handkerchief, and powder-box, are fashion accessories; the semiotic system of fashion, emphasizing detail, differentiation, and commodities, certainly enters Miriam's mode of perception. As Rebecca Bowler points out commenting on this passage, at this point Miriam "feels confident enough to assemble her own outfits" ("Fashion, Poverty" 71) and even receives praise from Mag and Jan: "Are you a millionaire my dear? Have they raised your salary?" (*II* 159-160 qtd. in Bowler, "Fashion" 72). The fact that Miriam puts together a flattering outfit seems to directly correspond to an elevation in social position for Mag and Jan, or in Bowler's words, "[c]lothing and social position are interchangeable" ("Fashion" 65). Her friend's question "Do you realize how lucky you are in being a stock size?" (*II* 160) certainly disrupts this brief illusion of *grandeur*, yet the fact remains that clothes are there to bespeak social status.⁷⁹ Bowler, whose essay discusses fashion, poverty and performance in *Pilgrimage*, is right to bring such passages from the novel into dialogue with Simmel's 1904

⁷⁹ In fact, Rebecca Bowler's "'I wish I had a really stunning dress': Fashion, Poverty, and Performance in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*" discusses the function of clothes as "costumes" and reads Miriam as "Simmel's 'emancipated woman' [...] who [...] 'lays particular stress on her indifference to fashion'" (77). Bowler's emphasis is on clothes as demonstrating Miriam's lack of consumer power and her drop in social status, whereas my argument here is about the moments when clothes, as cult commodities, seem to lend elevated status to Miriam.

“Fashion” [Die Mode]. Simmel analyzes the process by which individuals adopt fashion according to a tendency to imitate somebody else, whom they admire, or to differentiate themselves from others, whom they despise:

[F]ashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change (543).

Miriam seems to fully grasp the idea that clothing provides the opportunity of appearing as someone different, “another person” and emphasizes the act and process of dressing, while Simmel’s argument is intriguing in that it builds a dialectical movement between the poles of the socially uniform (*imitation*) and its opposite, the asocial (*distinction*). Since the tendency to imitate is naturally directed to someone who is superior to us, he insists that fashion “is a product of class distinction [...] the double function of which consists in revolving within a given circle and at the same time emphasizing it as separate from others” (Simmel 544). Benjamin cites Simmel in *The Arcades* (76, 77, 433)⁸⁰ and formulates a second dialectical schema in his line of thought on fashion. His coupling of opposites is between the organic and the inorganic: fashion stands “in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world” (*TAP* 8). The “vital nerve” of fashion is “the fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic” (*TAP* 8) in the dialectical exchange between “women and ware—between carnal pleasure and the corpse” (*TAP* 62).

In other words, Miriam’s “mysterious, sacred thing” and “mak[ing] a grand toilet” is the absolute expression of fetishism because they collapse “the boundaries separating the organic world from the inorganic” (*TAP* 69). In the realm of fashion, this “enthronement of the merchandise” (Benjamin, *Reflections* 152), “that supreme cult of the commodity” (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin* 35), proposes that the fetish arises as precisely what Lukács terms the “phantom powers” of things (184). In registering the life of mundane and seemingly insignificant commodities as she

⁸⁰ Jameson persuasively argues that Simmel’s influence on Benjamin was greater than is usually acknowledged (“Theoretical Hesitation” 269).

perceives it, Miriam rescues objects that are to become forgotten and discarded, a practice that resonates with the Benjaminian directive. In the words of Scott McCracken,

[t]he most difficult theoretical problem of Benjamin's late work is how we might rescue history's forgotten and discarded objects—the material world of the everyday—because, he argues, it is through those objects that we might write a history from the point of view of its victims. (“Old Work” 155)

Richardson's idiosyncratic attention to this material world of the everyday manifests her attempt to “save the dead from oblivion,” and, in that, *Pilgrimage* can be read as a repository of experience of the female subject at the turn-of-the-century metropolis. Her selective gaze alternates gestures of inclusion and omission foregrounding Miriam's experiences of the city, class and the labor market, and commodities, while dismissing or ignoring others.

One such occasion of dismissal is when Mr. Shatov wonders where to find a pawnshop for his Polish doctor friend. Miriam realizes that she has always been blind to their existence: “She scanned *her* (emphasis added) London. They had always been there... But she had never noticed or thought of them...” (*III Deadlock* 74).⁸¹ In Miriam's London, no pawnshop is included perhaps because she refuses to have her individuality stripped from possessions and her story stripped from objects.⁸² Miriam has indeed suppressed the image of pawnshops and considering that in 1826, there were 269 pawnshop licenses in Great Britain and by 1890 the number had soared to 4,433 (Minkes 18), her disregard can only be explained as an act of exclusion, typical of Richardson's archival practice. It might be argued that Miriam not registering pawnshops—but only on a secondary level of the occasional friend of a friend looking for one—in her collection of city images is perhaps what Farge terms the “archival surplus” that is left aside (17).

⁸¹ Exploring the solicitudes of material culture in *Middlemarch*, Andrew H. Miller notes that, “pawnshops tend to strip narratives of the past from objects, to insist that value reside in the mobility and the power of exchange” (213).

⁸² *Ibid.*

Complementary to this exclusion from her reconfiguration of London's topography is her view of the world as an uncanny experience of heightened consciousness that heavily relies on the perception of material objects:

What was life? Either playing a part all the time in order to be amongst people in the warm, or standing alone with the strange true real feeling—alone with a sort of edge of reality on everything; even on quite ugly common things—cheap boarding houses, face-towels and blistered window frames. (*I Backwater* 320)

Besides noting that this awareness of the world means being coldly shunned by others, the summoning of material objects is again impressive. Richardson's textual politics resemble those of the ragpicker; the boarding-houses, towels and window frames associate the "edge of reality on everything" with a materiality that bespeaks poverty and decay. Additionally, the manner in which the text moves from the very general existential question of what life is to the three close-ups, in just five lines, adds to the argument that Richardson's archive "leaves out as much as it memorializes" (Watts, Carol 14). In Farge's words, "[i]t is no longer a question of whether a narration is factually accurate, but of understanding how it came to be articulated in the way that it was" (28).

On several instances, Miriam identifies the ownership of commodities with a freedom of action. At the Corries' house, while stepping into Mr. Corrie's study with its "solid brown leather-covered secretaire, "a little bronze lamp," "wall covered with a dark silky-looking brown paper," she finds that "[t]here was a faint rich exciting odour in the warm little room ... cigars ... leather ... a sort of deep freedom" (*I Honeycomb* 366). Reflecting about happiness, she directly links it with consumer power: "... happiness. But these things could only happen to people with money. She would never have even the smallest share of that sort of life" (*I Backwater* 285). Both freedom and happiness, the abstract notions that emerge in the two excerpts as the natural outcome of the very concrete lamps, cigars, leather, and money should not be read in a backdrop that assumes Miriam's inexperience and *naïveté* about the world of the rich. To my mind, such occasions in the text of

Pilgrimage come to fruition as instances of Miriam's "empathy with the commodity" (*TAP* 448), her identification with inorganic things.

After accompanying Mrs. Corrie to the shops, Miriam and Mrs. Corrie pay a visit to Mrs. Kronen for tea. The text places their hostess in a somewhat comical spatial context: in "a mauve and white drawing-room, reclining on a mauve and white striped settee in a pale mauve tea gown" (*I Honeycomb* 412). Of course, the "frail mauve tea service" is ready and while Mrs. Kronen rises to greet them, she drops "on to the mauve carpet a little volume bound in pale green velvet" (*I Honeycomb* 412). The strawberries, cream jug, wedding cake, silken bag of sweetmeats, and tea-cakes all add up to the very brief but revealing episode. Miriam observes that "this was 'Society'" (*I Honeycomb* 412). She characterizes the apartment wonderful and marvels at "the chances these people have" (*I Honeycomb* 413). The parade of luxury items performed before her eyes form a metonymy where consumer goods stand for "society," the good life of leisurely sociability. The text's exaggerated repetition of the word "mauve" (seven times across two printed lines) and the openly ironic overtone seem to suggest that Richardson's text might be taking a distance from Miriam's point of view: while the text's representation of Mrs. Kronen's drawing-room points to banal middle-class aesthetics, Miriam seems in awe at the fact that "[n]othing is ever grubby" (*I Honeycomb* 413).

When it comes to the freedom provided by material goods, Miriam, in compliance with her limited economic standards, seems to pursue her empowerment as a consumer through inexpensive everyday commodities: "to buy a new cake of soap is to buy a fresh stretch of days. Its little weight, treasure, minutely heavy in the hand, is life, *past, present, and future completely welded*" (*IV Oberland* 63, my emphasis). Richardson's text is thus proleptic of Benjamin's credo that the world of the commodity does not bespeak "an impoverished rationality," but rather suggests a process of "re-enchantment" (Markus 16). By way of Benjamin's dialectics, Miriam elevates the commodity well beyond commodity fetishism to the realm of the dialectical image. She vests the commodity with the power to collect history and transform it into the present moment. Benjamin notes that "knowledge comes only in lightning flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows" (*TAP* 456).

Miriam conjures an image of the soap that triggers her reading at the very moment of experience. The recognition of the image is materialized in Richardson's writing, "the long roll of thunder that follows" (*TAP* 456). To put it differently, Miriam's differentiated perception which originates from her possession of the commodity produces a historical significance that re-enchants it and paves the path to Richardson's materialist archival writing. Following the practices endorsed by the collector, the text "detaches the object from its functional relations" (*TAP* 204) and liberates it "from the drudgery of being useful" (*TAP* 209). Through Miriam's recognition that emerges from the reading of the dialectical image, both the exchange value and the use value of the soap are annihilated and replaced with a fetishist value. Miriam's active seeing, like Isabel's, allows for her reading of the dialectical image and, hence, her criticism: "the image that is read, the image in the now of its recognizability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded" (*TAP* 463).

To elaborate on the importance of Miriam's new soap, I would like to contextualize it within the more general nexus of the already emergent consumer culture and the workings of the empire. Ann McClintock, whose *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* explores the "soap saga and the emergence of commodity fetishism" (17), emphasizes the connection between soap, imperial progress and capitalist civilization (32): "by the 1890s, [...] soap sales had soared, Victorians were consuming 260,000 tons of soap a year, and advertising had emerged as the central cultural form of commodity capitalism" (210). McClintock's suggestions are in accordance with Miriam's reaction: soap, invested with "magical, fetishist powers" (207), "was credited not only with bringing moral and economic salvation to Britain's 'great unwashed,'" but also embodied the spiritual ingredient of the imperial mission itself (211). In other words, as in the case of tea drinking on the English lawn of Gardencourt in *The Portrait*, the specter of colonialism is unavoidably summoned by Miriam's recognition of the dialectical image.

Much earlier in *Pilgrimage*, in *Backwater* (1916), resting in her North London room, Miriam reflects on cleanliness and filth. Moving about her room she randomly turns to the washbasin and rewashes her hands in the soapy water: "The

Englishman, she reflected as she wasted the soap, puts a dirty shirt on a clean body, and the Frenchman a clean shirt on a dirty body” (*I* 263). This time, Miriam’s thinking stays closer to the use value of the commodity, yet the soap again proves a springboard for the emergence of ethnic stereotypes that inform her way of thinking. Taking off from such instances, when she ponders the use value of the commodity, Miriam gradually proceeds to regard the commodity as a social marker. In *Interim* (first published in 1919), Miriam finds herself arriving at the Broom’s house, where she is to spend four days of Christmas holidays. This time, soap transfers her to the plane of leisure and comfort:

She snuffed freshness everywhere. While the fresh unscented curdiness of the familiar Broom soap went over her face and wrists and hands she began to hunger for the clean supper, for the fresh night in the freshness of the large square bed, for the clean, solid, leisurely breakfast. (293)

Having access to the commodity that others have procured and are offering to her, Miriam presents the concatenation of things that come with it, namely, the large square bed, and the solid, leisurely breakfast. Since the access to the commodity is here made possible on the grounds of hospitality and is not the outcome of her labor, the passage is tellingly situated within the time frame of a holiday, a break from her work life.

Yet, to return to Miriam’s own consumer power and the resulting acquisition of commodities, the purchase of what seems to be her first writing desk is an important turning point in the novel. In the first pages of *The Trap* (1925), the eighth book of *Pilgrimage*, she decides to share a flat in a house at Flaxman’s Court with a recent acquaintance, Miss Selina Holland, whose things are described as “cheerless” (*III* 404). Miriam, for the first time decides to buy her own desk which will eventually enable her to write:

The bureau was experience: seen from any angle it was joy complete. *Added* to life and *independent* from it. A little thing that would keep its power through all accidents of mood and circumstance. The inlaid design enclosing the lock of the sloping lid formed a triangle with the small brass handles of

the three drawers hung below on either side, garlands, completing the decoration. (*III The Trap* 410, emphases mine)

“Here in the mornings,” she relishes thinking, “there would always be beauty, the profiles of things growing clear on either side of the pathway of morning light” (*III The Trap* 410). The writing desk as commodity is here clearly defined and offers an enriched and illuminating experience; yet it is also seen as entirely separate from the life to which it is “added” like an added value. The dividing line between the organic, what Miriam terms as life, and the inorganic, the desk as commodity-object, highlights rather than debilitates the “phantom-objectivity” of the commodity (Lukács 83), a quality that is retained “through all accidents of mood and circumstance.” Underlining the importance of the material comfort of one’s own writing desk, this 1925 installment of *Pilgrimage* becomes proleptic of Woolf’s 1929 “A Room of One’s Own.”

The reflection on the desk takes her to another commodity she has acquired, the book she is currently reading, Henry James’ *The Ambassadors*—“[t]he book that had suddenly become the centre of her life” (*III The Trap* 407). Miriam thinks of her visit to “the little bookshop, a treasure-house opened by the so small subscription” (*III The Trap* 408) and briefly mentions the act of buying: “this book, for all the neutrality of its title and of the author’s name, drawing her hands, bringing, as she took it from the shelf and carried it, unexamined, away down the street, the stillness of contentment” (*III The Trap* 408). Miriam offers a personification of the book which, as if it had a life of its own, draws her hands and thus becomes animate.

More than that, Miss Holland comes across as a philistine, precisely because she “would get nothing from James. She would read patiently for a while and pronounce him ‘a little tedious’” (*III The Trap* 411). Miriam’s description of her roommate is thus based on her cheerless belongings and her shallow taste. Miss Holland is consistently perceived and assessed by Miriam through her reaction to material things: when Miriam takes her to Donizetti’s, her “little haunt” in London (*III The Trap* 427), Miss Holland seems equally unappreciative: “It is now [...] well

past midnight. This has been a unique experience. And, just for this once, I do not object to it. But it must certainly not be repeated.” (*III The Trap* 427)

Having acquired the book and while passionately reading it, Miriam’s comments on James are offered on the same typographical page as her rumination on the desk:

But the cold ignorance of this man was unconscious. And therefore innocent. And it was he after all who had achieved the first completely satisfying way of writing a novel. There *was* something holy about it. Something to make, like Conrad, the heavens rejoice. [...] Style was something beyond good and evil. Sacred and innocent. (*III The Trap* 410, emphasis in the original)

Like the bureau excerpt, the description of James’s writing, enabled by Miriam’s acquisition of her copy of *The Ambassadors*, alludes to abstract qualities that seem to border on the metaphysical. Yet, the “holy” element of James’s writing that becomes a springboard for Miriam to state that style transcends the divide between good and evil, comes, in fact, from her ability to acquire the book itself as a commodity. Thus, both her desk and her copy of *The Ambassadors* rise above the plane of the quotidian because of their transformative powers. On a symbolic level, the book and the desk are also important because they are the two objects, which, inextricably linked to writing, set the scene for Miriam as the aspiring author.

Her later comment on Ralph Waldo Emerson clarifies the point made about James and sharply differentiates the writing of the two authors. While discussing Emerson with Hypo Wilson, the fictional persona of H. G. Wells in *Dimple Hill*, Miriam foregoes literary expression and addresses the issue of the market economy: “He saw that commerce was dishonest and calculating, but accepted the market place as well as the shrine [...] Emerson, with a private income and a mystical consciousness, remained unperturbed” (*IV* 417). Miriam paints a graphic image of Emerson’s material conditions, making specific reference to his “stately house, within the serene immensity of New England, and all his needs supplied” and inferring that “he was for ever free” (*IV* 418). Her description becomes ironic as Emerson is reported to have “retired upon a life of cultured contemplation, to read

and meditate and exchange long, leisurely letters with other meditators all over the world” (IV 418). The focus of the text on the author’s affluence discloses the equation of Emerson’s acceptance of religion and his engagement with the market. It would seem that for Miriam, the confines of institutionalized belief, laden with ideas such as the subjugation of women and respect for hierarchies, are set on a par with Emerson’s embracement of the literary market.

While Miriam finds “holiness” in James’s novel, which she reads as the “Master’s” groundbreaking innovation, Emerson is ignored in terms of style. James is directly compared with Conrad, the other great stylist, and in his case, style emerges as transgressing the Manichaeistic binary of good and evil. Emerson, on the other hand, is seen in a somewhat ironic light that focuses on the author’s elitism due to his economic comfort. Emerson is, in a sense, reprimanded in Miriam’s consciousness for not having to struggle financially and for conceding to the demands of the literary industry, whereas James is spared such a scrutiny on account of his supremacy of style. Perhaps the text here turns heavily autobiographical offering a glimpse into Richardson’s own admiration for James’s authorial paradigm, paying homage to his literary genius as a major influence and literary predecessor. More importantly, style as the indicator of authorial excellence unsettles the dictums of Miriam’s social critique.

If clothing, and more generally fashion, stands in *Pilgrimage* as the commodity that becomes a social marker, which potentially empowers or weakens the heroine’s social status, the ownership of books and of the writing desk bespeak her emerging vocation as author and her literary agenda which acknowledges James as a pioneer of the novelistic form. Yet, more importantly, Miriam’s literary and critical ruminations that arise from these everyday commodities bring attention to style as a seminal and central concern in modernism and certainly in the cases of James and Richardson. Through their demanding, lengthy novels both authors resist the processes of commodification by not consenting to the rules of an easy and hasty consumption of literary works, an issue that brings me to the examination of their role in the market as authors as well as cultural critics.

3.5 From Books as Commodities to Authors as Producers

Having discussed the preoccupation with the material in the work of James and Richardson against the backdrop of Benjamin's archival politics, I now move away from the fictional texts in order to examine the authors' paratexts for their metanarrative politics and for revealing their own position in the literary market. James's *Prefaces to The Portrait of a Lady* and Richardson's "Foreword" to *Pilgrimage* as well as her essay "About Punctuation" express the two authors' views on writing and the role of their texts as the final products of their labor that ultimately assume the form of commodities put in the literary market. Benjamin's analysis of authorial production in his 1934 essay "The Author as Producer" will be affiliated with the above texts, which are meta narratives that preface their long novels, in order to discuss the extent to which the two authors were concerned about readership and the reception of their works. I suggest that while both James and Richardson were dependent on the literary market, they nevertheless refused to produce literary works that were available for easy reading and thus consumption, employing a style that in its opacity, complexity, and ellipsis persistently contradicted the popular or best-selling norm of their times.

Commenting on James's rigorous relation with the literary industry in his "*Friction with the market: Henry James and the Profession of Authorship* (1986), Anesko argues that James was "continually engaged in an active, if ambivalent, dialogue with 'the world,' and that his finished works were shaped not by the imagination alone, but by a constant and lively 'friction with the market'" (Anesko vii), a phrase he borrows from James in order to delineate how his literary production is defined by "the sense of an audience, registered through sales, shaping the voice of the author" (Bradbury "Profession" 282). In *Professions of Taste* (1990), Jonathan Freedman similarly suggests that James's involvement with the tradition of British aestheticism is deeply seated in the context of the late nineteenth-century commodification of literary life. Without denying either James's engagement in the market or the cultural backdrop of an increasingly commercialized public realm of letters, I think it is equally important to address the materialist dialectics in his work, which is immanent in the tension between his

desire to participate in the capitalist economy as an author and his resistance against the commodifying politics involved in the profession. While being embedded in a capitalist context, James's literary style unsettles the marketability of his literary product.

In *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity* (1997), Richard Salmon explores how James's fiction is acutely preoccupied with "the cultural space of authorship, and its movement across a shifting boundary between private and public spheres," as well as an indeterminate engagement with a "culture of publicity" (2). More specifically with regard to James's politics of representation and the world of commodities in *The Portrait*, Gilmore, in his 1986 essay "The Commodity World of *The Portrait of a Lady*," suggests that James handles his work with a "mixture of aesthetic and pecuniary motives" (53), "turning the life-story of Isabel Archer into the 'portrait of a lady' and offering it for sale in the literary marketplace" (51). An excerpt from the *Author's Preface*, describing the creative process, bears testament to James's utilitarian conscience:

in the dusky, crowded, heterogeneous back-shop of the mind very much as a wary dealer in precious odds and ends, competent to make an "advance" on rare objects confided to him, is conscious of the rare little "piece" left in deposit by the reduced, mysterious lady of title or the speculative amateur, and which is already there to disclose its merit afresh as soon as a key shall have clicked in a cupboard-door. (*TPL* 8)

In what appears to be a very market-centred image, James is situated in the intellectual back-shop, his conscience, ready for a *quid pro quo* with his creative imagination. Commenting on the *Preface*, Gilmore highlights James's self-presentation as "a wary dealer" (James, *ANCP* 47), the "tradesman or businessman of the mind... obliged by the economics of authorship to exchange his art for dollars" (54). In this vein, I would argue that James appears as a conscious agent of commodification rendering Isabel his own artful object, a "rare little piece," while also thinking of the other constituents of his plot as assets:

I seem to myself to have waked up one morning in *possession* of them—of Ralph Touchett and his parents, of Madame Merle, of Gilbert Osmond and his daughter and his sister, of Lord Warburton, Caspar Goodwood and Miss Stackpole, the definite *array* of contributions to Isabel Archer’s history. (*TPL* 12, emphases mine)

The passage is telling in that James “wakes up” to his newly found characters. Clearly referring to the highly charged moment of artistic inspiration, the “waking up” is reminiscent of Benjamin’s lightning flashes that bring about knowledge—“knowledge comes only in lightning flashes”—whereas the actual novel, “the text,” “is the long roll of thunder that follows” (*TAP* 456). Moreover, the description of the imminent story, far from being seen as a purely intellectual process as the reader would more easily expect, is carried out in proprietary terms (“possession”). The author appropriates a discourse of commodification to describe the process of invention and inspiration and the “array” of secondary characters which James contributes to Isabel’s story resembles an array of products placed on a commercial window display, or a shelf. His wares, “the numbered pieces of my puzzle” (*TPL* 12), are to be gazed at, examined and admired, but most significantly, to be purchased. After that, they are bound to become the “possession” of somebody else—to think of Miriam’s copy of *The Ambassadors*. Despotopoulou also emphasizes James’s awareness of writing as a commercial activity:

At the end of the nineteenth century James must have felt how impossible it was to be a writer without abiding by the laws of the marketplace just as it was infeasible for any person to claim autonomy of the self while thriving on the public stage of the drawing room. (“Penetrating” 40)

As shown from interviews and James’s correspondence with a friend (Gilmore 51-53), he was aggrieved when “his books weren’t selling well” (Gilmore 53), and *The Portrait* seems to have been the result of his wish to “try and seek a larger success than I have yet obtained in doing something on a larger scale than I have yet done” (James qtd. in Gilmore 53). The “success” needed is both artistic and financial pointing to a conflation of aesthetic and monetary goals. Gilmore

maintains that James's handling of his own status as an owner or manipulator of his characters is contradictory since "[t]hroughout the Preface he tends to hedge the question of his class identity and to back away from the claim that he actually owns the inhabitants of his fictive cosmos" (68). Although Freedman considers James (and the British aesthetes) "consciously set[ting] themselves in opposition to the market economy, and particularly to the commodification of art and literature wrought by such an economy" (xii), yet it is within this context of simultaneously opposing to and partaking in commodity culture, that the "social construction of the aesthetic" becomes visible (xxviii). Examples of such social constructions of the aesthetic can be found in both the impact of Isabel's inheritance on the course of her life and the desperate attempt of the Monarchs to enter the labor market first by doing something that would not be "beneath" them and then by surrendering to any form of hired labor within the limits of the artist's studio.

Benjamin, who discusses Brecht's epic theatre as a paradigm of authorial production, considers the demand made upon Brecht's audience, an issue that all contemporary writers must confront, namely, "the demand to think, to reflect on [their] position in the process of production" ("Author as Producer" 779). He suggests,

[r]ather than asking, "What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time?" I would like to ask, "What is its position *in* them?" This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary *technique* of works. ("Author as Producer" 770, emphasizes in the original)

If, according to Benjamin's directive, one is to look at several of the elements in James's literary technique, namely, the use of multiple points of view, idiosyncratic perception, interior monologue, his notorious density and elusiveness of omissions, the prose noted for long sentences, and ellipsis, one will find that the narrative construction of his work, that essentially constitutes James's specific style and form, unveil an affiliation with the work of the producer: "In as much as the author uses

art as a realm in which templates of new patterns of technical arrangements are generated experimentally, the author becomes a producer” (Leslie, *Overpowering Conformism* 93). James’s style, in its opacity, length, and reluctance for a conventional ending does defy the processes of commodification by making demands upon the reader and not succumbing to the rules of casual reading or facilitated consumption. Donatella Izzo has already argued for the importance of form in *The Portrait*. Commenting on how “the text reclaims its self-referential nature” in the twentieth century, Izzo notes that the novel is, in a manner, liberated from the notion of mimesis, contesting “the possibility and very concept of a traditionally mimetic narrative” (“Modern Narrative” 33-48). James himself often expressed his views on the importance of form, as in a letter to Hugh Walpole on 19 May 1912: “Form alone takes, holds, and preserves substance” (*Letters* 4 619 qtd. in Duckworth 100). Such priority of form over content is relevant since for Benjamin form is understood as “the objective expression of the reflection proper to the work, the reflection that constitutes its essence” (*SW* 1 156 qtd. in Osborne, “Philosophising” 32). Thus, technique “makes literary products accessible to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis” while it “provides the dialectical starting point” (“Author as Producer” 770). Literary technique is then read as a gateway to the work of art, and approaching James’s notoriously difficult style constitutes an approach to his content.

In the *Preface* to *The Portrait* James sustains for himself the picture of the brick-layer building a house of fiction page after page—“pile brick upon brick for the creation of an interest”—and suggests that authors “work but for a living wage” (*TPL* 13) and remain in the service of their readers. His argument apparently contradicts the previously discussed proprietary imagery that defines his relationship to his characters and situates him within the working class. Attractive as it may be for my materialist reading, James’s notion of the writer as an employee of his readers, strikes one as an exaggeration. His relation to the public is mediated by the publisher who represents the market with whom he negotiates at all times.⁸³ The

⁸³ In fact, the Author-Publisher-Public trajectory may be worth analyzing as parallel to the Money-Commodity-Money trajectory (M-C-M' in Marx). The publisher is the author’s and the product’s gateway to the market, while the publishing process mediates the relationship of the author to the readership, and this mediation invests the author’s product with added value.

author, as an intellectual, is unlikely to be considered a member of the working class, even if he would consciously side with the proletariat. As Benjamin avers, the bourgeois class offers the author “in the form of education, a means of production that, owing to educational privilege, makes him feel solidarity with it [the bourgeoisie], and still more it with him” (“Author as Producer” 780). Thus, the author remains in a mediated position with regard to the proletariat but never really is proletarian (Ferris *Companion* 101). Even if the author or the intellectual becomes revolutionary he “appears first and foremost as the betrayer of his class of origin” (“Author as Producer” 780).

James’s reference to the practice of building may as well seem to be digressive but I would suggest it is important because it can be read as his sideways glance at the traditional distinction between intellectual and manual labor. Trying to ostentatiously present himself as an “intellectual worker” rather than as author, he goes against the division of labor and effectively points to craftsmanship. In a pertinent allusion to the manual worker, Benjamin recommends that the “cultural producer” intervene in the production process so as to transform the apparatus in the manner of an *engineer* (“Author as Producer” 780, emphasis mine). James’s idiosyncratic class analysis of his status stems both from his wish to critically read or simply frown upon the vulgar commodity world described in *The Portrait*, and his understanding of social reality. Indeed, James comments on the voracity of the masses that demand a “literary” deluge of ambivalent quality (Salmon 48-54) but, after all, he cannot overlook the increasing opportunity for popular acclaim and commercial success, offered by a literary market that was expanding at the time (Salmon 47).

James as the author-producer is extremely engaged in and attentive to the complications that capitalism imposes on his characters’ and certainly on his own life. Biographical information derived from Edel’s book, *The Untried Years*, shows that James survived on a parental allowance which was mainly received as a loan and repaid. His gesture of offering his entire inheritance to his sister Alice, as in the case of his characters, Ralph and Isabel, after the death of his father, made him exclusively dependent on his writing proceeds. Anesko even argues that James’s

“special status as a transatlantic author placed him squarely between the forces of innovation and tradition and made him an ideal exponent for the professionalization of the literary vocation” (*Friction* 37). In particular, his negotiations with both British and American publishers helped to make the transition from gentlemen’s agreements to royalty contracts; thus “balancing art and the marketplace, Henry James made history by innovatively shaping both” (Griffin 323).

Such observations on James’s professional ethos that exemplify the author’s potential to intervene in the literary market, let alone his engagement in it, are revelatory of his kinship to the figure of the intellectual as analyzed by Benjamin. The intellectual assumes different guises in order to approach the market, two of which are the flâneur and the *bohème*:

In the flâneur the intelligentsia sets foot in the marketplace—ostensibly to look around, but in truth to find a buyer. In this intermediate stage, in which it still has patrons, but is already beginning to familiarise itself with the market, it appears as the *bohème*. (*TAP* 10)

As a member of the intelligentsia, James roams the modern market in search of inspiration; his characters “are not impoverished laborers but intellectuals of the upper classes: artists, writers, and dilettantes of aesthetic impulse” (Booth 149). But although some of them seem untouched by economic imperatives—Isabel certainly does not fall into this category—the author is preoccupied with locating the widest range of potential buyers possible, his audience. For instance, Adeline R. Tintner traces the changes and development in James’s work in the 1906 revision of *The Portrait* for the New York Edition, arguing that alterations were made in response to twentieth-century events and especially the preoccupation with the new economy and money. For instance, in *The Portrait’s* revision, Isabel Archer’s aesthetic tastes are refined to match Henry James’s vision.

Buck-Morss extends the analogy of flâneur/intellectual by associating the flâneur with the author and highlighting the capitalist pace of authorship production:

the flâneur in capitalist society is a fictional type; in fact, he is a type who writes fiction. Flânerie promoted a style of social observation which

permeated 19th-century writing, much of which was produced for the *feuilleton* section of the new mass newspapers. The flâneur-as-writer was thus the prototype of the author-as-producer. (“Flâneur” 43)

This notion of “the author-as-producer” and its genealogy to the contributor of the *feuilleton* certainly overrides James’s projection of himself as an “employee of his readers.” James is a producer who aims at bringing aesthetics and profit together, and whose narrative products may not only be read in a proprietary context, but are also extremely telling of the capitalist condition in modernity. Given the extent to which James’s texts disclose turn-of-the-century realities that concern labor power, class status, and the position of the human subject amidst the capitalist condition, I agree with Spiropoulou’s point about the artist who draws on bourgeois material potentially being able to serve revolutionary purposes (11). Isabel, in *The Portrait*, is commodified but, at the same time, thanks to her dialectical seeing she regains her subjectivity. Authorship as production results in the reification of the product and the alienation of the author-as-producer from the product of his labor; yet James’s poetics of opacity, compression and prolongation of action, and profundity of materialist nuances carves out a narrative space of potentiality for Isabel. Therefore, I argue that *The Portrait of a Lady* embodies and exists within the confines of bourgeois culture, but at the same time it deconstructs bourgeois culture and its capitalist context as a fake totality, dialectically fulfilling the prerequisites of what Theodor Adorno would call “progressive art” (“Enigmaticalness” 157-160).

To look at *Pilgrimage* as a commodity put by Richardson as a producer on the literary market presents a different set of problems that would necessarily begin with both what has been characterised as the “unreadable” form of the text and its lack of a “proper” ending. Carol Watts argues that *Pilgrimage* is “a text that dares to be unfinished in a radical sense: it aims to make its aesthetic experiment answerable, open, to the social conditions” (2). In this context, I read the novel as a literary product whose form and content peculiarities display affiliations with the incompleteness and montage of Benjamin’s own *The Arcades Project* as well as with the long sequential form and indeterminate closure of *The Portrait of the Lady*. Rather than use Benjamin as a theoretical *passé-partout*, my aim has been to

dialectically engage with the three authors on the basis of their shared methodology in order to argue that their modernist fascination with form and their digressions from traditional novelistic formulas go against the given literary tradition and undermine the market status of their works as commodities. At the time of their production, when capitalism enters a phase of mass consumption, Richardson's work, much like James's, could neither be readily classified, nor casually consumed.

As Annika J. Lindskog argues in "Dorothy Richardson and the Grammar of the Mind," Richardson's use of punctuation and syntax exemplifies the modernist "experimentation with and deviation from standard punctuation rules" (6). Lindskog acknowledges that "Richardson's punctuation is indeed 'unreadable'" in order to argue about the author's "creative collaboration," that is, "the reader's cooperation in 'creating' the literary work" ("Grammar" 7). Drawing on the Richardsonian terms of "being" and "becoming," Lindskog infers that the first is "associated with the pause and the punctuation mark," while the latter, "the rush of experience—is associated with the unpunctuated sentence, with the 'sound' of literature, and with movement" (17). In the same vein, Richardson's variations of the three-dot and the four-dot ellipsis seem to point to two different directions: "The three-dot ellipsis do not stop the flow of the prose, and they do not necessarily force the reader to pause and reflect," whereas the four-dot ellipsis "placed between sentences [...] strongly suggests a something missing in the text—that is something that is not expressed verbally" (Lindskog, "Grammar" 17-8). Bluemel also argues that there is "frequent use of ellipses or suspension points to break up sentences or separate them from one another" and that "[t]hese ellipses indicate gaps in Miriam's conscious thought, and depending on the circumstances they may signal the passing of time, the straying of attention or the pressure of unconscious thought" (5). Both Lindskog's and Bluemel's analyses, on the one hand, demonstrate Richardson's tendency towards an unmediated representation of experience that relates to her archival practice of salvaging a slice of her heroine's reality. On the other, they attest to her resistance against the traditional novel form of coherent development.

Such experiments in form conjure Benjamin's discussion of literary technique of the work which is directly relevant to the "literary relations of

production of its time” (“Author as Producer” 770). The long novel, in the demands that it makes upon the reader, goes against the practice of casual or mechanical reading unsettling the expectations of marketability. Richardson’s peculiar narrative style—the length and elasticity of the sentences as well as the non-linear spatial and synchronous writing (Garrity 100)—exemplify Miriam’s intermediary role, as a literary persona for Richardson, in arranging images, spaces, memories, and reflections. *Pilgrimage* is turned into a storehouse of ideas and notions, a repository of the experience of the female subject at the turn of the century through Richardson’s choice to confront the reader with “very long, indigestible solid blocks of textual matter” (Mephram 453). Richardson’s choices with regards to style do provide a “dialectical starting point” that opens up her text “to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis” (Benjamin, “Author as Producer” 770), since they have often proved a spring board for the discussion of matters that transcend the optics of the printed page. As shown below, Richardson’s *Foreword* very attentively acknowledges her innovations in form while at the same time embeds them within a solid, literary tradition. Discussing Balzac and Arnold Bennett, Richardson offers some explanation for her experiments in writing in the very first page of her succinct *Foreword* to the novel:

Since all these novelists happened to be men, the present writer, proposing at this moment to write a novel and looking round for a contemporary pattern, was faced with the choice between following one of her regiments and attempting to produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism (19).

Richardson very clearly states that the masculine realism of Balzac and Bennet would not do justice to her project and that its feminist equivalent would consequently have to be produced *de novo*. As Susan Sniader Lanser argues, in making an adolescent female consciousness “the (dis)organizing principle” of *Pilgrimage* (105), Richardson creates this feminine equivalent. The use of free indirect discourse “attempts a written approximation of Miriam’s mental

life” (Lanser 105), while the avoidance of narrative closure unsettles the coherence and transparency most often found in realist writing.

In the words of Renée Stanton, the *Foreword* bespeaks “a strong element of retrospection, as Richardson at the age of sixty five, attempts to put *Pilgrimage*, a work she had embarked on twenty three years earlier, into some kind of literary context” (102). Indeed, Richardson pens the *Foreword* in 1938 for the collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, comprising twelve of the thirteen novels of the sequence. She describes her initial “sense of being upon a fresh pathway” and then the “lonely track” turning out “to be a populous highway” with the company of other writers, among which “two figures stood out” (*I* 10): “One a woman mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger, the other a man walking, with eyes devoutly closed, weaving as he went a rich garment of new words wherewith to clothe the antique dark material of his engrossment” (*I* 10). Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, the woman and man of Richardson’s description, are followed by Marcel Proust, “‘the earliest adventurer’ (*I* 11) “because he had been published first, in 1913” (Stanton 105).

To the best of my knowledge, Carol Watts is the first Richardson scholar to associate the work of Benjamin and Richardson by often evoking Benjamin in her *Dorothy Richardson* (1995). Citing Richardson’s encounter with Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, when Richardson arbitrarily read from one point to another “taking up the first handy vol. and opening at random” (Richardson qtd. in Watts 10), she observes that Benjamin’s commentary on “The Image of Proust” (*Illuminations*) is “relevant to Richardson’s narrative:”

Only the actus purus of recollection itself, not the author or the plot, constitutes the unity of the text. One may even say that the intermittence of author and plot is only the reverse of the continuum of memory, the pattern on the back side of the tapestry. (205 qtd. in Watts 11).

Watts argues that in both novels “remembering serves as a kind of apprenticeship that will free the protagonist to become a writer” (11). I would further suggest that, as in James’s *The American Scene*, in Richardson, this remembering is performed as

a Benjaminian “telescoping of the past through the present” (*TAP* 471), a “reconstellation” of formerly disjointed tenses that now emerge together in the text. Karavanta’s term of reconstellation as a cultural and political practice that brings together “discrepant histories,” enabling “the ‘complete consort’ of incommensurable forces ‘dancing together contrapuntally’” is the basis for this reading (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 332 qtd. in “Kore’s Meidiana” 121). Drawing on Adorno, Karavanta remains attentive to Benjamin’s genealogy of constellation and coins reconstellation as an “always already double” engagement, which entwines concept with object, a “new act of interpretation and repetition” that “both engages previously untried affiliations and relations and unavoidably returns to the previously set contexts from which concepts and objects are wrenched” (Karavanta and Morgan 18). In Miriam’s words on the penultimate page of *Pilgrimage*: “While I write everything vanishes but what I contemplate. The whole of what is called the past is with me, seen anew, vividly” (*IV March Moonlight* 657 qtd. in Watts 11). Much like an archive, the non-linearity of *Pilgrimage* requires the active participation of its readers who are asked to experience its reading as they would experience life.

Scott McCracken and Jo Winning discuss the long modernist novel as “an excessive form that attempts and fails to achieve the impossible” (269), which might perhaps be to encompass all life’s experience in one narrative. The scholars explain that, while reading *In Search of Lost Time* in 1927, Richardson, “whose own long novel sequence, *Pilgrimage*, was routinely compared with that of Proust’s *A la Recherche* in the 1920s,” wrote to her patron Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman): “two volumes at a time now one from each end to meet presently in the middle. A change from reading all over the series haphazard, & then from beginning to end & then from end to beginning” (Fromm, *Windows* 146 qtd. in McCracken and Winning 275). If Richardson’s reading practice of Proust’s writing is a guideline to read her own work, her narrative technique in *Pilgrimage* of multiple temporalities, excessive length, delay or absence of action, and experimentation with punctuation may point to a literary quality that bespeaks political tendency. In Benjamin’s words, “the concept of technique contains an indication of the correct determination

of the relation between [political] tendency and [literary] quality” (“Author as Producer” 770). Thus, Richardson’s modernist literary quality of transgressing narrative rules mirrors her political tendency of unsettling the politics of commodification that encompass her novel as product.

Richardson’s homage to the three figures not only places her own writing and herself in excellent company among the cornerstones of the European modernist novel, but also paints the picture of a writers’ guild that share strong affiliations with each other. Woolf, Joyce, and Proust are all introductory literary references that will lead to James. The leading figure discussed, in terms of Richardson’s literary references, is James for whom Richardson reserves the role of “the pathfinder,” “a venerable gentleman, a charmed and charming high priest of nearly all the orthodoxies, inhabiting a softly lit enclosure he mistook, until 1914, for the universe” (I 11). Richardson commemorates James for his “prose style demanding, upon the first reading, a perfection of sustained concentration akin to that which brought it forth, and bestowing, again upon the first reading, the recreative delights peculiar to this form of spiritual exercise” (I 11). Sincere admiration and subtle flattery aside, Richardson does stray from her praise of James, noting that as late as 1914, he mistook his “softly lit enclosure [...] for the universe.” Writing in retrospect, Richardson perhaps designates 1914, the onset of the First World War, as the seminal period when James broadens his literary gaze as a result of the shock of the war. Yet, the emphasis here is put on the demand of concentration made upon the reader, which is complemented and reinforced by the author’s citation from Goethe’s “Wilhelm Meister:” “The novel must proceed slowly, and the thought processes of the principal figure must, by one device or another, hold up the development of the whole” (I 11). Radford reads this ‘holding up’ as implying a delay in action that somewhat impedes meaning and allows for reflection (18-9). Such delay in action as part of a distinct literary technique indicates the relation between Benjamin’s political tendency and literary quality (“Author as Producer” 770). Richardson, in other words, is here drawing on the authority of Goethe to explain and exemplify her painstaking depiction of Miriam’s consciousness.

Kara Watts, in her discussion of the reading economies of *Pilgrimage*, argues that the fact “[t]hat Richardson found these techniques of ‘holding up’ the whole through excess as desirable, demonstrates that even time resists typical consumption in Richardson’s text” (58). Juliet Yates, who argues about the feminine fluidity of *Pilgrimage*, also pinpoints the intermingling of past events “in the present consciousness of Miriam,” which removes “the standard linearity of time” (67). Watts’s and Yates’s arguments are relevant to the alleged unreadability of the novel; for instance, *The Tunnel* was called “the longest bore on earth” (Fromm, *Biography* 119-20). This brings me back to the nature of *Pilgrimage* as a commodity offered in the literary market. In fact, despite her blatant manifestos, Richardson is reported to have been dismayed at the reception of *Pointed Roofs*, the first installment of the book. Such disappointment showcases the contradiction between Richardson’s sabotaging of her product’s commodification and her authorial expectations of marketability. In fact, as Brown notes, *Pointed Roofs* “was the most popular ‘chapter’ of *Pilgrimage*,” perhaps because it was the most “accessible” (*Poison* 161). Jenelle Troxell cites Bryher’s *The Heart to Artemis* and its account of Richardson’s hope that *Pointed Roofs* might “help the mass of underpaid women workers whose life she had shared, she had no idea that she had invented ‘continuous association’ and she was afraid that by being labeled as experimental she had driven away the audience she wanted” (Bryher 238 qtd. in Troxell 66). It seems then that Richardson felt excluded from reaching a wider public not so much due to her unconventional literary form, but mostly on account of the critical reception of her work, namely, her “labelling” as “experimental.”

In the final part of her *Foreword*, Richardson declares that “she groans, gently and resignedly” to the accusations made against her: “of feminism, of failure to perceive the value of the distinctively masculine intelligence, of pre-War sentimentality, of post-War Freudianity.” She continues that “when her work is danced upon for being unpunctuated and therefore unreadable, she is moved to cry aloud. For here is truth” (*I* 12). The tone is unapologetically succinct, while the array of diverse critiques of *Pilgrimage* is nonchalantly bundled together. What is more, what seems to come across as an admittance to the unreadability of the text is

quickly subverted by reiterating her choice of specific punctuation: “Feminine prose, as Charles Dickens and James Joyce have delightfully shown themselves to be aware, should properly be unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstructions” (I 12). Thus, Richardson decidedly asserts her politics of depicting the female consciousness of her New Woman heroine in a novel way that produces the unity of such new form and such new content.

Reading Richardson as one of the major theorists of the modernist novel, Parsons argues that the author’s belief “in the basic and insurmountable difference between the male and female psyche” combined with her “redefinition of the ways in which masculine society has conceived that difference is central to understanding her representation of feminine consciousness as the crucial concern of both the form and focus of *Pilgrimage*” (*Theorists* 99). This issue of different handling and depiction of the female consciousness transcends, to my mind at least, Richardson’s concerns over gender and results in the opening of a new narrative space for her novel depiction of the female subject. Her text thus sustains a reciprocity that overrides the representation of Miriam and moves to the direction of the reader. For instance, blank lines or blank spaces “as visual additions to the text” are used extensively in the novel, in the first case indicating a pause or break between two sections of the text and in the second as “a nonverbal component of the literary work,” functioning similarly to the four-dot ellipsis (Lindskog, “Grammar” 20). For Radford, these blank spaces are “*printed silences*” which bespeak “the activities of the unconscious which neither speech nor writing can reach” (69-70, emphasis in the original). Such interpolation of blanks into the course of the text contributes to a certain disintegration of the narrative form and to the reader’s encounter with the unfamiliar. Even if Richardson’s authorial agenda may be argued to focus on this ineffability and inaccessibility of the unconscious, the fact remains that when the readers are faced with blanks, they are forced to decide what to do with them, engaging in a more active reading. Benjamin’s comment on the impact of writing on the readers here takes on a new meaning: “it is not private thinking but, as Brecht once expressed it, the art of thinking in other people’s heads that is decisive” (“Author as Producer” 773). Richardson’s choice of form, that is, engages

the reader to such an extent that her thinking in the reader's head is accomplished. As Lindskog pinpoints, when Richardson revised *Pilgrimage* for the 1938 edition, "her punctuation became more traditional", yet "her use of blank spaces instead grew more experimental" ("Grammar" 21), an indication to the importance and effectiveness that the specific technique carried for Richardson.

Similarly, reported speech is not separated from the previous or following parts of the text. Discussing the use of reported speech in *The Tunnel*, Mephram argues that it "is not set in conventional form, with each speech beginning on a new line," but found "demarcated by quotation marks, located in the midst of long passages of stream-of-consciousness prose" (454). Mephram explains that the extensiveness of the technique in the specific novel proves especially successful in passages recording Miriam's experience at work and results in making both a political and an aesthetic contribution to the novel of modern life (454-5). In the same vein, Carol Watts discusses the narrative fragmentation and disjointed sentences of the end of *The Trap* as attesting to Miriam's "succumb[ing] [...] to exhaustion" (64). Mephram's acknowledgment of the unity of the political and the aesthetic combined with Watts's view that the form of the text reveals its content of Miriam's collapse, attest to Benjamin's argument that "the tendency of a literary work can be politically correct only if it is also literarily correct" ("Author as Producer" 769). Especially Mephram's point is critical in that it contextualizes Richardson's experiment in form within Miriam's professional life under the reign of capital, thus underlining the author's attempt to archive the heroine's labor experience. It is a moment where form and content are aligned and assimilated not as reciprocal in their expression of the other part, but as inextricably and interchangeably attached to each other.

The insertion of reported speech within long interior monologue passages is also closely associated with Benjamin's "merely show" tool, the demonstration of the montage found in *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin asserts that his methodology in *The Arcades* is "to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage" (*TAP* 458). Benjamin explains his technique of "literary montage" as follows: "I needn't say

anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them” (*TAP* 460). Richardson does away with introductory phrases in order to bring to life the in-the-moment feeling, while her “merely show” tools are the radical plotlessness, the temporal experiment, and the revolutionary being of her autobiographical character (Matz 10). The reader’s unmediated encounter with reported speech, especially when it facilitates the representation of Miriam’s reception of the capitalist condition, is intriguing in that it exemplifies an employment of “difficult” literary technique. Such style and its use in describe Miriam’s experience of the relations of production makes Richardson’s product less marketable. In other words, Richardson employs a stylistic element that renders *Pilgrimage* less of a commodity in order to register the experience of capitalism.

Richardson’s politics of resisting the commodifying framework that encompasses her novel is also seen in her inclination for what she terms “organic” prose and “organic” reading. More than a decade before composing her *Foreword*, in her 1924 essay titled “About Punctuation,” originally published in *Adelphi*, Richardson discusses standard punctuation as part of “the machinery of book production,” which has “devitalized the act of reading” (991). The essay is pertinent both to the points raised in her *Foreword to Pilgrimage* and in the author’s references to other important literary figures. In place of standard punctuation, Richardson proposes “organic” prose, wherein the text “moves along unbroken, save by an occasional full-stop” and whose scarcer punctuation acts as a “pace-maker for the reader’s creative consciousness,” thus demanding the “collaboration of the reader” in the creation of the literary work. (“About Punctuation” 991-2). Richardson argues that “the charm” of the act of reading “has been sacrificed by the systematic separation of phrases” and that “the machinery of punctuation and type [...] have tended to make it [reading] less organic, more mechanical.” (“About Punctuation” 991). In a gesture reminiscent of James’s brick-layering and its allusions to manual work, Richardson’s wording juxtaposes the machine-like or

mechanical way of reading to the organic, while emphasis is put on the reader's reception which invariably begins by way of encountering the written page.

After briefly discussing Laurence Sterne and François Rabelais for having "honoured the rules in the breach, without rebuke" Richardson compares their literary reception to that of H. G. Wells and notes that "Mr. Wells's experiments" have been "dragged into the market-place and lynched, while the wholesale depredations of Sterne and Rabelais are merely affectionately hugged" ("About Punctuation" 902). Never losing sight of the fact that an author is always part of a literary industry, she poignantly argues that the market-place holds the power of lynching or embracing a writer, before she returns to James, stating that "[n]o one has more sternly, or more cunningly, secured the collaboration of the reader" ("About Punctuation" 991-2). James is assessed here for carrying the reader "unhasting, unresting, over his vast tracts of statement" a process in which the readers "learn to stretch attention to the utmost" ("About Punctuation" 992). As Barbara Hochman suggests, early in his career, he had expressed "the idea of reading as a reciprocal transaction:" according to James, in the "labor" of novel writing "the work is divided between the writer and the reader" (James, "Novels" 485 qtd. in Hochman 81). His technique of stretching the reader's attention, also reiterated in Richardson's *Foreword* is to my mind set as an example, a paradigm to be more precise, of what she sees as the epitome of writing.

James's inconclusive ending in *The Portrait* in which Isabel is determined but to no clear end, exemplifies his reluctance towards an "absolute anchoring of his unmoored heroines within conventional happy or sad endings" (Despotopoulou, "No Natural place" 154). Similarly, Richardson's refusal to offer *Pilgrimage* a "proper" ending turns it into a "eternity of 'now'" (Watts, Kara 62). Both novels share the notion of the incomplete or the unfinished with Benjamin's *magnum opus* which, as a compendium of modernity, assimilates the blending and clashing of various writings so as to become an archive of textual fragments, commodities, and acts of the multidimensional modern *locus*. In my reading, *Pilgrimage* and *The Portrait of a Lady* are narratives of ruins and, hence, ruins of narrations in the sense that their representation of the subjects cannot be but elliptical and symptomatic,

revealing the complexity of living without fully narrating life. Both authors and works thoroughly represent the subject's experience of the commodity and of the turn-of-the-century capitalist condition, while, at the same time, acknowledging their own participation in the literary market and the nature of their works as products. James's and Richardson's literary techniques, in their similarities and differences, emerge as elements that counteract the exchange value of their novels in their nature of commodities as such. If Isabel Archer's coming of age amidst the market may be argued to pave the way for Miriam Henderson's reception of the modern condition and if we acknowledge James as a literary precursor to Richardson, then it is worth looking at the *The Portrait* and *Pilgrimage* as an emergent constellation of texts illuminated by Benjamin's cultural theory and setting forth two interacting, yet diverse, archives of modern space, social class, labor and of the fascination with the object as commodity.

Conclusion

In his 1997 essay entitled “Marx’s Coat,” Peter Stallybrass thoroughly presents one of Marx’s numerous economic ordeals, involving the Reading Room of the British Museum, the philosopher’s overcoat, his labor power put on the market, and the struggle to make ends meet in the 1850s London. As he explains, Marx obtained a ticket to the privileged space of the museum in June 1850 and began his research on what was to become the *Capital* (187). In order to finance his research, he wrote articles for newspapers. I would like to consider these journalistic pieces as Marx’s “pot-boilers,” to use James’s phrase from “The Real Thing,” or otherwise put, the labor power he could sell. His research “brought in no money; his journalism brought in a little” (Stallybrass 188) and with “his credit with the butcher and the greengrocer fried up,” Marx was repeatedly forced to pawn his overcoat (Stallybrass 187). Unfortunately, the Reading Room did not accept a man without an overcoat, “even if he had a ticket” (Stallybrass 187). Thus, Marx and all of us as readers of this anecdote find ourselves faced with an impasse, one of capitalism’s uroboruses: if Marx was *not* wearing his coat during his research visits to the British Museum, he would not be admitted. Conversely, if he *was* wearing a coat, and as a result allowed to conduct his research on the *Capital*, he would not be able to invest time in journalism which provided him with an income, therefore he would often be obliged to pawn his coat in order to meet expenses, such as writing paper (Stallybrass 188). It can be inferred that whenever his overcoat left its owner and re-entered the sphere of circulation on its way to the pawn shop, whenever it stopped being wearable and keeping him warm, every time it shed its use value and was restored to its commodity status, it “directly determined what work he could or could not do” and “shaped what he wrote” (Stallybrass 187-8).

Stallybrass’s graphic account is fascinating not only because it vividly brings to life the very important minutiae of the Marx household, which at the time was regularly dependent on pawning, but also due to the fact that it can be read as a point of confluence for the separate thematic and methodological axes that this project has explored as the constituent elements of literary archives. By affiliating James’s, Richardson’s and Benjamin’s texts through the threads of urban space,

class/labor power, and the commodity, I have tried to construct a constellation of three different successive present-times in modernity that foregrounds the experience of the subject in the modern condition. If *The Portrait* is an example of how a woman's experience becomes central in late nineteenth-century fiction, then *Pilgrimage* stands as a text that exemplifies the experience of the "new woman" in early twentieth-century modernist writing and at the same time records the emergence of women novelists that challenge the masculine modernist canon. James's, Richardson's, and Benjamin's preoccupation with the material and/or the commodity assumes diverse forms in their texts: from James's attention to the ruins of Rome that become seminal for Isabel's self-knowledge to Richardson's preoccupation with the mundane and the common, be it a bar of soap or a hat, the experience of modernity comes across in its Benjaminian fragmentary essence. All texts discussed are meeting points of personal and historical remembrance: the city chronicles of New York and Berlin offered by James and Benjamin as well as Richardson's female reception of London spaces, through Miriam's eyes, paint portraits of modern metropolitan centres that underline the palimpsestic character of urban space and showcase it as *the* locus and highpoint of modernity, in a sense, spatializing time. *The American Scene*, *Berlin Childhood*, and *Pilgrimage* all reside in "two time-continua: that of the experiences recounted and that of the time of writing," an argument that Laura Marcus makes about *Pilgrimage* (441) that nevertheless is also true for James's and Benjamin's chronicles of their native cities. Class issues as manifested in the petition signed by Pauline and other *filles publiques* of Paris, in the downward social mobility of James's "The Real Thing" and in Isabel Archer's new-found capital are invariably confounded with the subject's labor power; the Monarchs, like Miriam Henderson, are forced willy-nilly into the labor market where they struggle to stand their ground. Additionally, despite Benjamin's reputation for being gender-biased, Pauline sets an example of the female resisting subject that perseveres. Like Miriam, who decidedly quits her underpaid job, Pauline talks back to power and claims the prostitute's labor space in the Parisian streets.

I have also argued that besides fictional characters, authors, too, are represented in these texts: in my reading, texts are also literary archives of the authors' awareness of class differentiations, the importance of material conditions, and the centrality of the commodity in turn-of-the-century writing. The position of James, Richardson and Benjamin as intellectuals and artists in their encounter with the growing demands of the market is complicated by the fact that their products of labor, as works of art, unsettle their very nature as commodities offered for sale. The constellation of thematic concerns and methodological approaches in the texts discussed dialectically conjoins these alternate archives of the modern condition emphasizing what Baudelaire called the consciousness of its "presentness," an acknowledgment of its ephemerality (Spiropoulou 20). The authors' microscopic approach, wherein the dialectical image conflates the minor with the great, the past with the present and the thing with the idea, stands in opposition with the hegemony of linear chronology and exemplifies modernist writing as favouring the hidden, the omitted, the heterogeneous, and the opaque.

To return to "Marx's Coat" and begin with *urban space*, which has been the main theme in my first chapter, the Reading Room of the British Museum is a space that enables Marx's philosophical aspirations, the writing of his *magnum opus*. In a similar manner, the urban work spaces of London and the opportunities they offer set Miriam's nascent subjectivity as a New Woman in motion. The Reading Room is an institutionalized space that hosts labor designated and reserved for specific use under the auspices of the reputable and decorous British Museum. As Stallybrass notes, the Reading Room would not allow entrance to "just *anyone* from off the streets, and a man without an overcoat, [...] was just anyone" (187, emphasis in the original). Likewise, the space of the dentistry comes across in *Pilgrimage* as a place identified by its professional character. For Miriam, the concatenation of the relentless demands of labor and her brief break for tea bring about her recognition of the dialectical image of the colonies. The British museum is also haunted by the colonial spectre. In his *Forget English*, Aamir Mufti discusses the museum, the "cultural patrimony of the modern nation," and the passage from "Royal" to "British" or "National" institutions; he examines the origins of the material found in

the Asian and African Studies Reading Room and explains that the vast collections come from “what used to be the India Office—and before its creation the East India Company” (43), linking the meticulous recording of colonial suppression and violence with the cultural history of Britain offered for study in the Reading Room. Given the collections of numerous manuscripts in “Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and a number of the vernacular languages of the subcontinent” that were taken from the “libraries of Indian Princes and retired servants of the East India Company and the Indian Office” (44), Mufti argues about “the extraction of value—symbolic and cultural as well as material—by the colonial powers from their conquered and administrated territories” (46).

Despite its very material colonial associations, for Marx, the Reading Room as a work space bears the promise of a privileged realm of authorship, a haven which would allow him to complete the *Capital*. Unlike the dentistry that hosts Miriam’s labor power, the use of the Reading Room is incompatible with Marx’s *labor power*, which by necessity goes into two different tasks: his journalistic writing which is the form of labor power he can actually put up for sale in the market and his work on his *magnum opus* which in fact is not marketable at the time. Labor power and class, the main focus of chapter two, re-emerges here: Like the artist/illustrator of “The Real Thing,” who would rather be engaged in things greater than the illustrations which provide him with a living, and like Miriam, who is obliged to practice an array of different jobs before she can actually write, Marx had to pen articles for the press in an effort to find a potential buyer and make ends meet. Yet Miriam’s professional route directly points to Richardson’s interaction with the labor market. Like her heroine and despite her middle-class origin, Richardson had to work as a student teacher in Hanover, at a school in north London, as a governess in a private house and a dental secretary, before she could eventually become a writer. Marcus explains that “from the 1920s onwards” the writer Bryher provided Richardson with funds “for the continued existence of Miriam and *Pilgrimage*, threatened as they were by the demands of freelance writing (446). As Bowler argues, “the post-*Pilgrimage* Richardson was no better off [...], supplement[ing] the tiny income she gained from her novels with translations

and articles. Her fiction suffered” (“Recognition” n.p.). James, on the other hand, was never obliged to tackle the complexities of holding a job other than writing in order to earn a living. Having grown up in affluence, he began to write at the age of twenty, but failed to sustain himself as a freelance writer, regularly falling back on his family’s wealth. When the twenty-six year-old James settles in London, he is already highly aware of the demands of the literary market and eager to make a compromise between high-brow art and the requirements of a mostly middle-class female readership.

Marx’s overcoat as the *commodity* which propels Stallybrass’s account forward, is simultaneously an object and a commodity that brings me to the thematic focus of my third chapter. When worn by Marx in order to gain access to the British Museum, the coat retains its use value, but when pawned, it exclusively constitutes exchange value. In Stallybrass’s words, “the commodity becomes a commodity not as a thing but as an exchange value” and “achieves its purest form, in fact, when most emptied out of particularity and thingliness” (183). Perhaps we will never know whether Marx wondered about his own coat like Miriam thinks of her hat from Kensington. Was there a point throughout his financial mishaps, that he perhaps empathized with the commodity as Isabel does, looking on her reified self that Osmond has turned into a collectible? Yet we do know from Marx’s writings that objects are valuable not when used, but when they are exchanged, that is they “realize their full [...] value only at the moment one no longer possesses them” (Miller, Andrew 34); “what defines the coat as a commodity, for Marx, is that you cannot wear it and it cannot keep you warm” (Stallybrass 183). One can infer that the coat’s trajectory to the pawnshop and back dialectically exemplifies what Marx describes as the M-C-M’ economy, in which money is exchanged for commodities and subsequently commodities are again exchanged for money which has become capital through the addition of surplus value (Miller, Andrew 33). In Marx’s words, “in the circulation m–c–m both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself,” which “is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement” (*Capital* 255, qtd. in Lütticken 115).

To look at James's, Richardson's, and also Benjamin's products of writing as forms of value, as commodities that nevertheless constitute cultural archives of their times, means to view them within the limitless movement of capital in the literary market, within which Marx insisted that the valorization of value takes place (*Capital* 250). Sven Lütticken argues that "if, according to the labour theory of value, the value of a commodity is the amount of labour socially necessary for its production, Marxist and non-Marxist theorists alike have long been aware that the artwork constitutes an exception to this rule" (112). The artisanal manner in which artists work, selling their products, rather than their labor power "to a capitalist who could pocket the surplus value" makes their work non-productive (Lütticken 112). According to Marx:

Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, was an unproductive worker. On the other hand, a writer who turns out work for his publisher in factory style is a productive worker. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the activity of *his own* nature. He later sold his product for £5 and thus became a merchant. But the literary proletarian of Leipzig who produces books, such as compendia on political economy, at the behest of his publisher is pretty nearly a productive worker since his production is taken over by capital and only occurs in order to increase it. (*Capital* 1044, emphases in the original, qtd. in Lütticken 112-3)

In the same vein, for Marx, a singer is an unproductive worker, but if she sells her song for money, she becomes a "wage labourer or merchant;" yet if she is "engaged by an entrepreneur who makes her sing to make money," she becomes a productive worker, precisely because she "*produces capital directly*" (*Capital* 1044, emphases in the original qtd. in Lütticken 112-3). According to Marx, all these activities can be formally subsumed under capitalist relations of production only to a limited extent. His examples are illuminating in that they remind us that, in the Marxian technical terms, only the labor that generates an amount of surplus value for the capital, may be called "productive" labor and, as Lütticken observes, that means "productive of value for capital" (112). Neither Richardson's, nor James's labor can

be qualified as productive. Like Milton they produced their works in the manner that a silkworm produces silk. Yet that is not to say that as merchants they did not partake the literary market.

This project has discussed literary works as commodities, which necessitates the act of comparing the form of the commodity *as such*, in its visible and invisible, material and metaphysical aspects to the form of writing as commodity. James's use of "preterition" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 202), his practice of emphasizing through omission, what Eagleton calls the "hidden horrors" and "unspeakable secrets" of James's writing, attest to the density and the absence of clarity in the author's writing style of notorious omissions (*The English Novel* 150). As argued in his 1884 "Art of Fiction," James identifies the role of the author as the one with the "power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern" (53). Precisely because "experience is never limited" and "never complete" ("Art of Fiction" 52), James is much more interested in the "air of reality" than reality itself ("Art of Fiction" 53) and infers that in "each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts" ("Art of Fiction" 54) alluding to the organic essence of the novel. Discussing the idea that Jamesian fiction is by and large dictated by the problematic of the commodity, Jameson sees the development of "point of view" in James as an attempt to recreate the subject: "the Jamesian operation, on the level of the construction of aesthetic discourse, may be grasped as part of the more general containment strategy of a late nineteenth-century bourgeoisie suffering from the aftereffects of reification" (*Political Unconscious* 209). Jameson traces reification not as simply expressed in James's work, but as dominant in the surrounding historical context, opening thus the discussion about the coinciding of form and content. Thus, the Benjaminian "merely show" methodology emerges as already including its interpretation: *the form is the content* and vice versa. Isabel is thrown into the vortex of commodity culture, and this as a historical act exemplifies the struggle between the disenchanting and re-enchanting power of the commodity, with which Benjamin was so concerned.

Similarly, I have read Richardson's stylistic experiments as the characteristic gaps that define "the archive by its very nature" (Breakell 5). According to Virginia

Woolf's wary impression of *The Tunnel*, "[a]ll the[se necessary] things are cast away, and there is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson" ("The Tunnel" 189). If Woolf's description delineates the gap between what Richardson insisted on calling "interior monologue" and what the other modernists termed as stream of consciousness, I see Richardson as contributing the *Ur-form* of stream of consciousness to the novel, in the same way that for Benjamin the arcade stood as the ur-form of the shopping mall and the prostitute as the ur-form of the wage-laborer. Richardson, having used Miriam as her collector of fragments, is the archivist who assumes the dynamic and determinist task of deciding what to include and what to exclude from the novel, therefore the gaps in her archive equally speak volumes. *Pilgrimage* takes up Richardson's whole life span and, like the "incomplete" and "unfinished" *Arcades Project*, is never brought to a definite close, leaving its archival practice indeterminate. Marcus comments on the author's reaction to the 1938 Dent edition of *Pilgrimage* which included the twelfth volume *Dimple Hill*: "Richardson wrote of her dismay and disgust" at its presentation "as a complete work" (448). Despite the novel's *Künstlerroman* journey towards the moment when Miriam truly commences writing, this journey is "a continuous performance rather than a teleology, since *Pilgrimage's* end propels the reader back to its beginning—the moment of authorship" (Garrington, "Haptic Text" 87). As Farge notes, "archives do not necessarily tell the truth, but, as Michel Foucault would say, they tell *of* the truth" (29).

Although *The Arcades Project* resides in an entirely different formal plane than that of fiction, "in its fragmentary and unfinished form" it, "in fact, resembles a modernist work of art" (Spiropoulou 8). Benjamin's methodology of quotation and rewriting also points to the problematics of conveying the totality of experience, the inaccessibility of a full narration. The process of "develop[ing] to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks [...], intimately related to that of montage" (*TAP* 458) is more than a gesture of taking a step back from hermeneutics. Benjamin's dialectical technique of thesis-antithesis employed in *The Arcades* not only omits authorial interpretation but also advances on a path that "solicits us to

explore the dimensionality of literary space” (Sussman 172). *The Arcades* demonstrates the unfinished modern attempt to narrate history through the history of the remains of the object, the ruin. According to Spiropoulou, Benjamin writes “Parisian nineteenth century as an Ur-History of bourgeois capitalist civilization” (9), and in this historiography ruins are not the past but rather become the present which bears the encoded past knowledge. His plethora of references from historical accounts to political brochures, petitions like the one signed by the *filles publiques*, and excerpts from popular literature, all archive what has been with a view to evoking that which is to come in the present moment.

James, Richardson, and Benjamin would, I think, have enjoyed Baudelaire’s description of his *Paris Spleen*, included in his 1862 introduction to the book. The introduction assumes the form of a letter to the French novelist and poet Arsène Houssaye:

Dear friend, I send you a modest work which people would be wrong to say has neither head nor tail, since, on the contrary, it *is all alternately and reciprocally head and tail*. I ask you to bear in mind the admirable permutations this arrangement offers us all, you, me, the reader. We can break off where we choose, *I my reverie, you the manuscript, the reader his reading*; for I have not tied his reluctant will to the interminable thread of some pointless plot. Remove a vertebra and the two parts of my tortuous fantasy join effortlessly. *Chop it into several pieces, you will see that each survives on its own*. In the hope these segments are sufficiently alive to give you pleasure and amusement, I dedicate the entire snake to you. (Baudelaire 3, emphases mine)

Baudelaire admits to having come up with the idea after “leafing through” Aloysius Bertrand’s *Gaspard de la nuit*. He states his effort to apply to a modern and more abstract life, something analogous to the process which Bertrand applied to his “curiously picturesque” portrait of an earlier age. Baudelaire’s poetic dream is “a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme, supple and choppy enough to accommodate the lyrical movement of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the bump

and lurch [elsewhere flipflops] of consciousness” (3). His ideal originates “above all in the habit of huge cities, the endless [elsewhere innumerable] meeting of their ways” (Baudelaire 3).

In his critical and mnemonic reading of New York, James unsettles the idea of linear progress, which was more that often dominant in the late Victorian imaginary. His constellation of past memory and present observation of his birthplace highlights a formation in which differences arise simultaneously and retain their distinct spaces. His *colportage* of the historical past of New York embedded in the present picture of the city builds an image that transcends “an urban phenomenology” (Posnock 165) as a particular temporal experience and disrupts the capitalist maxim of novelty, emphasizing the palimpsestic nature of the city. Richardson’s archival work is written and published in chapter-novel instalments that record the way Miriam experiences or even embody different aspects of modernity. The four volumes or thirteen novels of *Pilgrimage* can be read as “alternately and reciprocally head and tail” since what is of interest in this textual archive is not the linear development of Miriam’s character—if there ever was such a thing—but the constellation of outlooks on the modern condition that make the particular case for Miriam as a subject. Likewise, one can start *The Arcades Project* at any given page, remove any vertebra of the text to find out that each segment sufficiently stands alone. The absence of linearity in a work that could easily be described as an encyclopaedia of modernity is a reminder of the fact that modernity registers on a multiplicity that has more than often been silenced. In Nead’s words, “the discourses that constitute that historical temporality [of modernity] bear the ghosts of the past, of modernity’s own other” (7). Benjamin saw his work “in terms of ‘cycles’” wherein the separate parts stood for “the contradictory moments of a synthetic unity” (Brewster 161) and, in this vein, his constellation of past and present within the now-moment, unsettles the given tradition of history as a linear progressive trajectory.

In place of a concluding remark and bearing in mind “Marx’s Coat,” and Marx’s coat for that matter, I would like to cite Eleanor Marx’s 1895 recollection of an interesting family tradition her father shared with his children: Marx would tell

his offspring a series of stories that went on for months about “Hans Röckle,” “a Hoffmann-like magician, who kept a toyshop, and who was always hard-up” (Stallybrass 198). Sadly, the magician, would always have to sell his wondrous wares—“giants and dwarfs, kings and queens, workmen and masters, animals and birds as numerous as Noah got into the Ark”—to the devil, since he “could never meet his obligations either to the devil or to the butcher” (Stallybrass 198). In the end, after their trials and tribulations, the toys would somehow find their way back to the magician’s shop. In Stallybrass’s insightful comment, the moment of the toys’ sale is “the moment of alienation, of the stripping of the magic of the toys as they are transformed into exchange values” (199). Importantly, “Marx’s story refuses the transformation of the toys into commodities” since having “a life of their own” they always return to Hans (199). Perhaps Marx had seen enough of the family’s possessions—Stallybrass makes specific references to silver, furniture, the girls’ toys, and clothing, including Marx’s coat—never coming back from the pawnshop. Thus, the story decidedly holds a happy ending in which Hans always renews his possession.

For Hans, like “for the collector, the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of his objects” (*TAP* 858). Marx, the storyteller, offers his children a hero, who as a true collector has no regard for use-value. Additionally, the “magical” return of former commodities to his shop, “strip[s] things of their commodity value” and thus “opens up the possibility of politics (McCracken, “Old Work” 161). If the *Capital* “was Marx’s attempt to give back the coat to its owner,” the epitome of his lifelong investment in the “undoing of loss” (Stallybrass 187, 199), and if the works of James and Richardson bring new light to our understanding of story-telling, narrative structure, and of how prose fiction works, then looking at these works through Benjamin’s lens of archival practice may also allow a better understanding of the experience of the subject in modernity.

The texts I have discussed span a period that would roughly begin with the publication of James’s *The Portrait* in 1881, includes the serial publication of *Pilgrimage* from 1915 to 1938, and comes to an abrupt halt with Benjamin’s unfinished *The Arcades* on account of his suicide in 1940. I have read James’s

Isabel as a character that paves the way for Richardson's Miriam to come into light and both Isabel and Miriam as representations of the female experience of modernity. All the characters portrayed in the stories as protagonists—Isabel, the Monarchs, and Miriam, but also Pauline, James, Richardson, and Benjamin as authors—have been examined as subjects of and in history in an effort to read literature as an “organon of history” rather than “reduce [it] to the material of history” (Benjamin, “Literary History” 464). The concomitant reading of James and Richardson brings together a widely acclaimed male author who has received unflinching critical attention and an under-explored female author whose literary production has only recently started to attract the attention she deserves. I have drawn on Benjamin's cultural theory and analytical categories to pursue a new reading of two very distinct literary figures that have both contributed to the tenets of modernism especially in view of the spectralising effects of commodity on the human subject, and especially women at the turn of the century, and the aesthetic and political dimensions of the urban space as manifested in the literary and theoretical texts under study.

James's and Richardson's modernist works probe the consolidation of the urban space as constitutive of modern life, reflect on the exponential growth of the labor market that starts to appropriate women's intellectual, economic and social skills and power, and represent the ever-increasing concern about the effects of materialist culture on the human subject, in light of the prevalence of the commodity both as an economic as well as a socio-political catalyst in modernity. They also follow the workings of the consciousness of men and women engaged in modest yet important acts of contemplation and self-reflection and resistance against the material adversities and socio-political restraints that condition their positions and potentiality as subjects. Such works highlight both the dependence and autonomy of the work of art in the face of the commodity as a conceptual category of the modern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This thesis has reconstellated Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, and Walter Benjamin, as authors and producers, as modern subjects at work attempting to attain the impossible: represent, narrate, and analyse the elusiveness of human experience in

the face of the far-reaching impact of capitalism as both a revenant past and a present reality. The texts' status vis-à-vis story and history invites a reading of fiction as a historical category that transgresses the vague boundary between literature as fiction and history as fact and points to the vivid, living interaction between the world and the text.

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Περίληψη

Χένρι Τζέιμς, Ντόροθι Ρίτσαρντσον, Βάλτερ Μπένγιαμιν: Η Γραφή στο Γύρισμα του Αιώνα και η Μπενγιαμινική Αρχαιοθέτηση του Νεωτερικού

Η παρούσα διατριβή διερευνά τους τρόπους με τους οποίους ο καπιταλισμός, κυρίαρχος στη νεωτερικότητα, καταγράφεται στο έργο των Χένρι Τζέιμς και Ντόροθι Μίλλερ Ρίτσαρντσον. Ο κριτικός στοχασμός του Βάλτερ Μπένγιαμιν αποτελεί μεθοδολογικό εργαλείο και ερμηνευτικό πρότυπο για την αντιστικτική και συγκριτική προσέγγιση του έργου των δυο συγγραφέων. Οι θεματικοί άξονες που εξετάζονται είναι ο αστικός χώρος, η κοινωνική τάξη σε συνδυασμό με την εργασιακή δύναμη, και το εμπόρευμα ως μορφή του υλικού και έκφραση του καπιταλισμού. Επιχειρώ τη διαλεκτική συνομιλία συγκεκριμένων έργων των δύο συγγραφέων με σκοπό να αναδείξω την αρχαιακή λογική τους σε σχέση με τη νεωτερική συνθήκη. Το πολύτομο μυθιστόρημα *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938) της Ρίτσαρντσον εξετάζεται συνθετικά με τα έργα του Τζέιμς: *Το Πορτραίτο μιας Κυρίας* (1881), το διήγημα «Το Αυθεντικό» (1892), και το ταξιδιωτικό κείμενο *The American Scene* (1907), καθώς επίσης και δοκίμια τους. Υποστηρίζω ότι ο Τζέιμς και η Ρίτσαρντσον οικοδομούν λογοτεχνικά αρχεία συγκρίσιμα με το Μπενγιαμινικό υπόδειγμα. Η εκκοσμικευμένη κριτική του Μπένγιαμιν, ως πρότυπο αρχαιακής λογικής, προσφέρει το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο αυτής της εργασίας: μπενγιαμινικές έννοιες όπως η ρευστότητα των ορίων μεταξύ ιδιωτικής και δημόσιας σφαίρας, ο φетиχισμός του εμπορεύματος, το αστικό παλίμψηστο, το ερείπιο, και η διαλεκτική εικόνα εξετάζονται στα έργα των Τζέιμς και Ρίτσαρντσον. Έργα όπως τα *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1928), *Μονόδρομος* (1928), *Τα Παιδικά Χρόνια στο Βερολίνο γύρω στα 1900* (1938), *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (1969), *The Arcades Project* (1982), και δοκίμια όπως τα «Αποσυσκευάζοντας τη Βιβλιοθήκη μου» (1931), και «Ο Συγγραφέας ως Παραγωγός» (1934) αναδεικνύουν μια πληθώρα θεμάτων που επίσης απαντώνται στον Τζέιμς και την Ρίτσαρντσον. Το μητροπολιτικό περιβάλλον και η λειτουργία του ως εμπορικό θέατρο ανταλλακτικών αξιών εγγράφονται στη λογοτεχνική παραγωγή των συγγραφέων. Η φαντασμαγορία της αγοράς κυριαρχεί όχι μόνο στις διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις, αλλά και στην εργασία, στην περιπλάνηση του πλάνητα στην πόλη, και στην αυξανόμενη κινητικότητα των γυναικών. Η

Ρίτσαρντσον καταγράφει την έμφυλη εμπειρία στην αγορά εργασίας, την πόλη, και τη σφαίρα της πολιτικής, δείχνοντας την συμμετοχή των γυναικών στον επαγγελματικό στίβο, αλλά και την εμμονή του μοντερνισμού με το καθημερινό, το κοινότυπο, το υλικό. Ο Τζέιμς αναφέρεται στην κυριαρχία της καπιταλιστικής οικονομίας και τις συνέπειες της για την ανθρώπινη ζωή καθώς και στην επαφή των Αμερικανών με τον «Παλιό Κόσμο» της Ευρώπης. Με αυτήν την έννοια, το «λογοτεχνικό μοντάζ» του Μπένγιαμιν και η εναντίωση σε ερμηνευτικά σχήματα υποδεικνύουν την ανάγνωση του συγκεκριμένου των συγγραφέων σε αντιδιαστολή με παραδοσιακές αναγνώσεις που θέλουν τον Τζέιμς καλλιτέχνη της αστικής τάξης, την Ρίτσαρντσον φορέα μιας αποκλειστικά γυναικείας γραφής και τον Μπένγιαμιν παραπαίοντα ανάμεσα στη μεταφυσική και τον Μαρξισμό.

