



Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End.

Erika Rappaport

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In *Shopping for Pleasure*, Erika Rappaport reconstructs London's Victorian and Edwardian West End as an entertainment and retail center. In this neighborhood of stately homes, royal palaces, and spacious parks and squares, a dramatic transformation unfolded that ultimately changed the meaning of femininity and the lives of women, shaping their experience of modernity. Rappaport illuminates the various forces of the period that encouraged and discouraged women's enjoyment of public life and particularly shows how shopping came to be seen as the quintessential leisure activity for middle- and upper-class women. Through extensive histories of department stores, women's magazines, clubs, teashops, restaurants, and the theater as interwoven sites of consumption, *Shopping for Pleasure* uncovers how a new female urban culture emerged before and after the turn of the twentieth century.

Moving beyond the question of whether shopping promoted or limited women's freedom, the author draws on diverse sources to explore how business practices, legal decisions, and cultural changes affected women in the market. In particular, she focuses on how and why stores presented themselves as pleasurable, secure places for the urban woman, in some cases defining themselves as instrumental to civic improvement and women's emancipation. Rappaport also considers such influences as merchandizing strategies, credit policies, changes in public transportation, feminism, and the financial balance of power within the home. *Shopping for Pleasure* is thus both a social and cultural history of the West End, but on a broader scale it reveals the essential interplay between the rise of consumer society, the birth of modern femininity, and the making of contemporary London.

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