Scrutiny in the Modern City: The Domestic Public and the Toronto Local Council of Women at the Turn of the Twentieth-Century

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Abstract  In this article I argue that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "white" Protestant bourgeois women acted publicly and engaged in the production of public space, while disregarding the moral geographies now associated with such women's mobility. Highlighting the urban/social reform activities of the Toronto Local Council of Women, this article argues that their unlimited use of public space combines with domestic ideology's dictate to protect the home. Requiring women to scrutinize public space for threats against their families, home-protection compelled domestic public women to discover, assess, and correct city-hazards, irrespective of moral geographies.

Keywords: domesticity, public space, gender, urban reform, moral geography, Toronto

Introduction

Research about northern North American women, of all classes and "races" in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries,-solidly establishes their open publicity--their actual use of public space and presence in it--which derives from their participation in social and urban reform, and consumer, labour, and leisure activities (Baker 1984; Leach, 1984; Peiss, 1986; Stansell, 1987; Abelson, 1989; Flanagan, 1990; Koven & Michel, 1990; Blee 1991; Muncy 1991; Scott 1991; Ryan, 1990, 1992; Strange, 1995; Deutsch, 2000; Spain, 2000; Domosh, 2001). These historical women have been found to be so public that scholars now speculate on the plausibility of the female flâneur (Ryan, 1990, 82-83; Wilson, 2001), though both Nord (1995, p. 15) and Wolff (1990) doubt the possibility of a "female bohemian who strolled [the city] and looked with freedom." Furthermore, while all of these works define women as public, two important studies (Deutsch 2000: 23; Spain 2000) implicate not only the geography of the public and its functioning in the life-decisions of women, but women's ability to produce public space, "demonstrating women's active agency in shaping the city."
Those who undertake the historical study of women in public invariably discover women's "relatively free use of space," but then qualify the statement: "That space however was criss-crossed with real and imaginary gender boundaries: the categories of proper and improper womanhood, the segregated territory of ladies, the places of polite heterosexuality, and the spatial restrictions of prostitution" (Ryan, 1990, p. 92). Sarah Deutsch (2000, p. 78-114) suggests that a complex of strategies accompanied women's access to public space, which eased their presence there; moral geographies abounded, cartographies of propriety that attached to women's mobility. An important discussion of moral cartographies is found in Mary Ryan's (1990, pp. 61-62; 62) exploration of "mental maps." From mental mapping, as it applies to women in public in the nineteenth-century, Ryan (1990, p. 62) develops the idea of a "cartography of gender," based on a "cognitive method of ordering space" related to women's use of and comportment in the streets. Cognitive moral mapping facilitated, so Ryan (1990, p. 68) argues, a geography of the "endangered" and the "dangerous" that prevented women, but also men, from bustling unbound in the modern city. Women, then, employed moral thinking to negotiate the public, allowing cultural and personal norms to mitigate their use of the public.

Useful research derives from this concept of women's qualified publicity. Apart from the work of many of the authors above, Mona Domosh (2001), for example, uses the constrained publicity thesis to good effect, framing her discussion of the "Women of New York" in the mid to late nineteenth-century within a "fashionable moral geography," to illustrate how elite women's stylish, consumerized, and anti-domestic publicity was taken by social critics to symbolize the moral degeneracy of modernity and its whithering of traditional gender roles. Erica Rappaport (2000: 7) in her extensive study of late-Victorian women and shopping in London's affluent West End demonstrates that despite an undeniable and ubiquitous publicity, "not only were women constrained by the class and gender system, they also encountered very real limits on their mobility."

Given the preponderance of literature which warrants the idea that the publicity of women of nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries was attenuated by normative structures of constraint,
is it possible to demonstrate that some women—bourgeois Anglo- and Celtic-American and
Canadian Protestants—could have been acting publicly, and even engaging in the production of
public space, while disregarding prescriptions about proper uses of public space, and seemingly
discarding personal mental maps of moral geographies? Primary documents by women such as
Jane Addams (1912) or Louise de Koven Bowen (1926), or early city planning proponents such
as Charles Mulford Robinson (1899), and recent secondary works by Deutch (2000) and Spain
(2000), suggest that women actively manipulated not only the politics of the modern city (see also
Strong-Boag, 1976, p. 3; Baker, 1984; Ryan, 1992) but its spaces, to effect noticeable reforms in
the city.

To investigate the plausibility of bourgeois women’s seemingly limitless public mobility, I
offer as a case study the public and political efforts of the Toronto Local Council of Women
(TLCW), a “ladies league” of reform-minded, “white,” Protestant, and bourgeois women in turn-of
the-twentieth-century Toronto. The TLCW, as we will see, assumed an active and meaningful
position as producers of city space. In many cases the TLCW’s polity, publicity, and participation
effected palpable change. Theirs was not marginal, delimited participation and neither were they
browbeaten nor moralized for doing so. Their public acts were admonition free, in part because
they were white, Protestant, and bourgeois in a city where such qualities mattered (Goheen 1970;
Jenkins, 2001). More likely, they moved freely in city space because they were engaged in public
and domestic work that most modern city people could agree needed to be done. The TLCW
pledged themselves to reforming Toronto and ultimately navigated its public space unhindered.

The article explores the idea of the “domestic public” as a conceptual scaffold on which to
consider bourgeois women’s unlimited publicity. Arguing that the attempt to infuse modern city
space with the refinements so attractive to the middle-class at the turn of the twentieth-century,
an embourgeoisment involving both bourgeois morality and domestic ideology, I suggest that
domestic women’s unobstructed participation in public was requisite. Embourgeoisment implies
domicide, so its accomplishment in part was instigated by the expansion of the traditional
notion of woman as protector-of-the-home to include woman as protector-of-the-city, since homes
made up neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods cities. Home-protection in cities is the
domestication of the city. Vigilance over their homes impelled women to scrutinize the public for
imminent dangers and conditions, such as those in the streets of Toronto. By investigating the
Toronto Local Council of Women, and what it believed itself capable of achieving as well as what
it actually achieved, we may conclude that such women established an early modern city of
women that contributed substantially to the production and functioning of public space. The
TLCW's domestic commitment to embourgeoisment ironically compelled them to ignore moral
geographies precisely because domesticating the public required them to discover city-hazards
irrespective of location.

The Domestic Public

Domestic publicity acquired its credibility through its affiliation with Victorian bourgeois
culture, including its morality, which had measurable effects both in public space and on the
development of public culture in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries (Sennett, 1976,
1994; Lears 1981; Horowitz, 1985; Blumin, 1989; Calhoun, 1992). While not explicitly using the
term, geographers' interest in the embourgeoisment of nineteenth-century public space and its
governance has proved particularly useful, often illustrating the many and varied utterances of
resistance to bourgeois public normativity (Jackson, 1989; Howell, 1993, 2001; Domosh 1998,
2001; Goheen, 1998, 2003; Mitchell, 2002). Indeed, from Peter Goheen (2003: 74) we may infer
that the embourgeoisment of public space "could only be expected," as the middle-class
"perceived that its stake in the city increased." Domosh's (1998) discussion of the "polite politics"
of the streets of nineteenth-century New York affirms the apparency of a bourgeois ideal that both
facilitated and guaranteed what Goheen (2003) notes as the era's "assertion of middle-class
claims to public space." And as Peter Gay (1998) has shown, obsessive attention to genteel
ideals is the trademark of nineteenth-century bourgeois morality; the bourgeoisie fussed and
fretted over points of morality and life-style--respectability--that set them conspicuously above the
the most palpable signs of class, for many the very definition of class." Thus, personal attention to
propriety in public--appropriate dress, civil discourse and behaviour, and participation in respectable leisure and consumer activities-- was certainly a prime indicator of one's elevated class and observance of bourgeois morality.

Importantly, scholars have either explicitly shown or implied that domesticity and bourgeois morality intersected frequently and happily in the era (Baachi, 1978; Wright, 1980, 1983; Bordin, 1981, 1986; Ryan, 1981; Blumin, 1989; Horowitz, 1985; Bushman, 1993; Blanchard, 1995; Tiersten, 1996). Bourgeois domestic morality regulated--or at least attempted to regulate--comportment in the streets. This would explain, for example, why "Police Statistics" for New York City in 1889 indicate that 61 percent of all arrests that year were for what we might call "crimes against bourgeois domestic comportment:" drunkenness, disorderliness, and vagrancy, rather than crimes of violence or crimes against property.[1] Domosh's (2001, pp. 574; 580) work on "New York" women, those "who did not conform to the dictates of bourgeois respectability," as I have alluded above, demonstrates the moral anxiety of domestic ideologues as they observed "Women of Fashion" trading their biological duty for public and consumerist pleasure. Philip Howell's (2001, p. 27) "anti-bourgeois" sporting men, who came from all classes and who "were more than just bachelors" (Gilfoyle, 1992, p. 115), represent an ideology of "popular masculinity" (Howell, 2001, pp. 24; 27) which contrasted starkly--transgressively--with bourgeois types of domesticated or tempered manhood. This anti-bourgeois masculinity especially contradicted domestic concern for urban disorder and predominant ideas urging the domestication of the city (Howell, 2001, p. 27). Don Mitchell's (2002) discussion of migrant workers in Denver shows that migrant labour was inherently anti-domestic. It is no coincidence that, in a bourgeois milieu that made "home" a transcendent value, "homelessness" or any behaviour that slighted domesticity was morally and legally proscribed. Thus, embourgeoisment of public space has much in common with domestication.

Women's public activities were intrinsic to the embourgeoisment of the modern public, the attempt to impose on the modern city "the vernacular gentility [which] had become the possession of the middle-class" (Bushman, 1993, p xiii). Arguably, the embourgeoisment of the
modern public could not have happened without women's substantial domestic efforts to reshape the public and the city according to domestic ideas derived from bourgeois conceptions of refinement, but especially the bourgeois home as a template for public respectability (Wright, 1980, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Bushman, 1993; Baldwin, 1999). Thus it makes sense to see women's engagement in virtually every aspect of reform in the city, from the design and construction of public space and its infrastructure, to the discovery, assessment, and correction of housing and social conditions, including factory- and labour-life, to public health, and to the informal reconfiguration of municipal politics (Birch 1994), as their explicit participation in the embourgeoisment of the city, the creation of a city-as-parlour. The domestic public, as typified by domestic women reformers’ public activity, is an expression of women's embourgeoisment of the public, especially given that the bourgeois woman "was cast as an aesthetic arbiter, particularly within the home, and charged with redeeming bourgeois taste" (Tiersten, 1996: 18).

Public embourgeoisment as domestic publicity required women's physical presence in some of the worst places in the city, in order to observe, assess, and correct them. The embourgeoisment of the public, which involved in part "domesticating the streets" (Baldwin 1999), meant that the domesticators had to see everything in the streets. And seeing everything depended on unrestricted access to the streets. Embourgeoisment and the domestic public pivoted on women's scrutiny of the city in their role as home-protectors.

**Scrutiny and home-protection**

It is not the purpose of this article to survey the canon of literature on domesticity and its pervasive ideology in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, although a brief discussion of domesticity's chief aim, home-protection, will aid understanding here. We may reasonably infer from the canon that home-protection, emphasizing child-nurturing, son- and husband-training, health-promotion and disease-prevention, the instantiation in the home of environmental principles of beauty, order and hygiene, and moral edification and tuition (including the establishment of standards of social comportment) provided the substance of domesticity. Certainly scholars in their assessment of women's involvement in urban/social reform have
indicated a profound connection between women's public activity and their home-protectionist
criticisms (Bordin, 1981, 1986; Wright, 1980, 1983; Baker, 1984; Flanagan, 1990; Koven and
Michel, 1990, 1993; Muncy, 1991; Scott, 1991; Baldwin, 1999; Rynbrandt, 1999), which include
domestic women's special role in the sacralization and sentimentalization of nineteenth-century

Women's domestic publicity resulted from a domestic truism: "if the woman's home
were...an island of purity in a sea of moral [and physical] danger, diligent women must attend
those forces outside the home that threatened to subvert the moral [and environmental] purpose
of domestic life" (Goodman, 1988, p. 82). By the turn of the twentieth-century, the ideological
consideration of the external moral and physical threats to domesticity compelled the president of
the General Federation of Women's Clubs to declare that the American club woman's mandate
was the protection of "women and children, and the home, the latter meaning the four walls of the
city as well as the four walls of brick and mortar" (in Wright, 1983, p. 173). For women to adopt
this overtly public position of protection, they could neither be house-bound, nor solipsistic.
Accordingly, Jane Addams (1912, chapter 13, and especially pp. 296-297) urged women to
expand their vigil for the home beyond their doors, since blinkered attention to one's own home
while neglecting to monitor the immigrant-influence in the neighbourhood could bring tragedy.
Indeed, Addams (1912, p. 297) notes "the futility of the individual conscience which would isolate
a family from the rest of the community and its interests." The domestic edict to protect the
"private" home required lasting care over the "public" home.

This idea of domestic vigilance over the public, or domestic scrutiny of the public, lies at
the heart of domestic publicity; scrutiny is a concept to which earlier research of public women
alludes. Christine Stansell's (1987, pp. 63-75; 65) discussion of "places of vice" and evangelical
home-visitation implies this observational impulse, especially when suggesting that evangelical
reformers "actively ferret[ed] out opportunities to minister to or struggle with the benighted souls
hiding away in...dark urban places." Later, Deborah Nord (1995, p. 208) describes women social
reformers as "reliable observers of the home," which I take to mean they discerned not only the
ontology of home, but the what, how, and why of home-like environments. Can we, however, go beyond the mere implication of scrutiny?

Epousers of the domestic in Toronto read what may seem like a curious paragraph in the Toronto-published, *The Ladies' Journal* (TLJ), although to them it may have been stating the obvious:

Many people labor under the delusion that they are close observers but if questioned only a few minutes after they have apparently been earnestly gazing at an object or window, they will not be able to give a consecutive account of the view. Children should be early taught to observe closely and describe accurately.[3]

The TLJ was itself already committed to scrutinizing the urban environment for travesties against the home, including in its monthly publications investigations of the social geographies of Toronto; the TLJ inspected everything from schools, to food preparation sites, to homes for the variously needy (Mackintosh, 2001, pp. 140-143). That scrutiny was a domestic imperative is amply borne out by the above exhortation to train children to be observant; the more observance in would-be adults the less likely environmental threats to the home will be overlooked in the future. For home-protectors, reform occurred when observant and responsible citizens perceived errors and acted promptly to correct them. Thus, to rectify the city’s faults, to alleviate its perils, women perused the streets in a visual act of discovery. This home-protectionist proclivity for scrutinizing the public is also an attribute of the Toronto Local Council of Women.

Scrutiny took domestic women into the streets in an attempt to root out dangers to home and family. They took special interest in the public as it related to clean streets (and hygienic social practices and orderly behaviour within those streets) pure water, air, and food, oversight of public and private institutions created to house the sick, the orphaned, the disabled and ‘feeble-minded.’ They were equally concerned with the haphazard design of streets that fostered congestion and ill-health in cities now awakened to the merits of epidemiology (see Sennett (1976, 1994) on the nineteenth-century bourgeois fear of crowds). Women reformers began to refer to their street-based concern for the city as "municipal housekeeping." Home-protection, then, was as much a visual as constructive practice.
This visual principle was quite simple: where there were no eyes to scrutinize "evil" there could be no transformation for "good." For example, the TLCW put on public slide shows documenting the insalubrious city conditions their various fl,neuristic investigations revealed. After an outbreak of diphtheria in some of the underprivileged wards of the city, one public presentation, "How Some of the People in Toronto Live" --echoing Jacob Riis' How the Other Half Lives (1890)--demonstrated that diphtheria, cholera and typhus were no respecters of people, class, or neighbourhoods.[4] Furthermore, to aid scrutiny, groups such as the TLCW partitioned their clubs and leagues into committees and subcommittees to scrutinize more effectively. The women of the TLCW would "form small parties" and investigate places such as "the Mercer Reformatory, the Children's Hospital, [or] Toronto University," and then retire for tea afterwards to discuss their findings.[5] The TLCW determined that it was completely within its purview to "investigate the sanitary conditions [of the city]...agitate for the proper conducting of bakeries, milk depots and other places where food is kept...Keep authorities posted thereon, collect invaluable statistics and demand needed legislative reforms."[6] The TLCW, as home-protectors, knew that urban/social reform not only required precise and expedient feminine observation to correct social and environmental errors. They also had to reduce the city to the particular, to acquaint themselves fully with it and its problems.

It was a work that many believed ideally suited women: "Those great offices which women fulfil in the home, those qualities and capacities which are trained and practiced there, are those for which there is an almost unlimited opportunity outside the home, and practically an unlimited need."[7] However, as Jane Addams, illustrates, this public work befitted women only in part because it mirrored their traditional duties. Another important motivation lay in an extant belief that male politicians simply garnered no interest in the everyday functions and infrastructure of the city of families, homes, and neighbourhoods. As Addams (1907, pp. 183-184) put it (in a lengthy quote),

If American cities have failed...may we not say that city housekeeping has failed partly because women, the traditional housekeepers, have not been consulted as to its multiform activities? The men of the city have been carelessly indifferent to
much of this civic housekeeping, as they have always been indifferent to the
details of the household. They have totally disregarded a candidate's capacity to
keep the streets clean, preferring to consider him in relation to the national tariff
or to the necessity for increasing the national navy, in a pure spirit of reversion to
the traditional type of government which had to do only with enemies and
outsiders. [Such politics have nothing] to do with the multiform duties, which, in a
modern city, include the care of parks and libraries, superintendence of markets,
sewers, and bridges, the inspection of provisions and boilers, and the proper
disposal of garbage...nothing to do with the building department which the city
maintains to see to it that the basements be dry, that the bedrooms be large
enough to afford the required cubic feet of air, that the plumbing be sanitary, that
the gas-pipes do not leak, that the tenement-house court be large enough to
afford light and ventilation, and that the stairways be fireproof...nothing to do with
the health department maintained by the city, which provides that children be
vaccinated, that contagious diseases be isolated and placarded, that the spread
of tuberculosis be curbed, and that the water be free from typhoid infection...is
remote from the functions of the school boards, whose concern it is that children
be educated, that they be supplied with kindergartens and be given a decent
place in which to play. The very multifariousness and complexity of a city
government demands the help of minds accustomed to detail and variety of work,
to a sense of obligation for the health and welfare of young children, and to a
responsibility for the cleanliness and comfort of others.

Women, in this light, seem to have been groomed to be managers of the city. Traditional
housekeeping-- and gender ascription--as an attribute of home-protection, prepared women in
advance to oversee the streets and the "multiform duties" their maintenance entailed.

If municipal housekeeping mirrored the domestic tradition, then home-protection allowed
municipal housekeepers, and particularly club women such as the TLCW, to manipulate
bourgeois gender divisions to women's public advantage; as "city-mothers" and municipal
housekeepers they would and could go wherever and whenever scrutiny required, as suggested
here:

For the club woman, who had finished a long day's work of washing or ironing,
followed by the cooking of a hot supper, it would have been much easier to sit on
her doorstep during a summer evening than go up and down ill-kept alleys and
get into trouble with her neighbours over the condition of their garbage boxes. It
required both civic enterprise and moral conviction to be willing to do this three
evenings a week during the hottest and most uncomfortable months of the year

Addams, here, was writing about the Hull House Women's Club. The "club women" to whom she
referred were tenement women, those working-class "drudges" who added outsourced labour,
from washing to cigar rolling, to their already burdensome domestic responsibilities. Even they,
however, found the strength and time to patrol the streets in their municipal housekeeping
capacity which included attendance at club meetings; Hull House Women's Club president, Louise de Koven Bowen (1926, p. 83), remembered "th[at] crowded [club] room...filled with tired women, a few of them with shawls over their heads, some of them with babies in their arms or clinging to their skirts." Importantly, the Addams' quotation above applies to all "club women", working tenement women, bourgeois domestic women, and elite matrons, as we will see below. If these scrutinizing women took to the streets in a way many men, bourgeois or otherwise, did not, considered the housekeeping details of the city in a way many men could not conceive of, it had much to do with women's affiliation with the home (see also Jones (1904) for African-American women's interest in and influence on municipal housekeeping).[8]

**Progressive Era Toronto**

Toronto's home-protectors were well apprised of the spatial and social instability of their city; Toronto, and Canadian cities in general, resembled the Chicago School model of modern cities and demonstrated the pressing effects of size, density, and heterogeneity (Wirth, 1938; Goheen, 1970, p. 1; Ley, 1991, pp. 319-320). Toronto experienced the crisis of modernity: explosive demographic change that both abused its nascent infrastructure and services and distorted the white Protestant bourgeois image of the city advanced by Toronto's elites (Goheen, 1970; Riendeau 1984; Harney, 1990; Valverdi, 1991; Dennis, 1994; Strange, 1995; Harris, 1996). Reformers gathered much disdain for foreigners who took "no part in the distinctive civic life of the city in which they live." Immigrant-driven population growth badgered reformers: Toronto's 1921 population--522,000--represents a 290 percent increase on the 1891 population--181,000, and an almost 150 percent increase on the 1901 count--205,887.[9] While it may be true that "Toronto did not experience growth to nearly the same extent as New York, Chicago, and Boston" (Lemon, 1984, p. 330), such numbers in the years before and after 1900 still denote a significant immigration burden on a city that believed itself to be Canada's English bastion of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and more importantly Canada's moral compass; Toronto, to this day retains
the appellation it acquired at the turn of the twentieth-century: "Toronto the Good" (on the Torontonian/English Canadian penchant for moral probity, see Valverde, 1991).

The radical expansion of populations experienced by most northern North American cities resulted frequently in square miles of hastily erected, badly built, and short-lived structures that barely accommodated a spate of immigrants; city planning at the beginning of the twentieth-century was a direct response the rapid and ill-considered development compelled by such immigration, giving rise to the notorious social history of the tenement (Abbott, 1970[1936]; Wright, 1980, 1983; Wirka, 1994). In Toronto, however, and unlike typical American cities, the worst housing was not tenements but "rear cottages," shacks or shanties squatting in the invisible alleys behind many of Toronto's inner city streets. They existed in the thousands, especially in Toronto's St. John's Ward—a repository of immigrants in Toronto, north of Queen Street, south of Bloor Street, east of Yonge Street, and west of Spadina Avenue. "[H]idden from the public gaze," the "overcrowded" life such housing fostered and the unparallelled unsightliness of the space itself were a "disgrace to the city."[10] In response, Toronto's Department of Public Health spent most of the 1910s and 1920s photographing the rear cottage experience of the city's poor, compiling a visual record of urban squalor equalling the horrors Jacob Riis documented in lower east side New York. Included in this photographic record of poverty were the children who lived and played amid the wreckage of modern Toronto; dozens of photos of infants, toddlers, and little boys and girls undoubtedly served as motivations for home-protectors whose public actions hinged on the idea of rescuing children from the foulness of rear cottage life.[11] Public health nurses inspected these areas searching for offenses to public health, frequently putting on local public displays demonstrating to Toronto's immigrant-poor everything from proper nourishment of children to methods of avoiding water- and air-borne disease.[12] Little wonder the Toronto Local Council Women, as one organized group of reform-minded women among numberless others in Canada and the United States, adopted housing and city planning into their reform mandate in the 1920s, as we will see below.
Dense population resulted in heavy traffic in Toronto, narrow streets and large numbers of people and vehicles produced precarious congestion in an era and society that sought to create "a crowd of freely moving individuals " (Sennett, 1994, pp. 317-354). Toronto's daily traffic often degenerated into "furious immobility," to use J.B. Jackson's (1972, p. 204) famous description of traffic in fin de siècle New York City. But then it was only the semaphore, a manually operated traffic signal, that vainly attempted to govern traffic in Toronto until August 8, 1925, when the city's first traffic lights were installed at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor Streets (Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 1984, p. 70). Like New York, Toronto's streets were decisely unsafe. As one Mail and Empire editor suggested of Toronto's lack of "Safety in the Streets,"

The number of street cars in motion about the corner of Yonge and King streets, for example, are enough for most people to look after; and when to these are added the numerous carts and carriages, many of them driven by unskillful and reckless persons, crossing the street is very much like running the gauntlet. What then shall be said of the chances of escape when one finds sandwiched in between these the numerous and ever-increasing host of bicycles?[13]

Congestion and traffic jeopardized everyone, unless we are as careful as the two children who stood on the corner of a street looking long and vainly for a chance to cross. At last, the older of the two, grasping the hand of the youngest, said -- with a careful eye searching the street up and down -- "No butcher cart, no trolley, no bicycle; run!"[14]

As in most cities of the era, Toronto's crowded thoroughfares imperiled children and adults.

If rear cottages and congested streets worried home protectors, so did the physical condition of Toronto's streets and services, which required constant attention (Riendeau, 1984; Mackintosh, 2001). Sidewalks were in a miserable state of repair--or non-existent--400 of 429 miles were primarily made of wooden planks that frequently broke under foot. In this time of agitation for pure water, Toronto's 232 miles of storm and sanitary sewers, in 1900, were only beginning to drain waste from individual homes directly into Lake Ontario, "triggering periodic epidemics of typhoid fever" (Riendeau, 1984, p. 162). Toronto's hundreds of miles of streets were largely surfaced with either gravel or macadam, brick, or cedar blocks, six-inch cedar logs stood on end on a bed of sand, gravel, and very infrequently, concrete. Such inappropriate paving
surfaces with their accelerated obselescence tormented reformers, who knew that "only 10 1/2 per cent. [sic] of the roadways inside the City limits...have[d] anything like a durable covering," which meant that in wet weather many of Toronto's streets were impassable, and in dry weather clouded with dust.[15] This lack of practical and hygienic pavement was especially important because reformers widely accepted the idea that "good roads in Canada" meant "a higher standard of citizenship, [and] a people pervaded by education and good morals."[16] Apparently, even the very pavements of the streets of Toronto posed a physical and moral threat to the civilizing aims of the home in city.

The Toronto Local Council of Women

The TLCW demonstrates the ability of domestic women to scrutinise the environment for threats against the safety of the city-home. And it did this despite putatively extant ideological and rhetorical domestic prescriptions about women's place and role to the contrary. The domestic and Protestant TLCW agitated for changes in the city streets. The TLCW Minutes show that each meeting opened with a prayer and music, the meeting room decorated with flowers and dainties, what we might expect from domesticators engaged in embourgeoisment.

The president of the TLCW, circa 1900, was Harriet Boomer, who made her pious and romanticized ideas about children, religion, and education known at The International Congress of Women, 1899 (Boomer, 1900). Boomer was anything but a reticent homemaker. Toronto's Globe considered Boomer one of the TLCW's "prime workers," "a woman of bright ideas and with the courage of her convictions," which by the moral tone of her address given at the International Congress of Women, were considerable. And if home protection were in large part child protection, the following excerpt from her address at the women's Congress lights a portion of Boomer's thinking on the issue:

As we realise more and more our own many limitations, our proneness to do what we should not do, and to leave undone so much that we should do, we may be tempted to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but [remember] "all God's biddings are enablings," and in committing into our charge the priceless treasure of a little child, we know that with it He Himself will bestow, if only we ask for it, all
the necessary insight, wisdom and judgment, whether in the home or in the school, for us the fulfilment of our trust. Our duty is crystal clear before us, as God-guided parents and teachers, to at least endeavour to train the God-given child into the fulness of the stature of a perfect manhood or womanhood, not only for time but for eternity (Boomer, 1900, p. 21).

Boomer was "[a]lways a good drawing card" as a public speaker, and "many new paths [were] due to her initiative," especially when her sense of duty to children, the home, and society was so "crystal clear."

An apostle of "the discipline of an orderly, well-regulated home" (Boomer 1900, p. 21), Boomer--and the TLCW--operated perspicaciously, her eye on every endangering aspect of the city-home.

The TLCW undertook its protection of Toronto's homes by organizing into standing committees. They included: Committees for the Better care of the Aged and Infirm Poor; Objectionable Printed Matter; Immigration; Laws for the Better Protection of Women and Children; Custodial Care of Feeble-minded Women; Finance; Press; Domestic Science; Agriculture for Women; Women on School Boards; Vacation Schools and Supervised Playgrounds; Peace and Arbitration; White Slave Traffic; Circulation of Council Literature; and the Industrial Exhibition. There were also special committees to oversee street reforms and traffic regulations; such committees were struck as circumstances arose. The TLCW affiliated itself with the Women's Art Association of Canada, and the Toronto Social Hygiene Club, the latter a poignant indicator of such women's interest in "race regeneration" (Baachi, 1978). Later, the TLCW also operated a Committee on Housing and Town Planning.

The TLCW's committees searched out and proposed solutions to basic city problems. For example, in January of 1908, after investigating Toronto's continuing problem with "pure water," owing to its problematic in-take pipe, the TLCW sent a deputation suing for the installation of a suitable filtration plant. The deputation was "cordially received by the City Council," and though we are not told what the outcome was, construction of the Island Slow Sand pumping Station began within the year. If the TLCW influence was not directly involved in the erection of the pumping station, its advice was not ignored.
In its concern for Toronto's streets, the TLCW considered "the number of appalling accidents on our streets through vehicles, etc."[20] Toronto like many cities suffered horrible streetcar and cart accidents which regularly claimed the limbs and lives of adults and children. The TLCW struck a committee "to secure all necessary information as to the by-laws controlling traffic on the streets in Toronto…and bring it before the proper authorities to see what can be done to lessen the danger to pedestrians."[21] Less than one month later, the “Report of the Special Committee appointed to inquire as to the laws controlling traffic in our streets” was presented.[22] "There are by-laws," the Minutes read but they are not enforced. Much of the laxity was due to the fact that when accidents did occur[,] persons--particularly ladies [-] refused to enter action or even go to court to give evidence. A bylaw [sic] was now being prepared at City Hall to compel Bicyclists to carry lights and bells. A copy of the letter drafted by the com. [sic] to send to cities comparing in size with Toronto asking for information regarding the control of traffic in their streets was read.[23]

The committee, now officially the "Committee on the Regulation of Street Traffic," then undertook a letter-writing campaign to various North American cities to learn what was being done elsewhere. Responses were received and the Committee compiled an extensive report, now vanished, and presented it to the TLCW. The latter resolved that twelve copies of the report should be made and one sent to the Mayor, one to each Controller, the City Solicitor, and the TLCW’s convenor of the Press Committee.[24] Unquestionably, the TLCW as a league of purposeful quasi-politicals actively sought to influence the City Council.

Streets mattered to the TLCW, whether in terms of disorderly traffic or behaviour, the latter causing the striking of a committee in 1899 to wait upon the City Council to introduce a bill "prohibiting expectoration on the street, in public halls, and conveyances."[25] Spitting in the age of tuberculosis was a public health issue; municipal housekeepers were well-apprised of the "dangers of the transference of saliva and nose discharge" (Richards, 1978[1911], p. 112). The TLCW’s agitation prompted the passing of a by-law, but by 1908 enforcement of the by-law had relaxed. The committee deputed Toronto’s Medical Health Officer.[26] One month later, correspondence from the Mayor stated that he would put the matter before the Board of Control,
asking that the by-law be strictly enforced. Shortly thereafter the Committee read “[a] clipping from one of the dailies show[ing] active operations had begun: êon the motion of controller Harrison signs are being erected warning people against the infringement of the by-law.”[27] Not only did the TLCW scrutinise the streets for environmental hazards, it occasionally possessed the political ability to affect public policy.

Aware of the politics of, and the various political groups in, Toronto, the TLCW extended its mind to the Civic Guild (CG), Toronto's prototypical urban planning body. In a letter to the CG, the TLCW urged it
to take into [its] earnest consideration...the plan (which has been already advocated) of widening Yonge Street from Shuter St., South as far as Wellington by a system of colonnades on both sides of the street thus relieving the extreme congestion and danger of Toronto traffic in that vicinity which must continually increase with the development and expansion of the city.[28]

It seemed to the TLCW that if a measure of practically applied "wisdom and forethought" were advanced "in the preparation for the expansion of this City, foreshadowed and encouraged by the great municipal works now projected" it "would be timely." The letter naively urged the CG—the CG had been trying for years to have funds allocated for all kinds of projects (Mackintosh, 2001)—to convince the City Council to divert "some of the expenditure which the people are asked annually to authorize" "to the above purpose thereby placing the City in a better position to cope with the vast population and traffic of the future." The letter then concludes, undauntedly, by requesting "that the above suggestion be reduced to a workable basis and that the Guild bring pressure to bear upon the Municipal Authorities that they submit a perfected plan along these lines to the people at the earliest possible date."

The well-schooled CG, however, politely declined. Responding eleven days later, it suggested that the colonnade or arcade plan was not feasible or economical, preferring instead the "Homologated Line" system in this particular case, understanding that standardization of roadways was key.[29] It thanked the TLCW for its "interest," philosophically adding that "with so much consideration being given to the subject of making our thoroughfares more convenient, some solution will suggest itself which will meet with general approval." Though the Guild's view,
technically and politically was probably the more practicable one, it does not negate the fact that
the TLCW's concern for population and traffic, in a word "congestion," was typical of street
reformers. Moreover, this particular instance demonstrates what Ryan (1992, p. 284) calls women
finding "circuitous routes to public influence."

The ill-placement of advertisements and signage vexed street reformers of the era.
Robinson (1901, p. 76) claimed the street reformer's "general assumption of the right to official
censure of posters on moral grounds" and the universal "recognition that the will of the
individual...may be curbed for the general good." One "Miss Mary Cayley" a particularly tenacious
TLCW member, whose name frequently adorns the Minutes, welcomed Robinson's moral claim.
Her special talent lay in the issue of public morals as it concerned posted advertisements in the
streets.

In 1897, dancer/actress Cissy Fitzgerald, performed at the "Grand Opera House...in the
brilliant comedy success 'The Foundling'...with George Edwards' original Gaiety Company."
Cayley disapproved of Fitzgerald's image in the theatre's posters throughout the city. Apparently,
Fitzgerald was a "young lady whose alluring wink...made her famous." The poster, nevertheless,
affronted Cayley who, in her office as secretary of the TLCW, contacted the Mayor, "asking him to
call attention to the posters advertising Cissy Fitzgerald, which, [Cayley] claim[ed we]re
detrimental to the morals of the city." [30] What the mayor thought we must suppose was his own
business, although Miss Cayley seems to have a clear understanding of what she considers hers
and the TLCW's.

In 1905, Cayley acting on behalf of the "Committee on Objectionable Printed Matter"
averred that the "Committee had been instrumental in causing an objectionable [poster] in a
Barber Shop window to be withdrawn." Further to this, the committee suggested that "theatrical
posters should only be displayed on the doors of the theatres, as is done in Ottawa."[31] Later
vigilance revealed a miscreant Queen Street East firm guilty of posting "objectionable advertising
matter," although exposing the problem seems to have been as far as the TLCW was prepared to
The TLCW knew what a homelike city should be and it did not include lewd or crass posters in shop windows.

The TLCW also coveted formal authority in the streets; their success at detective work in the happenings of the Toronto's streets pushed them to acquire representation on Toronto's police force. In February of 1913, the TLCW suggested to Toronto Chief of Police, Colonel Grassett, the need for policewomen on the force and offered the names of two of its leading members. The Toronto Star reported that the two women proposed by the TLCW were of such importance in women's club land that one gasps at the notion of either accepting a job under Col. Grassett. One is a professional lady of high degree, whose husband turns over in a month, doubtless, as his wife would make in a year policing. She is, moreover, the mother of a family, and she says she couldn't be prevailed on to take the work, important as she considers it to be, though she will assist the actual appointee in any way that is in her power. And that's saying a good deal, for the amateur detective work of this demure little woman during the past two years would stand up some hairs on the head of Toronto the Good were the heroine to make public her reminiscences.

Within three days, Col. Grassett had received twelve applications for the two positions. By April, the Toronto Board of Police Commissioners had settled the matter in favour of the TLCW's proposition, the Toronto Star announcing that "Toronto Will Soon Have Policewomen." To the TLCW's probable disappointment, the Commissioners did not hire a Council woman as its first female constable. Rather, they chose an upright social reformer who worked at the Mercer Reformatory for girls (a place that the TLCW had declared "homelike"): Miss Mary Minty, "a typical example of the finer type of Scotch woman" who was "eager to engage in preventive work." Still, the TLCW's influence in matters of policing seems inevitable given the investigation and detection impulses of municipal housekeepers.

Any disorder in the streets motivated the TLCW. When a "leading morning paper" discovered that the girls loitering in the streets around the Technical School resulted from "inadequate provision in the matter of playgrounds or recreation rooms," the TLCW reacted by doing what it did best: it struck a committee to wait on the School Board. Miss Cayley, the committee convenor, and her compatriots immediately approached the Chairman of the Management Committee of the School Board, urging "on him the necessity of providing suitable
recreation rooms and grounds for the girls attending the Technical School" and "he promised to bring the matter before the Board."[37] The TLCW knew that nurturing young womanhood necessitated properly supervised environments, which embeds an important irony in the idea of the domestic public: home-protectors were unwaiveringly committed to traditional gender roles and they never shrank from imposing them. Yet these dogmatic beliefs do not prevent home-protectors from performing their broadly public and scrutinizing task of saving the city.

A few months later, the TLCW would depute the School Board again, this time on the matter of clean drinking water in public schools. Schools were public buildings on city streets. Because they housed children for a good part of the day, home-protection demanded their homelikeness. Upon discovering that many schools did not carry potable water in their pipes, the council resolved "that some provision be made to supply the children in the schools with...pure spring drinking water," or barring that, the securing of boiler equipment "at a possible cost of say $5." The latter option required that the school "caretaker be entrusted to boil and cool sufficient drinking water daily for the use of the pupils."[38] The minutes do not report on the outcome of this investigation. However, this interest in plumbing affirms Wright's (1983, p. 106) suggestion that "women had to take the principal responsibility for judging sanitary facilities and keeping them operative."[39]

The logical consequence of the TLCW's municipal housekeeping seems to be its involvement in town planning. Women reformers generally followed a path to town planning through their social concerns for housing (Addams, 1912; Birch, 1994a; Simkhovitch, 1944; Wirka, 1994). Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the influential city planning son of the famous landscape designer, maintained that "the first national conference on city planning in Washington, in 1909," was called "mainly due" to the persuasion of "our own housing reformers and social workers" in the direction of city planning. Not surprisingly, then, the TLCW forged an affiliation with the Housing and Town Planning Association of Ontario, and had representation on the Association's Executive, and also on their deputations to the Provincial Government.
Because the TLCW's interest in town planning ultimately resulted from their domestic interest in streets and housing, town planning became an efficient method for fashioning bourgeois domestic propriety, something the CG also associated with its town planning efforts.\[^{40}\] For the TLCW, town planning became the basis of home- and family-oriented social service: "In regard to the whole question of Housing and Town Planning...Why does not this fundamental subject find a more prominent place on the programme of Social Service and Child Welfare conventions and conferences?" \[^{41}\] Town planning for the TLCW could facilitate their domestic municipal reform aims.

Toronto City Council's lack of interest in comprehensive urban planning frustrated the TLCW who spoke aloud a question that also exasperated the CG: "why it is so hard to interest and enthuse the majority of the citizens of Toronto on the importance of a definite town-planning policy?" \[^{42}\] The women's council had in the 1920s tried to compel the City Council to think with farsightedness: "In 1923 the Local Council of Women suggested to the mayor that he call a conference of interested men and women to get a consensus of opinion as to the importance of town planning." The call met with no success. And for the first five years of the 1920s, the TLCW, "through the Provincial Council," had "waited upon the Provincial Government, asking for a better and more adequate Town Planning Act for Ontario."\[^{43}\] Still, of Toronto, the women's council would ask bluntly:

> Why are there not more houses built which in price would be within the reach of the working man?...When will someone promote a housing scheme for the lowest wage earner and the Tubercular poor where they can be housed in pleasant cottages with bright surroundings and an attractive environment, where all the rooms get sunshine some time of the day, where the children have room to move about in work or play?\[^{44}\]

The housing and town planning concern of the TLCW is purely public and purely political, perfectly suited to a body of domesticity-oriented municipal housekeepers.

**Conclusion**
There is something inherently persuasive, if ironic, about the idea that "white" Protestant bourgeois women, concerned for their families and homes in an increasingly expanding modern city, and ideologically committed to domesticity and its decree to protect the home, would turn their considerable domestic attentions to the streets and the four walls of the city home. This domestic publicity, affiliated as it was with the home, allowed organized women such as the Toronto Local Council of Women to peruse the public, although it is difficult to imagine that a Harriet Boomer or Mary Cayley relied on any moral mapping to act in their capacities as municipal housekeepers. Such women simply perceived the city-wide hazards of modernity and reacted "properly," even if some of their actions could have stood up hairs on the head of Toronto the Good.

"Perceive" is the correct word here, for home-protection was visual; women's scrutiny took them where city-problems and home-threats occurred. Mental maps and moral geographies would render municipal housekeeping unnecessarily inefficient: such cognitive behavioural tools would constrain women's ability to discover, appraise, and fix the city's most threatening problems, and impede their effectiveness as city-wide problem-solvers. In order to renovate the city, and thereby protect the home, they had to know how streets worked, from sewers and sanitation and school maintenance and supervision, to designing street systems and housing, as well as marshalling the morals of the street.

This domestication of the city was part of a larger project of urban *embourgeoisment*. Bourgeois home-protectors were complicit in the implanting of bourgeois values in city space. And it is their domestic affiliation with the bourgeois, whether in the home or the city, that enables domestic women to perform the work of producing a bourgeois domestic public without having to consider moral geographies. Domestic *embourgeoisment* relied on women's unhampered investigation of the whole city, and granted women reformers unlimited publicity in the process.

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Notes

[1] Of 82,200 total arrests of males and females, 58 percent, are for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, while 3 percent are for vagrancy. The total of these equals 50,297, or 61 percent (Riis, 1957[1890], p. 230).


[8] Contemporary observers of municipal housekeepers noted the role they played in reforming the streets. C.M. Robinson (1899, pp. 774) reported that "in Chicago, in 1897, a woman was appointed chief inspector of streets and alleys. She was the first to be appointed to such a position, but she filled it to better satisfaction than had been known before, having gained experience in similar duties for the Civic Federation." Addams (1912, p. 284) similarly suggested that as a result of women's scouring of the tenements, and their incessant reporting to the city, "three city inspectors in succession were transferred from the ward because of unsatisfactory services."


[12] *ibid.*


[21] *ibid.*


[23] *ibid.*


[28] Letters, etc, 1912-1914, December 11, 1913, Civic Guild of Toronto Papers, S48, Baldwin Room, Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library.
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