

“Consuming Misogynist Currencies: De/Valuing Women in Public Circulation”

Whether present as the subject of critique or illustrative of an (un)consciously patriarchal, ideological paradigm, misogyny becomes transparent in modernist literary texts that involve, and often react against, feminine circulation in public places that for centuries had been coded as masculine public space.

Circulation is the organizing principle here. Misogynist reaction against the literal outpourings of women from private, domestic space (and limited gender roles linked to private, domestic space) into public venues like the street, cultural institutions like department stores, parks, museums, and restaurants, and the workplace, sought other means of re-inscribing women with patriarchally defined, value-derivative object status. In contrast to the construction of women's roles according to their “use value” as wives and mothers in the Victorian era, a misogynistic twist of value occurs that reconstructs women in terms of a de-valued “use value,” by equating women with the commodities they purchase and wear, and in commodifying women within new kinds of social and/or sexual circulation. This is not to say that women were not commodified prior to the modernist period, nor that women weren't at times complicit in their own commodification; the ways that women become commodified, and then enter circulation as commodities, become more numerous and more complex beginning at the turn of the twentieth century.