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Shopping streets and cultures from a long-term and transnational perspective: an introduction

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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations, Maps and Tables</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1 Shopping Streets and Cultures from a Long-Term and Transnational Perspective: An Introduction <i>Clé Lesger and Jan Hein Furnée</i>	1
2 The Shopping Streets of Provincial England, 1650–1840 <i>Jon Stobart</i>	16
3 Stalls, Bulks, Shops and Long-Term Change in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England <i>Claire Walsh</i>	37
4 Shopping Streets in Eighteenth-Century Paris: A Landscape Shaped by Historical, Economic and Social Forces <i>Natacha Coquery</i>	57
5 Antwerp Goes Shopping!: Continuity and Change in Retail Space and Shopping Interactions from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century <i>Ilja Van Damme with Laura Van Aert</i>	78
6 Urban Planning, Urban Improvement and the Retail Landscape in Amsterdam, 1600–1850 <i>Clé Lesger</i>	104
7 German Landscapes of Consumption, 1750–1850: Perspectives of German and Foreign Travellers <i>Heidrun Homburg</i>	125
8 Something Old, Something Borrowed, Something New: The Brussels Shopping Townscape, 1830–1914 <i>Anneleen Arnout</i>	157
9 Innovation and Tradition in the Shopping Landscape of Paris and a Provincial City, 1800–1900 <i>Marie Gillet</i>	184

vi *Contents*

10	'Our Living Museum of Nouveautés': Visual and Social Pleasures in The Hague's Shopping Streets, 1650–1900 <i>Jan Hein Furnée</i>	208
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	232
	<i>Index</i>	243

1

Shopping Streets and Cultures from a Long-Term and Transnational Perspective

An Introduction

Clé Lesger and Jan Hein Furnée

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, comparing the shopping streets of Paris and London became a stock element of English and French travel accounts. In 1810, the French writer J. B. Barjaud, like many of his compatriots, praised the ‘grandeur’ and the ‘magnificence’ of London shops as ‘one of the particular characteristics’ of the British capital. In turn, English travellers were deeply impressed by the ‘brilliant’ arcades and the ‘marvellous’ merchandise in the Palais-Royal. Travellers also praised the increasing exchange of modern retail innovations between the two capitals. In 1819, J. N. Quatremère de Roissy enthusiastically reported how only recently Paris’s shopkeepers had started ‘copying’ the exteriors, ornamentations and ‘general arrangements’ of their English neighbours. Yet this constant competition fuelled sneering comments as well. As French travellers generally looked down upon the small number of attractive shopping arcades in London, English writers were happy to scorn the lack of brilliant bazaars in the French capital.¹

The advent of modern retail techniques and modern consumer culture has continued to be the core issue of the expanding historiography on retailing and shopping in Western Europe.² In recent decades, most historians working on the nineteenth century have argued that the so-called ‘retail revolution’, and especially the rise of the department store from 1850, was the ultimate ‘take off’ moment for modern retailing and consumer society.³ Simultaneously, however, a growing number of historians working on early modern retailing have demonstrated that most of the key elements usually regarded as modern – such as fixed prices, lavishly decorated shop windows, and the practice of shopping for pleasure – had already been developed in the eighteenth century and, in some cases, much earlier.⁴ Surprisingly, historians whose specialisations

lie either side of the traditional gulf of 1800 have not, on the whole, taken up the challenge to discuss their conflicting arguments or to readdress processes of innovation and continuity in a long-term perspective. Even what is potentially the most interesting meeting ground, the first decades of the nineteenth century, has largely remained a terra incognita.⁵

From a geographical perspective, the uneven development of historiography on retailing and shopping is even more striking. In Britain, the body of research on both the early modern period and the nineteenth century is very impressive and research on France is also making good progress. However, German historians have almost entirely focused on the late nineteenth century, while Belgian scholars have primarily surveyed the early modern period, and the Dutch are only just entering the scene.⁶ In contrast to the numerous accounts of contemporary travellers who constantly compared retail strategies and shopping practices in foreign cities, historians studying either period have mainly worked within their national boundaries and comparative research has scarcely been developed in any systematic way.⁷ Beyond mere comparison, there are many reasons to embrace the recent 'transnational turn' and to study the history of retailing and shopping in this period from the perspectives of cultural transfer and *histoire croisée*. Following and stimulating the desires of millions of consumers, foreign and native shopkeepers bought and sold commodities from all over Europe and beyond. But, as indicated above, they also constantly exchanged and appropriated foreign retailing strategies, while local authorities repeatedly restructured the layout and the regulation of shopping streets and other retail premises on the basis of foreign examples. How these processes of influence and appropriation worked exactly has, however, hardly been questioned.⁸

This volume invites the reader to study the history of retailing and shopping in Western Europe in both the early modern period and the nineteenth century from a more systematic long-term, comparative and transnational perspective. The book focuses on the history of shopping streets as an overarching research theme, enabling us to link and integrate a broad variety of related themes: the spatial location and development of shops and shopping streets in a changing urban fabric; the rise of the 'fixed' shop in the spatial, economic and social context of other retail facilities; the advent of new retail institutions such as arcades, bazaars and department stores; the design and regulation of shopping streets by local authorities; the shifting exterior presentation of shops; and the changing social and cultural behaviour of consumers, including the increasing cultivation of shopping for pleasure. Combining

quantitative and qualitative research approaches and using a wide variety of sources – from tax registers, almanacs and municipal administration, to newspapers, novels, prints and travel accounts – the volume brings together fresh research on shopping streets in five neighbouring countries and in regions that strongly cultivated mutual relations.

What is the overall picture that emerges from the various chapters in this book, and what does the book add to the existing historiography? Though we are only at the outset of a truly comparative and transnational approach to the history of retailing, shopping streets and shopping culture in the longer term, it is still possible to use the contributions in this volume and the available literature to mark the contours of some important themes.

The location of shops in early modern and nineteenth-century cities is the first theme, for which several chapters provide new information. In each of the cities discussed in this volume, the marketplace and the major thoroughfares were the oldest commercial locations. This, of course, should not come as a surprise. Traditionally the market was the principal arena of retail activities and along busy streets shopkeepers and other retailers could intercept potential customers and entice them in more or less sophisticated ways to make purchases. Indeed, accessibility was, and still is, the crucial factor in the location of retail activities, and in marketplaces and along major thoroughfares accessibility was optimal. After all, when settlements grew from a core site – the market or crossroads – to a much larger size, that core retained its accessibility and locational advantages. Despite differences in the definition of retailing and the methods used, the maps of Paris, Antwerp and Amsterdam presented in this volume all clearly demonstrate that location patterns in the period under study had a remarkably high degree of continuity. For centuries the old centres of these cities remained the most important locations for shops and other retail facilities. The maps also show that with the growing size of these cities, arterial streets to and from the city centres became important shopping streets as well.

But not everything remained the same. Along with the demographic and spatial growth of cities came the need for more marketplaces. These were also attractive locations for shopkeepers and other retailers, as were main streets and major intersections in the newly developed districts and, in fact, all places where the structure of the urban grid and the concentration of activities and public institutions generated a busy flow of traffic. The growth of cities also created a spatial differentiation between the various branches of the retailing industry. In small towns both the providers of daily necessities and those of less frequently

purchased and more durable (luxury) goods could be found in the centre. When cities increased in size, however, this was to change. Being easily accessible, the town centre and the busy arterial roads increasingly became the domain of retailers in durable and luxury goods. Due to the infrequent purchase of such goods they had to attract customers from across the city and even from out of town. They were willing to pay a considerable price for a central location and they thus drove retailers in daily necessities out to the side and back streets and to locations outside the centre. These traders in everyday goods could flourish there as well, however, because they usually catered for an established customer base in the immediate vicinity of the shop and were therefore not dependent on an expensive location on one of the busy streets or squares. As cities grew larger, retailers in consumer durables also moved to locations outside the centre, but due to the nature of their merchandise, there too they showed a clear preference for easily accessible locations. Nevertheless, in the English, French, German, Belgian and Dutch cities that are studied in this book, the centre remained the shopping heart of the city throughout the early modern period and nineteenth century.

Besides spatial differentiation between the providers of daily necessities and consumer durables, in large early modern cities like London, Paris, Amsterdam and Antwerp, a further differentiation occurred due to the uneven distribution of income groups within the city. In the affluent parts of the city the goods on offer were of a very different quality and price than in the less affluent and poor districts. As Natacha Coquery demonstrates in her chapter, the retail landscape of Paris, with its sharp contrast between the rich shops on rue Saint-Honoré in the wealthy northwest of the city and the shops in the less affluent southeast of the city, is a case in point. Exactly at what point in time this form of social differentiation within the retail landscape arose varied from city to city, but it is clear that the size of the city, the policies of local governments and private initiative all played important roles. Those factors were also crucial in a phenomenon which is referred to in several of the contributions below: urban improvement – that is, the adaptation of public space for social and cultural activities, particularly those of the wealthy.

Of the cities discussed in this volume, Amsterdam was the earliest and most striking example of large-scale government intervention in the urban landscape. More than a century before the well-known urban renaissance in English provincial towns, in Amsterdam the adaptation of public space to the needs of the wealthy was part of a larger project: the creation of an orderly, efficient and attractive urban space. The

need for intervention arose when Amsterdam entered a period of rapid economic and demographic growth from the end of the sixteenth century. In the city extensions developed in the seventeenth century, welfare groups were deliberately housed in separate quarters and economic activities were also assigned specific areas of the city. In addition, the city government took care of street lighting, paving, waste disposal and the control of traffic flows and it also relocated a number of markets to the urban periphery. This package of measures resulted in a city which was not only pleasant for the rich to live in, but also where, by early modern standards, the shopping district in the centre was clean, comfortable and safe.

From the second half of the eighteenth century, similar initiatives towards urban improvement were taken up in almost all cities and countries discussed in this book. Sometimes the changes were very limited, as Jon Stobart shows for Birmingham, where in the 1790s only a few street lights were installed, and in Besançon, which even in 1830 still had all the characteristics of an early modern city. Even in Paris in the second half of the eighteenth century sewers and pavements were missing in large parts of the city, and traffic was a constant threat to pedestrians. Hence, as Marie Gillet argues in her chapter, the introduction of a new element in the Parisian retail landscape: covered arcades. These were clean, well lit and free from traffic, and therefore provided an ideal setting for undisturbed shopping and strolling. The first arcade, the Passage Feydeau, was built in 1790–91 but was not without its precursors. The designers found inspiration in the famous galleries at the Palais-Royal in Paris, a commercial project developed by the Duke of Orleans and realised in the 1780s. Even older precursors were the shopping arcades in the exchanges of Antwerp, London and Amsterdam built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Antwerp ‘panden’ dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Because these early forerunners of the Parisian arcades often lost their attractiveness and function long before the end of the eighteenth century, they have largely disappeared from the collective memory and are unfortunately seldom included in the canonical history of retailing.

Covered arcades were copied in a series of European cities: London, Brussels, Milan, Hamburg, Moscow, The Hague and elsewhere. In Paris itself some 30 arcades were built between 1790 and 1840, but their popularity really took off from the 1830s. Many factors can be held responsible for the decline of the Parisian arcades, and the initiatives to improve the quality of the public domain certainly contributed. It was in the time of Haussmann that this manifestation of urban

improvement reached its greatest extent and with a heavy hand the urban landscape was adapted to what was seen as the demands of modern times. From that moment, many Parisians and tourists preferred walking on the wide, tree-lined boulevards to strolling along the arcades and the 'new' Paris of Haussmann became a desirable model for other cities. Previously it had been London in particular that had set the standards. Here, in the eighteenth century, 'raised footpaths' or pavements had already been constructed to protect the shopping and strolling public against dirt, horse manure and traffic on the streets. Brussels and Paris had copied this innovation by the 1780s, but, as in London, pavements were for a long time only to be found in the major streets. In The Hague and Amsterdam the public had to wait until after the middle of the nineteenth century for this innovation. With their private stoops, basement entrances, stairs, fences and other obstacles, the streets of The Hague and Amsterdam preserved their early modern character to a much stronger degree. Obviously, this was not to the satisfaction of the wealthy bourgeoisie, who were perfectly aware of the situation in capitals like London and Paris, and did not hesitate to present these cities as examples to their local authorities.

But sooner or later the changes that can be referred to as urban improvement occurred everywhere. In the important shopping streets especially it was often shopkeepers who took the initiative. Even without being forced by the local authorities, they removed the signs that protruded far into the street, the displays in front of the shop and in the window frames, and the heavy canopies attached to the lower part of the facade. The authorities, in turn, widened streets and filled in canals to facilitate traffic circulation. They also constructed sewers, organised a city sanitation department, ensured adequate street lighting, imposed traffic regulations, regulated markets, and experimented with different paving materials. All this began, of course, in the city centres and the residential quarters of the well-to-do. As a result, shopping and strolling along the streets in the city centres in the second half of the nineteenth century was no longer a perilous undertaking, but a pleasant pastime for those who could afford it.

Those responsible for the design and execution of the extensive public works that were started in the nineteenth century constantly referred to and derived ideas from examples in other cities. Urban landscapes therefore have common elements such as pavements, gutters and street lighting, but nonetheless the variety was great as it was dependent, among other factors, on the scale of urban improvement. In large capitals such as London and Paris, and also in Brussels, slum clearance and

improved accessibility resulted in wide boulevards and a relatively open urban landscape. Elsewhere, in English provincial towns and in many German, Belgian and Dutch cities, the early modern street network was less harshly dealt with and the small scale of early modern cities was better preserved (see pictures in the chapters of Ilja Van Damme, Clé Lesger and Jan Hein Furnée). Despite the variety of its manifestations in the cities and countries studied here, urban improvement has led to the disappearance of at least one specific element in the retail landscape: about 1800 shops were removed from bridges.

The impression of unity and diversity remains when we leave the two-dimensional world of location patterns and infrastructure and include the design and appearance of actual shops themselves in our story. The thing that stands out for the early modern period is the huge variety of retail facilities. Firstly, in accordance with the centrality of markets and fairs in retailing, we see the dominance of stalls. But even within that category numerous variants existed. Some stalls were taken down every night and must have been made of canvas with wooden frames; others were semi-permanent or permanent and built in wood or even stone. The more permanent stalls were usually located at busy sites such as bridges and on the facades of important public buildings in the heart of a city. Moreover there were the stalls in the galleries of exchanges, and in Antwerp in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the 'panden', precursors of the arcades that were developed in the decades around 1800.

In addition, retailers ran shops from their homes. Virtually all rooms were suitable, but the best suited were those with direct access to the street and the public. This explains the preference of shopkeepers for the front part of houses, and for cellars. The appearance of these fixed outlets varied according to predominant architectural traditions and thus differed from country to country and, within large countries such as France and Germany, from region to region. For the Netherlands and Flanders, the available images indicate a high degree of similarity in house type and method of construction and consequently retail spaces will have looked quite similar too.

What all early modern (and medieval) retail outlets had in common was their open character. For stalls and 'bulks' this is self-evident, but the workshops of artisans selling their products directly to consumers and even fixed shops also had at least one open side. In front of a fixed shop often stood a table or counter on which the merchandise was put on display. Shutters and window frames were also used for presenting merchandise and when the facade was equipped with an awning and

the merchandise could be exposed to the weather, articles were hung from the awning as well. Finally, there were movable and fixed cupboards placed in front of the shop or mounted onto the facade in which precious objects were protected against the weather, dirt from the street and theft. Both the merchandise that was put on display in the open air and the customers were protected from direct sunlight, rain and dirt by awnings and canopies. These too gave early modern shops the appearance of market stalls.

The open character of shops, and of retail facilities in general, has a long history. Since the Middle Ages, transactions in the privacy of shops and workshops were distrusted. Buying and selling preferably took place in broad daylight and in the public sphere of the marketplace. This way, cheating with shoddy weights and measures was prevented, the customer was offered the opportunity to inspect the quality of the merchandise and the establishment of a fair price was more likely due to the presence of bystanders and other customers. But there was also a very practical reason. Even during the daytime and in shops that were located right on the street, it was usually half-dark and difficult to attract the attention of potential customers. Medieval and early modern streets were mostly narrow and the heavy wooden frames or stone facades obstructed natural light from pouring in. Furthermore, glass in these years was much less transparent than it is today and the incidence of light was also hampered by the rods or lead strips in which the glass was mounted. Finally, awnings and canopies obscured the rooms behind the facade. In combination with the fact that retailers liked to display the goods in sight of passers-by, these were reasons enough for both customers and retailers to prefer an open presentation of merchandise in the window frames or in front of the facade.

Yet there was a distinct long-term trend towards closed shops with glazed facades. Markets and sales from stalls and bulks never completely disappeared, but their share in total retail sales declined and they lost the prominence they once possessed in the urban landscape. And eventually retailers' extensive displays on the stoops in front of their shops disappeared, although this process took a long time. Even in rue Saint-Honoré, the most luxurious shopping street of early modern Paris, market stalls and street vending were quite common until late in the eighteenth century. The resilience of sales under the open sky did not prevent glazed shops from eventually dominating the retail landscape. The question of why this development towards closed shops occurred is not easy to answer. In her contribution to this volume Claire Walsh emphasises civic authorities' desire for order and control and

the need for shopkeepers to express cultural values like reliability and respectability. In Antwerp Van Damme also finds a connection between glazed shops and respectability.

For Amsterdam, Lesger suggests that in the course of the seventeenth century especially, the affluent part of the city population increasingly felt the need to draw a firm distinction between the public sphere of the street and the private sphere of the home. This need found expression in differentiated architecture and a change of function of the stoop in front of the house. The latter was transformed from a semi-public transitional zone between the street and the interior into a barrier between the two. From the second half of the seventeenth century the elite also developed a preference for bright interiors and large windows. In the course of the eighteenth century, shopkeepers in the fashionable shopping streets in particular followed these trends. And thus the displays of merchandise in front of the facade disappeared and buying and selling became an activity for inside the shop, away from the public in the street. Once the development in the direction of glazed shops was put in motion, it is not surprising that this type of retailing was much imitated. Especially in major shopping streets the traditional shops now looked very old fashioned compared to these manifestations of modernity. And the same goes for markets and stalls. These remained important mainly in the food trade and the sale of relatively inexpensive items, including used goods.

The development towards glazed shops occurred in all the cities and countries discussed in this volume, but not simultaneously. Capitals such as London and Paris led the way, cities in Belgium and the Netherlands followed, and Heidrun Homburg's study shows that in Germany, markets retained a broad function for much longer and the transition to a retail landscape with mostly closed shops set in relatively late. But, wherever displays in front of the facade disappeared, the facade itself and the shop window gained in importance. They now had to draw in passers-by and entice them to enter the shop and buy the goods on offer. They could only do so by giving an impression of the quality of the merchandise, the status of the shop and the reliability and respectability of the shopkeeper.

The exterior of a shop also became a way for shopkeepers to distinguish their shop from others. Walsh speaks, in this context, of facade competition. That facade competition not only occurred between shopkeepers in the same city, but also between capitals and provincial towns and between cities in different countries, is demonstrated by the praise and admiration that especially the shops in London in

the eighteenth and early nineteenth century won, both in England and on the Continent. In Amsterdam, for instance, where the shopping landscape compared favourably with that in smaller cities in the Netherlands, visitors nevertheless wrote of ‘a mean appearance compared to the standard of London conveniences and elegance’. In 1803/4 Johanna Schopenhauer, the wife of a merchant from Danzig, is also full of admiration for the splendour of the shops and storehouses in London and the beautiful displays of merchandise behind large shop windows. According to Schopenhauer, even the presentation of items of little value was given great attention and more than two decades later the German poet and writer Heinrich Heine made the same observation.

As Parisian shopkeepers in the course of the nineteenth century had successfully imitated their London colleagues, they themselves served increasingly as an example. In the first half of the nineteenth century, The Hague was called ‘a little Brussels’ due to its shops and shopping streets, but Brussels itself was known as ‘a little Paris’. Throughout the century competition and imitation drove change and innovation. Around 1870 journalists celebrated the fact that shop windows in The Hague had surpassed those in Brussels. And German architects who had visited the shopping streets of London and Paris called on German retailers to follow these foreign examples, and so they did. London and Paris set the standard not only for shopkeepers in Germany, but also for those in Belgium and the Netherlands and of course for retailers in the provincial towns in England and France themselves. German migrant retailers, in turn, were said to have introduced the display of visible prices in The Hague’s shop windows.

In the world of retail the diffusion of innovations was not restricted to improvements in the physical infrastructure (pavements, architecture, gas lighting) and presentation techniques, but it also included new retail formats such as arcades, bazaars, *magasins de nouveautés*, multiple stores, department stores and market halls. From the various contributions to this volume it is clear that some of the new retail formats came about in a mutual process of *histoire croisée* in big capital cities like London and Paris: the Parisian arcades appeared first in London, and the London bazaars first in Paris. Only thereafter did these innovations spread to other countries and to provincial towns. The history of the arcades shows that some countries (Belgium) were surprisingly fast to adopt this innovation, while other countries (the Netherlands) were surprisingly late.

Regarding the retail formats that so often have been labelled as modern and typical for the nineteenth century, the contributions to this volume

give rise to three qualifications. The first is that the history and the sources of inspiration for the large-scale retail formats go back much further than is usually acknowledged. This applies to the arcades which, it has already been noted, built on the examples of the shopping galleries in the Palais-Royal in Paris and in the early modern exchanges. It also applies to the English department stores, of which Walsh has revealed the roots in the larger drapery shops of eighteenth-century London. With this emphasis on continuity and evolution the early modernists have qualified the image of the nineteenth century as a fundamental break and the beginning of the modern era in the history of retailing. In some respects, however, the nineteenth century was a radical break with the past. In the early modern period large shops were not entirely absent, but the size and the monumentality of arcades, market halls, bazaars and department stores was a completely new and iconic phenomenon in the urban landscape.

A second qualification is that important nineteenth-century retail formats did indeed spread from London and Paris across other cities, but the specifics of those formats varied from place to place, and in the process of diffusion and transfer the original concept was usually more or less radically revised. The arcades in Paris, for instance, were little regulated and they not only gave access to the middle and upper classes, but to almost the entire social spectrum, prostitutes included. In the London arcades, however, the behaviour of the public became subject to strict regulation and in practice only the upper classes had access. Local conditions also accounted for the fact that in Brussels the monumental Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert (1847) flourished long after the popularity of arcades had peaked in Paris and London, and that Sillem's Bazar in Hamburg (1845), the first arcade in Germany, was a commercial failure and in 1881 was razed to the ground and replaced by a hotel. In other words, the diffusion of retail innovations was a complicated process of imitation and of adaptation to local conditions.

A final qualification is that the new retail formats, although a salient and in many respects new element in the retail landscape of the nineteenth century, did not drive out older formats. Despite the construction of market halls, sales in the open air continued and hawkers and pedlars did not disappear from the streets. And contrary to what often has been assumed on the basis of complaints by shopkeepers and Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the rise of department stores in the 1860s did not squeeze out traditional *boutiquers*. On the contrary, there was (and is) still a sometimes bewildering variety of fixed shops. Even as late as the end of the nineteenth century some retailers still displayed their

merchandise in front of the facade. Especially outside the central shopping areas and major shopping streets, where the pressure to modernise and renovate was greatest, one can read from the shops the history of the retailing industry and the shop fronts reveal the changing architectural preferences of the past. All in all, the landscape of consumption itself is the best proof that there was no linear and uniform development in the history of retailing. The relative weight of different retail formats varied in time and space, but everywhere old and new forms of retailing coexisted.

Much the same argument can be made for the history of shopping as a pleasurable sociocultural practice, understood as walking or driving down the shopping streets, enjoying the public spectacle of merchandise, comparing and discussing the commodities, imagining how they could adorn the home or the body, and finally (perhaps) the satisfying act of buying. In recent decades, historians have regularly argued that the practice of shopping for pleasure developed as a new form of leisure only in the nineteenth century, stimulated or even triggered by the advent of shopping arcades and in particular the rise of the department store. Research on early modern England and the Southern Netherlands, and even on Renaissance Italy, has convincingly challenged this view. In the eighteenth century and even earlier, shopping was a serious business requiring knowledge and skill, but for many consumers it was also a sociable and enjoyable pastime, often done in social company and part of a sociable routine of visiting family and friends. This volume confirms this vision: even in late seventeenth-century The Hague, fashionable ladies were said to enjoy visiting a tiny but luxurious shopping street 'to spend her money, with great pleasure', offering male inhabitants a 'pastime' of watching them walking to and fro.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the combination of the increasing use of window displays and public works on pavements, street lighting and traffic control encouraged a leisurely perambulation of the shops, with promenading and shopping merging into a polite social activity. Following the examples of London and increasingly Paris, shopkeepers in Brussels, Amsterdam and The Hague succeeded in cultivating shopping as a leisurely activity by adding beautiful showcases, rich facades and fairylike gas lights. In Brussels, the early construction of the shopping arcade encouraged relaxing strolling alongside the shops even more. However, the pleasures of shopping did not only attach themselves to modern retail inventions. In Germany, visiting the 'promenade' on the weekly market was also experienced as 'very pleasant', while the magical excitement at traditional urban fairs

in Leipzig or Frankfurt surpassed the spectacle of modern bazaars in contemporary London and Paris. Indeed, neither German nor Dutch cities needed to wait for the introduction of arcades or department stores to see their shopping streets filled with joyful consumers.

The social pleasures of shopping did change, however. While shopkeepers actively copied modern retail strategies and institutions from abroad, consumers were also keen to style their shopping practices to foreign examples. Despite lacking pavements or arcades, in the 1840s The Hague was represented as a fashionable city where all classes, from the aristocracy to the servants, cultivated the art of 'flaneeren'. In 1829, a German prince described how he enjoyed to 'go *shopping*' in Paris, explicating the English term to his German audience as a very modern thing to do in the French (!) capital. Unlike in Germany, from the 1880s the Dutch increasingly appropriated the concept of 'winkelen' as a literary translation of the English term, less as a new term for a new phenomenon but rather to add an extra transnational layer of meaning to an established social practice.

Both in the early modern period and in the nineteenth century, the regulation of shopping streets was not only a matter of paving, lighting and cleaning. Creating a comfortable space where well-to-do consumers wanted to stroll and spend – to the benefit of the urban economy – also meant freeing the key areas of consumption from 'unpleasant' activities and fellow citizens. In early modern English towns, popular pastimes such as bull-baiting and cock-throwing were expelled from market squares, and some open markets and especially fairs were themselves removed from the city centres as well. However, even in the modern shopping arcades, regulating social accessibility and conduct was a constant concern, with the arcade in Brussels, analysed by Anneleen Arnout, being a fascinating example of how administrators carefully mediated between the strict rules and aristocratic profile of the London examples and the free conduct and mixed clientele they witnessed in Paris. Unlike in Amsterdam, where respectable women did not dare to stroll in the central Kalverstraat in the early afternoon when prostitutes dominated the scene, The Hague's elite did not let the demi-monde spoil their daily pleasure of promenading the shopping streets. Perhaps they felt more at ease with the manners of the elegant world in Paris?

This volume aims to demonstrate that running a shop, regulating shopping streets and shopping for pleasure in the early modern period and the nineteenth century were all social practices that took on different forms in different times, countries and cities. Comparing them systematically from a long-term, comparative and transnational

perspective, however, offers us the opportunity to trace some new and surprising continuities and similarities, to highlight stronger contrasts and specificities, and to explore intriguing processes of cultural transfer, appropriation and exchange. We hope this volume will encourage readers to pursue this quest, leading to a deeper understanding of how we shop and why we do it the way we do.

Notes

1. All quotations from: C. Hancock, *Paris et Londres au XIXe siècle: représentations dans les guides et récits de voyage* (CNRS, 2003), pp. 192–4.
2. For a concise bibliography, with emphasis on British historiography, see J. Stobart, *Spend, Spend, Spend! A History of Shopping* (Stroud: Tempus, 2008), pp. 247–51. For an excellent introduction in the broader field of consumption history, see F. Trentman, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
3. A classic example: J. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954). A more recent example: R. Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); B. Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995).
4. The classic example: N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). A recent overview for England offers: Stobart, *Spend, Spend, Spend*, pp. 45–96. For an even earlier period, see E. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy, 1400–1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
5. An exception should be made for the history of retailing in Britain: Stobart, *Spend, Spend, Spend!*. See also J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680–1830* (London: Routledge, 2007). In the broader field of the history of consumption the long-term (and comparative) perspective is much more applied. See, for example, H. Siegrist, H. Kaelble and J. Kocka (eds), *Europäische Konsumgeschichte: Zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1997); P. N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2001); M. Prinz (ed.), *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss. Anfänge und Entwicklung der Kosumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne* (Padernborn: Schöningh, 2003); Trentman, *The Oxford Handbook*.
6. For the key publications for these five countries, see the various chapters in this volume.
7. Except for a team of British, Belgian and French scholars working on the early modern period, many of which are represented in the current volume. For example, B. Blondé, E. Briot, N. Coquery and L. Van Aert (eds), *Retailers and Consumer Changes in Early Modern Europe: England, France, Italy and the Low Countries* (Tours: PUF, 2005); B. Blondé et al. (eds), *Fashioning Old and New: Changing Consumer Patterns in Western Europe (1650–1900)* (Turnhout: Brepols,

- 2009); J. Stobart and I. Van Damme (eds), *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade: European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700–1900* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2010). For comparative studies in the broader field of consumer history, see note 5.
8. A classic study: M. Espagne and M. Werner (1988) (eds), *Transferts culturels: les relations interculturels dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVII–XXe siècle)* (Paris, 1988). For some recent English-language overviews, see, for example, D. Cohen and M. O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2004); H. G. Haupt and J. Kocka (eds), *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn, 2009).

Index

- advertising, 16, 18–19, 31, 49, 94,
 120, 140, 166, 191–4, 202–3, 212
 Amiens, 189
 Amsterdam, 3–6, 9–10, 12–13,
 79, 104–122, 208, 210, 214, 217,
 225
 Antwerp, 3–5, 7, 9, 78–99, 172
 arcades (incl. passages and galleries),
 1–2, 5–7, 10–3, 27, 31, 33, 78, 87,
 99, 126–7, 137, 142–3, 157, 162,
 164, 166–74, 177–9, 185–9, 192,
 195, 203, 208–10, 226
 auctions, 95–6, 98, 162
 awnings and canopies, 6–8, 109–10,
 113–16, 142, 165, 211

 Basingstoke, 18
 Bath, 26–7, 29, 52
 bazaars, 1–2, 10–11, 13, 26–7, 31–3,
 131, 140, 142–6, 157, 177, 185,
 189–90, 192–5, 199, 203, 209, 220
 Berlin, 134, 137, 139, 141–2, 144–6,
 148, 189
 Berchem, 85, 89
 Besançon, 5, 185, 195–203
 Bergen op Zoom, 89
 Birmingham, 5, 19, 21, 23–26, 31,
 105
 Bonn, 137
 Borgerhout, 85, 89
 bourgeoisie, 6, 86, 107, 164, 166–7,
 171–3, 175–6, 184, 186, 193, 197,
 201–3
 Braunschweig, 127–8
 Breda, 89
 Bremen, 133
 Bristol, 27
 Bruges, 79
 Brussels, 5–6, 10–13, 89, 98, 157–179,
 189, 213–16, 218–19, 226

 Chambéry, 189
 Cheltenham, 24

 Chester, 17, 19–22, 24–26, 28–30, 46,
 48, 108
 Chicago, 158
 coffeehouses and cafés, 91, 127, 143,
 164, 168, 170, 186, 195, 198, 209,
 224, 226
 consumer revolution, 49
 consumer society, 1, 16, 147,
 161
 co-operatives, 157, 161, 163, 176

 Dam, 85, 89
 Danzig/Gdansk, 10, 128
 department stores, 1, 2, 6, 10–13, 16,
 21, 25, 27, 30, 32–3, 78, 95, 99,
 146, 157, 161–2, 164–6, 172, 176,
 184–5, 189–90, 193–5, 198–9, 201,
 203, 209–10, 221, 226
 display of goods, 6–12, 16, 18, 22,
 27–9, 31–3, 37, 39–41, 43, 47,
 49–53, 60, 109–12, 114–121, 128,
 131, 135, 137–8, 140–2, 150, 157,
 165–6, 169–70, 174, 185, 191–5,
 200, 211, 219, 221, 226
 Dusseldorf, 137

 exchanges (galleries in), 5, 7, 11,
 26–7, 29, 32, 87–8, 96
 Exeter, 26

 fairs, 7, 12, 13, 30, 42, 61, 70, 86–8,
 108, 126–8, 133–140, 146, 148, 150,
 192, 196
 Flaneur, 2, 95, 167, 157, 172, 216–17,
 222, 224–5
 Florence, 66
 Frankfurt am Main, 13, 127–8, 133,
 135–8, 140

 gentlemen, men, male, 12, 29, 143,
 146, 148, 213–4, 217, 221, 223–4,
 226
 Ghent, 79

- glass (windows and boxes), 8–9, 22–3, 31, 33, 37–41, 47–8, 51–2, 92, 95, 109–10, 115–17, 119, 128, 131, 143, 167, 169–70, 185, 212, 216–17, 219–20
 Glasgow, 27
 Göttingen, 137
 Gravesend, 32

 Hague, The, 5, 6, 10, 12–13, 176, 208–226
 Harrogate, 24
 Hamburg, 5, 11, 133–4, 136–7, 142–5, 150, 189
 Hastings, 27

 innovation, 1–2, 6, 10–1, 26–7, 30, 32, 59, 78, 95, 115, 117, 121, 126, 132, 140–1, 145–6, 158, 161, 164, 166–7, 169–70, 178–9, 184–5, 190, 192, 194–5, 203, 210, 212, 221, 226
 itinerant retailing (incl. hawking and peddling), 11, 42, 44, 47, 49–50, 61, 80, 86–8, 90, 95–9, 108, 166, 173, 175–6, 178, 196, 216
 Ixeles, 177

 Kiel, 89

 Lancaster, 17
 ladies, women, female, 12–3, 22, 26, 28–9, 31, 130–1, 136, 138, 143, 146, 148, 171, 176, 199, 213–4, 217, 221, 223–6
 Leeds, 26
 Leipzig, 13, 128, 138–40
 light (day and sun light, street, oil, gas and electric lighting), 5–6, 8, 10, 12–3, 18–22, 39–40, 47, 49, 51–3, 93, 105–7, 109, 114–17, 127–8, 130–1, 141–3, 145, 157–8, 168–70, 185, 191–2, 194, 197–8, 201, 217, 218–21
 Liverpool, 19, 24, 30–1, 105
 location and accessibility, 2–4, 17–20, 24–5, 30, 44–6, 49–50, 52–3, 57–74, 81–93, 96–9, 106–7, 111–13, 117, 121, 138, 146, 162–6, 168, 172, 174–5, 177, 186–8, 195, 197–8, 209, 211, 225

 London, 1, 4–6, 9–13, 18, 21–2, 24–29, 33, 40–1, 47–8, 51–3, 57, 79, 93, 98, 105, 107, 116–17, 119–22, 126, 128–32, 134, 140–2, 145, 158, 161, 164–5, 171–3, 178, 184, 188–9, 192–3, 211, 216, 221
 Lübeck, 133
 Lyon, 196

 ‘magasins de nouveautés’, 10, 185, 190–5, 199
 Manchester, 24, 26, 30–31
 market halls (and ‘panden’), 5, 7, 10–11, 30, 41, 50, 58, 62, 68–9, 81, 83, 85, 87, 96, 157–8, 162, 165–6, 170, 173–9
 marketplaces, 3, 8, 17, 19, 30, 42, 44–6, 59, 81, 83–4, 136
 Mechelen, 89
 Merksem, 89
 middle classes, 16, 24, 27, 30, 130–1, 186, 193–4, 196–7, 202–3, 218
 Milan, 5, 168
 modernity, 9, 25, 33, 125, 161, 166, 169, 170, 178, 191
 Moscow, 5, 189
 multiple stores, 10, 16, 23, 32, 157, 161–2, 176

 Nantes, 189
 Newcastle, 27, 33
 New York, 158
 Niort, 189
 Norfolk, 27, 29
 Northampton, 24, 46
 Norwich, 17, 24, 26–7, 29

 Palais-Royal (Galeries de Bois), 1, 5, 11, 27, 59, 63–5, 74, 126–7, 129, 132, 142, 185–90, 194, 215
 Paris, 1, 3–6, 8–13, 27, 41, 49, 57–74, 79, 93, 98, 105, 117, 119–22, 126–8, 131–2, 134, 140–2, 145, 157–8, 161, 164–5, 167, 170–3, 176–8, 184–203, 211, 213, 215–16, 218, 221, 224
 pavement (incl. elevated pavement), 5, 6, 10, 12–3, 38, 47–9, 68, 92, 105, 119–21, 128, 131, 157–8, 165, 167, 171, 184–5, 189, 196–7, 216, 222, 226

- Preston, 19, 30
- prices of goods (incl. fixed), 1,
4, 8, 10, 16, 27, 30, 42, 44-5, 49,
67, 79, 94, 112, 136, 138, 174,
190-4, 196-7, 199, 201-3, 217,
219
- promenade, promenading, 12-3, 20,
28-9, 131, 136, 148, 208, 214, 218,
222-226
- regulations, 2, 6, 9, 11, 13,
18-19, 21-22, 37, 42-6, 48-50,
53, 60, 80-1, 84-7, 88, 106,
113, 127, 134-5, 138, 140,
165, 170-1, 173, 175, 177,
179, 186, 188-9, 212, 216,
222
- reputation of shopkeepers, 37, 49-51,
53, 71, 86, 171, 215
- restaurants, 73, 127, 143, 170, 186,
195
- retail Revolution, 1, 11, 16, 33, 49,
78, 172, 178-9, 190, 209
- Rotterdam, 217
- Ryde (Isle of Wight), 27
- Scarborough, 24
- shop exteriors (facades, shop
windows), 1-2, 6-9, 12, 18,
20-3, 26-32, 38-42, 47-8, 51-4,
73, 82, 91-3, 95, 99, 108-22,
128-30, 141-2, 166-8, 188,
191, 200, 211-12, 215, 218,
221
- shop interiors, 9, 29-32, 43, 93, 99,
111, 116, 146, 169, 192-4, 200-1,
212
- shop signs, 6, 21, 41, 47-8, 73, 93,
111-13, 116-17, 121, 128, 130, 169,
191, 212, 215
- shops 'above stairs', 19, 41, *see also*
exchanges
- shops/retailing on bridges, 7, 57, 66,
95, 141
- shopping areas (social differentiation
of), 4, 7, 11, 24-5, 27, 30, 41-2,
52, 63-70, 81, 90-1, 93-9, 106-7,
113-15, 121, 135, 162-6, 186-90,
197-8, 211
- shopping and entertainment, 31-2,
164, 167-8, 171-2, 177, 186-7, 193,
203, 224
- shopping for pleasure (incl. window
shopping), 1, 2, 12-13, 21, 27-32,
31, 37, 41, 47, 51, 59, 73-4, 79, 84,
86, 91-5, 98, 109, 115, 126-7,
130-2, 165-7, 170-2, 176-77, 179,
186, 195, 208, 213-4, 216-17,
222-6
- shopping practices, 18, 27-29, 31,
33, 45, 49, 52, 84, 93, 95-8,
190-2
- showcases (moveable), 38, 40, 51,
110, 117, 121, 212, 215
- shutters, 7, 18, 92, 109-10, 113, 141,
165, 172, 211-12
- stalls, booths and bulks, 7-9, 27,
30, 37-42, 44-7, 49-50, 80-1,
87-8, 108, 111, 115, 121, 127, 131,
135-8, 140-1, 150, 173-7, 184, 212,
216
- street selling, 8, 30, 42, 44-7, 49-50,
61, 88, 115, 165, 173, 178
- Stockport, 30
- Strasbourg, 196
- theatres, 25, 87, 105, 164, 170, 176,
188, 189, 208, 219
- tradition, 3, 7, 9, 11-12, 22-4, 78,
83, 85, 106, 115-18, 121-2, 133-5,
143, 145-7, 150, 161-2, 164, 166,
169, 176, 178-9, 184-5, 190-1, 193,
195-6, 198-9, 201, 203, 209, 211,
216, 218, 223
- traffic, 3, 5-6, 12, 30, 80, 87-8, 85,
105-7, 128, 163-5, 167-8, 172-4,
179, 184-5, 222
- transfer of retailing strategies, 1-2,
5-6, 9-14, 22, 24-8, 41, 52, 95, 117,
120, 122, 125-6, 132, 141-2, 145-6,
157-8, 161, 164-5, 167-8, 170-2,
173, 176-8, 185, 188-9, 192-3,
195-200, 203, 215-16, 218-19, 221,
224
- types of goods sold, 3-4, 17, 60-1,
57-73, 80-4, 86-8, 90, 94-9,
111-12, 121, 130, 135-7, 143, 163,
174, 199, 201-2, 210-11

- upper classes (incl. aristocracy, gentry), 13, 32, 63-4, 121, 145, 148, 171, 174, 177, 188, 208, 214, 218, 222-3, 226
- urban improvement, 4-7, 10, 13, 19-21, 25, 29, 33, 46-50, 52-4, 67, 83, 85-6, 93-5, 98, 104-8, 119-22, 132, 163-6, 174, 177, 179, 189, 197, 216
- used goods (sale of), 9, 79, 95-98, 145, 165, 188, 196, 202-3
- Venice, 66
- Versailles, 64
- Vienna, 128
- window shopping, *see* shopping for pleasure
- Wolverhampton, 19
- Worcester, 24, 108
- working classes, 11, 98, 165, 171, 188, 193, 197-8, 202
- workshops, 7-8, 60, 62, 64-8, 84, 86, 108-9, 127, 169, 199
- York, 24, 28, 52