

My research project's goal is to analyze scenes involving dining, food, and body shape in "New Woman" novels written by women in the final decade of the 19th century, including works by Mona Caird, Sarah Grand, Amy Levy, Victoria Cross, and Mrs. Humphry Ward, among others. Over the course of six weeks (6/13/22 - 7/22/22), I will read novels and periodicals that depicted the New Woman—a term first utilized by Sarah Grand to describe independent and societally non-normative women involved in social change. I will primarily focus on close-reading scenes related to or depicting eating, dining, and women's bodies. I will also contextualize the New Woman fiction I read by reading periodical's representations of the New Woman and accessing a variety of archival materials that will help me better understand the class dynamics, social expectations, and evolution of the New Woman movement. I anticipate utilizing my research in order to fulfill the English department's senior essay program.

My research seeks to fill a gap within critical writing on the New Woman period and look more closely at the way women interacted with each other within this newfound identity. While there is a wealth of texts on New Woman fiction, much of it is focused on the genre's portrayal of sex, family, and education. Analyzing food and dining habits within literature illuminates trends about women's self-identification and surveillance of each other that might otherwise remain obscure. Because food is rarely the direct political subject of literature, it is all the more revealing as a symbol that captures nuances of class dynamics and social behavior. The ties between food and the New Woman are also not coincidental: New Woman fiction coincides with the rise of independent eating spaces for women, which allowed women to interact in female-only, politicized spaces in a fundamentally new way.

Additionally, my project will aim to contribute to the larger critical study of New Woman fiction, which has largely neglected issues of eating, despite researchers identifying that this area is central to women's experience and the depiction of women in fiction of other eras. My project aims to fill this gap, which will use the "variable" of eating and body shape in order to look more closely at how women interacted with each other within early feminist spaces (as opposed to how they interacted with men).

During my research, I will read both secondary and primary materials, with an emphasis on novels and periodicals as my primary texts. I have currently identified twelve novels that I intend on reading and will be reviewing secondary criticism to understand the existing scholarship more thoroughly. Through close-reading, I will analyze scenes of eating, as well as scenes that involve women communing with each other and identity-forming through or over food. I will also survey select periodicals that depicted, discussed, or satirized the New Woman, including *The Woman's Herald*, *Englishwoman's Journal* (which ran prior to the period of fiction I aim to read, but was a crucial early periodical that discussed women's equality), *The Englishwoman's Review*, and *Shafts*. I plan to meet with my faculty advisor, Professor Sharon Marcus, over Zoom or via email communication on a weekly basis.

In order to accomplish my outlined research, travel to the United Kingdom would be an extreme advantage, allowing me to access records and archival support that are otherwise unavailable in the United States. A key resource that would aid my research is the London School of Economics' Women's Library. LSE's Women's Library has a unique collection of over 1,000 journals in their "Women's Print Media" section (all of which are cataloged in a public-access spreadsheet organized by publisher, time period, and availability); such an accessible database of physical items would cut hours of searching online databases, sharpening images, parsing through scans, and requesting scans from outside resources from my research. Illustrations and advertisements are a vital component of food culture, and often represent women's bodies; being able to view them in detail, rather than as scanned images, would give

me a unique chance to note details, captions, and other intricacies that are lost during the digitization process.

I also hope to view the records of the Aerated Bread Company, which are currently not digitized and accessible only through the London Metropolitan Archives Collections. The Aerated Bread Company was a vital space where women could eat with each other without the presence of men, and flourished during the fin-de-siecle period as a hub for women’s suffrage. These documents would allow me to better understand the physical location of the ABC outposts (along with the class implications that accompanied their location) and the rate at which they expanded during the period that coincides with the development of the “New Woman” novel. The ABC is mentioned in many New Woman novels, such as Rhoda Broughton’s *Dear Faustina*, and understanding their tangible presence within the authors’ lives would add to the comprehensive scope I wish to take with my research.

I wish to spend a full six weeks in the United Kingdom to allow sufficient time for traveling to different archives, including several visits to the National Archives in London. The Archives would give me access to non-digitized materials published during the New Woman period such as book reviews of the novels I wish to survey, as well as supplementary “life writing” and newspapers that were concerned with the New Woman. Although my paper will focus on the novels themselves, as I found with my prior research, analyzing a topic such as food-- which functions as a nexus for class, social relationships, power, and a variety of other variables-- requires a deep historical understanding of the connotations it bears. This kind of cultural understanding is best gathered through a variety of materials that supplements novels with life writing, periodicals, images, and other written artifacts.

During the fall 2021 semester in a seminar with Professor Marcus, I produced a research paper on Victorian ladies’ eating habits within public and private spheres that utilized a methodology similar to the one I have proposed above. This paper, which Professor Marcus deemed publishable, brought me to the research question I wish to investigate this summer. Through that research, I established that Victorian attitudes towards marriage were the dominant factor in determining how women ate and policed their, and other’s, behavior. The question about the New Woman period then emerged: what happened when feminists began to challenge marriage as the central purpose of a woman’s life? Did conventions around behavior and appetite shift? And if so, how did they shape how women related to one another?

My research will greatly benefit from my unique understanding of the culinary, social, and literary context that predates the New Woman period. ability to track the evolution of women’s eating habits and eating in fiction. I am able to better identify where the content or the literature itself departs from previous norms because of my general knowledge of this subject matter.

Expense	Cost
Flight expenses, round trip flight from NYC - London	\$900
Rent for a single room in London, 6 weeks	\$2,000
Transportation (public transportation, based on an estimate of monthly public transportation costs found online)	\$372
Food (relying primarily on groceries and cooking at home)	\$600
Other (toiletries, SIM card)	\$120
Total	\$3,992