WerkstattGeschichte 42, Klartext Verlag, Essen 2006, S. 45-56

■ Paul Lerner

Consuming Pathologies:

Kleptomania, Magazinitis, and the Problem of Female Consumption in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany*

The year is 1906. The scene: An undisclosed, upscale department store in an unnamed German city. A woman is caught attempting to steal a worthless trinket. As the store's guards whisk her into the examination room – a special chamber reserved for questioning suspected shoplifters – they notice that she is wearing an elegant fur coat, which they realize also comes from their store, further piquing their suspicion. The guards then find a salesman from the fur department who informs them, to their astonishment, that this woman is one of his best customers, that she spends thousands of Marks every year on furs and that she pays for her purchases in cash.[1]

This trinket thief fits the typical profile of the kleptomaniac in many ways. Kleptomania first entered the psychiatric literature in the early nineteenth century, and while its etiology and diagnostic status have shifted, its characteristics have been remarkably stable. The kleptomaniac steals – according to consistent psychiatric observation – not out of need, but out of some compulsion, often in a highly confused, dream-like state, or for the rush, the exhilaration of the forbidden act, and this is what distinguishes kleptomaniacs from common thieves, who act for more rational, economic reasons.[2] Whereas »regular« criminals are interested in objects for their material value, kleptomaniacs seldom cash in on their loot – they often furtively return what they have taken or amass large collections of stolen goods in some secret corner of their dwelling. The kleptomaniac is usually comfortably middle class, if not downright affluent, like the fur-clad trinket stealer or her contemporary, a Parisian woman nabbed for taking an umbrella worth less than four Francs while she carried some 70,000 Francs in her purse.[3] Winona Ryder springs to mind as a highly-publicized recent case of a rich shoplifter, but for historical examples, one could point to the sister of the Lord Mayor of Edinburgh (as recorded by the Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush around 1810) or the young lady described in this early nineteenth-century account by André Matthey, the French alienist who gave kleptomania its name: »A young mademoiselle, born

* Versions of this essay were presented at the German Studies Association, New Orleans, LA, September 20, 2003 and the Berlin Forum für Geschichte der Psychoanalyse, May 10, 2005. I would like to thank the journal editors and Eric Engstrom, Veronika Fuechtner, Julia Sneeringer, and Despina Stratigakos for their helpful comments and references.

1 The incident was reported in the journal Die Deutsche Konfektion. I take this description from Paul Göhre, Das Warenhaus, Frankfurt/M. 1907, p. 134.

2 Wilhelm Stekel, Impulshandlungen. Wandertrieb, Dipsomanie, Kleptomanie, Pyromanie und verwandte Zustände, Berlin 1922, p. 207.

3 Originally described by Paul Dubuisson – here in Patricia O'Brien, The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth-Century France, in: Journal of Social History 17 (1983), p. 67.

to rich parents and of noble extraction, possessing a good character and a healthy spirit«.[4] She – and the kleptomaniac is most often, though certainly not exclusively a she – generally steals small items of little value (in contrast to Ryder who took very expensive clothes), such as umbrellas, gloves, pieces of fabric, pencils, and trivial knick-knacks. Her choice of objects, as we will see, has also been the subject of a great deal of psychological speculation, particularly with the growing influence of psychodynamic psychology after World War One.

A recent case in an Italian town – in which a woman used a psychiatric statement to try to evade legal responsibility for stealing from a department store – suggests that medical, legal and cultural threads are still intertwined around the problem of department store theft and kleptomania, but kleptomania's peak, as both a medical and a social problem, lies in the past.[5] Its »golden age« began in the 1890s when the problem grabbed the attention of psychiatrists, social critics and retailers – the period between the 1890s and the 1930s was marked by a sustained and intense cultural engagement with kleptomania and shoplifting in general in North America, Britain, Western Europe and beyond. Contemporaries linked the alleged epidemic of kleptomania with the dramatic changes in retailing that had been occurring around them, for this was also the great age of the department store.[6] To be sure, increasing cases of kleptomania seemed to correlate directly with the expansion of department stores in all of these places.[7] Due to record-keeping practices and since most department store shoplifting cases were handled in house (to avoid bad publicity) and thus not reported to police authorities, historians can conclude almost nothing about actual numbers of cases[8] – other than reporting anecdotal evidence from contemporaries, such as the claim from a major Cologne department store that on busy days generally seven dozen pairs of stockings and about twelve silk garments for men were taken; that ninety-six shoplifters were caught in the days before Christmas 1907 in Berlin's department stores or that more was stolen from the Wertheim emporium on Leipziger Straße than was sold in most other stores.[9] But independent of numbers, it is clear that contemporaries feared that shoplifting – both the »normal«, criminal type and the »pathological« kind – was reaching crisis proportions in the decades surrounding World War One.

4 Quoted in Eduard-Rudolf Müllener, Die Entstehung des Kleptomaniebegriffes, in: Suddhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften 48 (1964), p. 233. My translation of the French.

5 Kaufhaus-Diebin mit ärztlichem Attest, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung (23.5.2005) 116, p. 14.

6 See Elaine S. Abelson, When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York 1989.

7 Arthur Leppmann, Über Ladendiebinnen, in: Archiv für Psychiatrie 35 (1902), p. 264. See also Uwe Spiekermann, Theft and Thieves in German Department Stores, 1895–1930: A Discourse on Morality, Crime and Gender, in: Geoffrey Crossick/Serge Jaumain (eds.), Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850–1939, Aldershot, UK 1999, p. 135–160; Detlef Briesen, Warenhaus, Massenkonsum und Sozialmoral: Zur Geschichte der Konsumkritik im 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt/M. 2001, esp. chapter 3. See also Tammy Whitlock, Gender, Medicine, and Consumer Culture in Victorian England: Creating the Kleptomaniac, in: Albion 31 (1999), p. 413–437.

8 Spiekermann, Theft and Thieves, p. 137.

9 For the Cologne report see Hans Bernd Thiekötter, Die psychologische Wurzel und strafrechtliche Bewertung von Warenhausdiebstählen, Bochum 1933, p. 1. The other reports come from Leo Colze, Berliner Warenhäuser, Berlin/Leipzig 1908, p. 73; Göhre, Das Warenhaus, p. 132.

To explain this problem, they looked both to the shoppers and the stores, alternately blaming women's mental constitution and physical states and the irresistible allure of the commodity created by the department store and its techniques of advertising and display. But whether they emphasized the former or the latter, i. e. whether doctors and critics saw kleptomania or »magazinitis«, whether they classified department store theft as a type of instinctive monomania, like followers of French psychiatrist Jean-Etienne-Dominique Esquirol; as a kind of compulsive act that arose out of an internal conflict, as the psychoanalysts portrayed it; or indeed as something literally caused by the department stores (»magazinitis«), they fanned the flames of a broader discussion of mass consumption and its pathologies that resonated across the social and political spectrum starting in the 1890s.

This essay explores the problem of female department store theft from a medical- and cultural-historical perspective. Its aim, in part, is to show how the department store emerged as a site of danger, a pernicious stage of female action, where otherwise upstanding members of society could easily be derailed. Thus, as an urban space the department store became a spectacular attraction that was simultaneously seen as a hotbed of pathology. Whereas film scholar Anne Friedberg argues that the department store (along with the amusement park) was the only acceptable public place for an unaccompanied woman to spend her days – hence, the phenomenon of the »flâneuse« in the late nineteenth century – I maintain that department stores remained a vexed and problematic site of female agency – a woman's space to be sure, but simultaneously a place where she could easily slip outside the bounds of acceptable behavior.[10] Women's desire for goods, as several scholars, notably Leora Auslander have argued, was simultaneously economically necessary and socially problematic, and unchecked female desire appeared threatening and destabilizing to cultural norms and accepted practices.[11] The problem of (female) shoplifting was just one of many dangers contemporaries associated with the department store; along with the threats of overcrowding, stampeding, fires and broader economic concerns, kleptomania represented part of the dark underside of the fascination and excitement that surrounded the new forms of consumerism and entertainment in Germany in the modern period. Ultimately, the broader agenda of this research project – which the current essay can only begin to demonstrate – is to map the connections between the anxieties and upheaval around early forms of mass consumption and retail, the anti-Semitic social movements of the Wilhelmine period, and psychiatric and sociological perspectives on gender, shopping and the city. My claim is that the department store and mass consumer society were coded as »Jewish« in Wilhelmine Germany and that the image of the »Jewish department store« and Jewish economic power was shared by widely disparate discourses on consumerism from the 1890s through the post World War II period.

10 Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern, Berkeley 1993. See also Ann-Louise Shapiro, Disordered Bodies/Disorderly Acts: Medical Discourse and the Female Criminal in Nineteenth-Century Paris, in: Genders 4 (Spring 1989), p. 68–86.

11 Leora Auslander, The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France, in: Victoria de Grazia (ed.), The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective, Berkeley 1996, p. 78–112 and Lisa Tiersten, Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France, Berkeley 2001. On women and consumerism in Germany see also Christiane Lamberty, Reklame in Deutschland, 1890–1914: Wahrnehmung, Professionalisierung und Kritik der Wirtschaftswerbung, Berlin 2000 and Irene Guenther, Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich, Oxford 2004.

I. The Department Store and Its Opponents in Germany

While the Parisian Bon Marché – immortalized in Emile Zola's thinly fictionalized portrayal, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) – was well established by the middle of the nineteenth century, and such American and British firms as Wanamaker, Macy's and John Lewis appeared in the 1860s and 1870s, the first major German department stores began to emerge only in the mid to late 1880s.[12] In the early 1890s they were just entering the largest cities and were only starting to compete for a reasonable, although still rather modest share of the retail market.[13]

Department stores differed from traditional retail establishments in a number of ways that worked to their great advantage. They sought, wherever possible, to eliminate middlemen and deal directly with the manufacturers. They bought from the factories in remarkably high volume, a risky, but ultimately extremely successful practice. Their guiding business principle, »small profits, large volume«, enabled them to sell goods at significantly lower prices, often for as much as 25 to 30 per cent less than at existing specialty shops.[14]

The department stores radically transformed the experience of shopping and the business of selling. Unlike at traditional shops, department store prices were fixed – there was no bargaining – and items could usually be returned and exchanged, a previously unheard of practice which must have made the stores all the more attractive. Sales transactions were typically conducted with cash, and purchases were packaged and made available almost immediately, or delivered to the home soon thereafter. Furthermore, entering a department store entailed no obligation to purchase anything (the practice known as entrée libre). One would not go into a smaller specialty shop without serious interest in buying a particular item, and one would not leave without at least engaging in some negotiation. Department stores, on the other hand, sought to bring as many people as possible inside with absolutely no direct pressure to buy. And once inside, one could wander through anonymously – like in the modern city itself. These conditions, especially the close, unsupervised access to goods, proved especially conducive to department store theft.

Due to their immediate success, Germany's urban department stores were continually expanded; they offered an increasingly diverse array of goods, including textiles, clothes, jewelry, rugs, toys, household wares, and food, and many ultimately added such features as restaurants, hair salons, reading and correspondence rooms, and travel agencies. As the stores grew and diversified, the original houses were often converted into palatial new buildings, which were designed by the leading architects of the time, most notably Alfred Messel

12 See above all Michael Miller, The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869–1920, Princeton 1981; for the comparative history of the department store, see the essays in Crossick/Jaumain, Cathedrals of Consumption.

13 Robert Gellately, An der Schwelle der Moderne: Warenhäuser und ihre Feinde in Deutschland, in: Peter Alter (ed.), Im Banne der Metropole: Berlin und London in den zwanziger Jahren, Göttingen 1993, p. 131–156.

14 On the department store in Germany, see Siegfried Gerlach, Das Warenhaus in Deutschland: Seine Entwicklung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg in historisch-geographischer Sicht, Stuttgart 1988; Hans-Peter Ullmann, ›Der Kaiser bei Wertheim‹ – Warenhäuser im wilhelminischen Deutschland, in: Christof Dipper/Lutz Klinkhammer/Alexander Nützenadel (eds.), Europäische Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift für Wolfgang Schieder, Berlin 2000, p. 223–236; Konrad Fuchs, Ein Konzern aus Sachsen. Das Kaufhaus Schocken als Spiegelbild deutscher Wirtschaft und Politik 1901 bis 1953, Stuttgart 1990.

for Wertheim and in the 1920s Erich Mendelsohn for Schocken.[15] Through their ornate architecture and often exquisite design features, elaborate display windows, technological novelties (such as elevators and later escalators), promotional events and leisure-time attractions, the turn-of-the-century department stores turned shopping into a spectacle.[16] Innovations of the early 1900s, such as neon signs, beckoned potential customers from afar – the KaDeWe's ads were aimed at passing auto traffic – and mass advertising through the new illustrated daily press invited people to come and take in an art exhibition, watch a fashion show or just while away the day amid the store's luxury and splendor.[17] Led by their guidebooks, tourists, such as the young Hans Fallada, flocked to the stores to gaze at the window displays and marvel at the fantastic cornucopia of goods.[18] Many visitors experienced their first escalator or elevator ride in a department store, increasing the sense of awe and wonderment associated with the establishments.

Carefully designed product displays were intended to appeal to customers' fantasies – the association between modern consumer culture and illusions and dreams has been theorized from Walter Benjamin through the more recent work of Rachel Bowlby and Rosalind Williams.[19] Significantly, proprietors sought to create a desire for goods, to awaken consumer cravings (»Kauflust«). Rather than selling people what they needed, the department store aimed to sell people what they did not need or what they did not know they wanted. In the words of a contemporary observer: »Beim Anblick all dieser Herrlichkeiten wird die Kauflust derart gesteigert, daß der Besucher das Warenhaus selten verläßt, ohne mehr eingekauft zu haben, als er ursprünglich kaufen wollte.«[20]

As leading department store chains Tietz and Wertheim were opening their Berlin branches in the early 1890s, and the stores were beginning to make their mark on Germany's cities and large towns, oppositional movements emerged. The most vocal detractors came from a national organization, the newly organized Zentralverband Deutscher Kaufleute und Gewerbetreibender (Central Association of German Shopkeepers and Artisans). Claiming to represent the economic interests and social insecurities of the German *Mittelstand*, the Zentralverband lobbied at the national and regional levels to have department stores banned.[21] Failing that, they agitated for special taxes that would make it impossible for the stores to continue operating, or at least eliminate the great advantages brought by their high

15 See, above all, Kathleen James, From Messel to Mendelsohn: German Department Store Architecture in Defense of Urban and Economic Change, in: Crossick/Jaumain, Cathedrals of Consumption, p. 253–278.

16 On display windows and advertising innovations, see among others, Janet Ward, Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany, Berkeley 2001, esp. chapter 4. On shopping, entertainment and consumption in turn of the century Paris, see Vanessa Schwartz, Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in fin-de-siècle Paris, Berkeley 1998.

17 Ullmann, Der Kaiser bei Wertheim, p. 229; See also Ward, Weimar Surfaces.

18 For example, see Peter Fritzsche, Reading Berlin 1900, Cambridge, MA 1996, p. 163–165.

19 See, for example, Rachel Bowlby, Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping, London 2000 and Rosalind Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France, Berkeley 1982.

20 Cajus Nordmann, Die Warenhausdiebinnen, in: Die Welt der Frau 26 (1907), p. 85.

21 Ullmann, Der Kaiser bei Wertheim, p. 230. For the French case, see Philip Nord, Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment, Princeton 1986.

volume.[22] Activists also organized anti-department store demonstrations; for example, rallies against the newly opened KaDeWe were held in Berlin in 1907 and 1908 where its owner, Adolf Jandorf was condemned for exploiting his employees (especially around Christmastime), and underpaying them, which allegedly forced poor female sales clerks into prostitution.[23] In Bavaria retailers distributed propaganda leaflets and regularly demonstrated outside Tietz's Munich store in the early 1890s.[24]

The anti-department store campaigns did indeed bear fruit (over the opposition of Liberals and Social Democrats): Special taxes were imposed by three state governments: Saxony (1897), Bavaria (1899) and Prussia (1900) against businesses which sold goods in multiple retail categories and had profits in one category exceeding 400,000 Reichsmark.[25] These measures remained in effect until 1919; they certainly presented a formidable challenge, but clearly did not halt the department stores' continued growth and expansion, and many stores exploited technicalities to circumvent the harsh provisions.[26]

Nevertheless, I would suggest – and this point awaits more sustained research and lies beyond the scope of this essay – that the goals and representational strategies of the early anti-department store campaigns drew on long-standing anti-Semitic tropes but reframed them in modern cultural and economic terms. These representations emphasized the alleged cheapness or shoddiness of the goods for sale and the exotic or »oriental« nature of the stores – as illustrated by the constant use of the term »Ramschbasare« for Jewish-owned enterprises by the anti-Semitic press –; the shiftiness and unreliability of Jewish merchants; the disturbed morality and perverse sexual/gender order in the department stores; and finally, the parasitic quality of these stores on economy and society.[27] If in the German imaginary production was generally coded as a male occupation (notwithstanding Auslander's corrective to this assumption) and consumption as a female role, Jews, unmoored from »authentic« economic activities, occupied the space between these two acts, haunting the healthy processes of German production and consumption.[28] The Jew, then, was available as a free floating signifier for consumer society's excesses and potentially nefarious effects.

22 Uwe Spiekermann, Warenhaussteuer in Deutschland: Mittelstandsbewegung, Kapitalismus und Rechtstaat im späten Kaiserreich, Frankfurt/M. 1994.

23 See, for example, Die Freiheit (14.5.1907), clipping in Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 30, Tit. 94, Nr. 10937. This claim is also made in J. W. Hausschildt, Der Kampf gegen die Warenhäuser. Praktische Vorschläge zur Beseitigung derselben, Friedeberg [ohne Jahr], in: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem, A Rep. 120, CVIII 1, Akte 134.

24 Georg Tietz, Geschichte einer Familie und ihrer Warenhäuser, Stuttgart 1965.

25 The categories were: food, textiles, household goods and furniture, and small items such as jewelry and toys. Jürgen Schwarz, Architektur und Kommerz. Studien zur deutschen Kauf- und Warenhausarchitektur vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg am Beispiel der Frankfurter Zeil, Ph.D. Diss. Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt/M. 1995 and Gerlach, Das Warenhaus in Deutschland. On department store taxes see, above all, Spiekermann, Warenhaussteuer in Deutschland.

26 See Gerlach, Das Warenhaus in Deutschland, p. 49.

27 I deal with these issues in greater detail in Shopping and Its Discontents: The ›Jewish Department Store‹ in German Politics and Culture, in: Gideon Reuveni (ed.), Jewish History Encounters Economy, New York, forthcoming 2007.

28 I am drawing here, admittedly rather liberally, from Moishe Postone's analysis of anti-Semitism and the image of the Jew through the lens of the commodity fetish. See Moishe Postone, The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century, in: Moishe Postone/Eric Santner

The Zentralverband's efforts drew from and intersected with a broader discontent with the social and cultural dislocations of the late nineteenth century, and such discontent was often aimed at Jews who were seen as the embodiment and agents of these unsettling transformations.[29] Social thinkers – perhaps most notably Werner Sombart – mourned the seemingly inevitable disappearance of crafts-based production at the hands of international capitalism. In a series of sharply anti-Semitic treatises, the department store stood as a symbol for all that threatened to undermine an imagined community of traditional and harmonious German life. The pursuit of pure profit at the expense of traditional mores was understandable, wrote Sombart, but it presaged the collapse of the civilized world.[30] Indeed, in his 1911 tome Sombart had identified the Jews with the transformation of modern economic life and attributed their facility in capitalism to their unique »racial« traits and historical conditions.[31] In short, in a variety of media, the department store was represented as »Jewish« and simultaneously as foreign (and later as American); its proprietors seen as rapacious capitalists, and its victims, above all, were innocent German women, both the shoppers and the female members of the workforce who, opponents feared, were being corrupted and seduced by exploitative Jewish entrepreneurs.[32] It is certainly worth asking how these sets of representations intersected with constructions of the Jewish man as parasitic, oversexed and sexually depraved. Modern consumer culture and the history of the department store need to be better integrated into the history of anti-Semitism and representations of »the Jew« in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Central Europe.

II. The Pathologies of Department Store Consumption

The department stores, according to many contemporary critiques, victimized women by arousing and channeling unhealthy desires for things. Unbridled consumerist desire was dangerous: In Fallada's hugely successful novel, *Kleiner Mann – Was Nun?* (What Now, Little Man?) of 1932, the protagonists, Pinneberg and his bride Lämmchen are brought to ruin by an expensive bedroom set that *he* could not resist buying (but significantly, to please her) after he has lost his jobs first in an old style, provincial clothing store and later in a modern department store palace in Berlin. Significantly, Pinneberg is a casualty of department store, commodity culture from both sides: it causes him to lose both his job and his shirt, as it were.

Underlying these varying types of representations was the conviction – often starkly at odds with economic realities – that the department stores were unstoppable, omnipotent forces. »Es gibt vier Herrscher Berlins, ungekrönte Kaiser, deren gestrenges Regiment nichtsdestoweniger, aber allenthaben anerkannt wird«, wrote Leo Colze in a 1908 treatise.[33] »Diese

(eds.), Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century, Chicago 2003, p. 81–116.

29 Ibid. See also Derek Penslar, Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe, Berkeley 2001.

30 Quoted in Ullmann, Der Kaiser bei Wertheim, p. 231.

31 Werner Sombart, Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben, Leipzig 1911. See Derek Penslar, Shylock's Children.

32 See, for example, Der Harem im Warenhaus am Andreasplatz, in: Die Wahrheit 4 (30.5.1908), p. 1–2f. and Die Geheimnisse des Teesalons im Warenhaus Wertheim, in: Die Wahrheit 3 (19.1.1907), p. 1.

33 Leo Colze, Berliner Warenhäuser, p. 9.

ungekrönten Herren sind die Warenhäuser, sind die Wertheim, Tietz, Jandorf und seit Jahresfrist etwa, das Kaufhaus des Westens [which was, incidentally, also owned by Jandorf but was sold to Tietz with all the Jandorf holdings in 1926].«[34] There was something mysterious or uncanny about the department stores' power. These rulers, to tease out Colze's logic, exerted their imperial power through the allure of the commodity. His description of the stores' ability to entice throngs of (female) customers – »der Herscher ruft – sie folgen gern«[35] – and of their manipulation, even exploitation of potential shoppers through advertising and spectacle parallels contemporary concern over hypnosis and mind control by insidious practitioners.[36] Department stores were, in fact, widely believed to exert »eine berauschende und schwindelerregende Wirkung« on customers.[37] »Die Temperatur, die Geräusche, Gerüche, Farben und Lichter riefen eine Umnebelung des Bewußtseins [...] sogar einen hypnoseartigen Zustand hervor, in welchem der impulsive Diebstahl [...] geboren wurde.«[38] Or, as Emil Raimann put it, »Man muß an Hypnose denken. Das Ermüden des Auges und des Ohres sind altbekannte Mittel, das Fixieren eines glänzenden Gegenstandes vermag eine Autohypnose hervorzurufen. Mit leisen eintönigen Schallreizen erleichtert man refraktär scheinenden Medien die Einengung ihres Bewußtseins, die dann in den hypnotischen Schlaf hinüberführen. Bei veranlagten Frauen, und dazu gehört eine große Anzahl psychopathischer Frauen, werden durch das Warenhaus leicht Bewußtseinszustände geschaffen, die mindestens dem Vorstadium der Hypnose [...] gleichzusetzen sind«.[39]

More generally, the assumption prevailed that the department store environment precluded rational thought and deeply affected the nerves and psyche of female shoppers, inducing a condition that the French doctor Paul Dubuison labeled Magazinitis – like department stores themselves, discourses on shoplifting and kleptomania came to Germany from France.[40] Shoplifting perpetrators often claimed that »In der Menschenmenge, im Lichterglanz wäre ihr Kopf benommen worden und sie hätten sich nicht recht überlegt, was sie täten!«[41], they argued »Ich sah die Dinge wie durch eine Wolke«.[42] These frequent allusions to the dream-state of the kleptomaniac suggest the fantasy dimension of shopping and the notion of the department store as a »dream world« gone awry or perhaps even a »nightmare world«.[43]

One psychiatrist described the department store atmosphere as arousing covetousness with all means: it was not the »desire to steal« (die Lust am Stehlen) so much as the »desire for things« (die Lust zu den Dingen) that was at work in these cases, and this accounted for the »scheinbar unbegreifliche Entgleisung mancher sonst durchaus ehrenhafter und gut-

34 See Adolf Jandorf Collection, Archive of the Leo Baeck Institute New York, AR 3144.
35 Colze, Berliner Warenhäuser, p. 11.
36 See my article Hypnotic Cures: Hypnosis, Gender and Performance in World War I and Weimar Germany, in: History Workshop Journal 45 (March 1998), p. 79–101.
37 Gerhard Schmidt, Der Stehltrieb oder die Kleptomanie, in: Zentralblatt für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie 92 (1939), p. 12.
38 Ibid., p. 12.
39 Quoted in Thiekötter, Die psychologische Wurzel, p. 20.
40 Paul Dubuisson, Les Voleuses de Grands Magasin, Paris 1902, German translation published by H. Seeman Nachfolger, Leipzig 1904.
41 Stekel, Impulshandlungen, p. 213.
42 Schmidt, Der Stehltrieb, p. 12.
43 See Williams' classic study: Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France.

situierter Frau«.[44] Indeed, the department store layout, the unmediated contact between the customer and the unsupervised goods, was blamed for rising numbers of department store thieves.[45] »Die offene Auslage von Waren ohne Kaufzwang bietet eine große Gefahr für willenschwache Naturen«, warned psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel.[46] And, as Dubuison observed, »Es ist unmöglich, Zeit in einem dieser ungeheuren Etablissements zu verbringen, ohne – und wäre man von der besten Konstitution der Welt – dabei ein ganz besonderes Gefühl der Entnervung, der physischen Ermüdung und Betäubung zu empfinden. [...] unsere feinsten Sinne ermüden rasch in dieser wimmelnden, lärmenden, duftenden Menge; [...] Das gilt für uns Männer, um viel mehr muß dies Milieu auf eine Frau, besonders auf eine kranke Frau, wirken!«[47]

Accordingly, hysterics and neurasthenics were thought most prone to magazinitis or to a condition described by the nerve doctor Leopold Laquer as »Warenhaus-dämonie«, in which women felt compelled to go to a department store multiple times every day.[48] This notion of Warenhaus-dämonie, or demonic possession by the department store, appeared frequently in both psychiatric and economic texts and captured the repetitiousness of the shoplifting act, its occurrence in a semi-conscious or even unconscious state. It also evokes women's lack of economic agency and hence that they could not be held responsible for their actions, which the kleptomania diagnosis served.[49] In a 1935 article, for example, Doctor Leo Deutsch compared the kleptomaniacal urge to satanic possession and wrote of a patient who identified with the S. Ansky drama *The Dybuk*, the retelling of an old legend of sorcery and possession in the Polish shtetl.[50] And anti-Semites made explicit the connection between the department store's allegedly dark powers and the Jews, as in Nazi economic propagandist Hans Buchner's 1928 book on economic demons, *Dämonen der Wirtschaft: Gestalten und dunkle Gewalten aus dem Leben unserer Tage*, which claimed to depict the nefarious influence of Jewish and American capital on German women, or a much earlier article which excoriated Jewish-owned department stores as »economic vampires«.[51]

And while in psychiatric terms all women were of weaker constitution and thus potential shoplifters, general medical consensus pointed to the dangers of menstruation. In the words of the house detective in a Swedish novel of 1926 that takes place in a department store: »Es wird in allen Warenhäusern gestohlen. Das Gedränge und die Anhäufung von allen Herrlichkeiten des Lebens machen die Versuchung zu stark. Gestohlen wird von männlichen gewerbsmäßigen Dieben, von Kunden – meist weiblichen und sehr oft von solchen in anderen Umständen.«[52] Menstruating women, then, along with pregnant and hysterical

44 Schmidt, Der Stehltrieb, p. 12.
45 Leppmann, Über Ladendiebinnen, p. 264.
46 Stekel, Impulshandlungen, p. 209.
47 Dubuison, here quoted in Leopold Laquer, Der Warenhaus-Diebstahl, Halle 1907, p. 11.
48 Ibid., p. 12.
49 On the issue of criminal responsibility, see O'Brien, Kleptomania Diagnosis and Whitlock, Gender, Medicine and Consumer Culture.
50 Leo Deutsch, Zur Frage der Kleptomanie, in: Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie, 152 (21.2.1935), p. 212f.
51 Hans Buchner, Dämonen der Wirtschaft: Gestalten und dunkle Gewalten aus dem Leben unserer Tage, München 1928 and Behördliche Reklame für Warenhäuser, in: Staatsbürger-Zeitung 39 (24.11.1903), p. 1.
52 Sigfrid Siwertz, Das große Warenhaus (translated from the Swedish by Alfons Fedor Cohn), Berlin 1928, p. 137.

women – women in their most womanly/sexualized states – were seen as most suggestible and least able to resist the stimulations of the department store environment.[53] Or as psychiatrist Arthur Leppmann put it in a 1901 lecture, neurasthenics, and especially women weakened by pregnancy or complications in childbirth, were the most vulnerable population.[54] It is no coincidence that kleptomaniacs were often discussed in the same context as prostitutes, as both activities were attributed to abnormal desires and violated the boundaries of normal economic conduct.[55]

These associations have roots that stretch back deep into the history of psychiatry. Mid nineteenth-century studies linked pregnancy (and puberty) to a pronounced tendency to steal. Other early psychiatrists focused on menopause as a source of kleptomaniacal impulses, but later doctors found little evidence to support these purported connections, suggesting only that the psychological impact of hormonal imbalance could cloud a woman's judgment and trigger such impulsive actions as stealing.[56]

To be sure, cases of male kleptomania and shoplifting were documented as well – and were thematized in contemporary fiction, including Vicki Baum's 1931 work *Jape im Warenhaus*, the story of a young man's pathological obsession with a necktie in a department store display window – but for a variety of reasons the issue was treated as an almost exclusively female problem. (One medical commentator claimed that 97 to 98 per cent of department store thieves were women, but it remains unclear where he got these numbers.)[57] Explanations generally given for this gender imbalance ranged from the practical – women were more likely to carry handbags or wear loose clothes with large pockets suited for concealing objects – to the more speculative – women were believed to be more interested in material goods and were, of course, considered more vulnerable to the department stores' seductive displays and attractions. According to the lawyer Hans Bernd Thiekötter, the department stores never missed a chance to please and delight women, which was vital to their economic viability.[58] Indeed, many sources represented the relationship between the department store and women as a kind of courtship or romance between two highly essentialized entities, the male store and female customer.[59]

Historian Uwe Spiekermann has persuasively argued that German department stores furthered two conflicting contemporary images of women: as efficient household managers (rationalized housewives), attracted by the stores' bargains and their modernity and as vain

53 See Georg Buschan, Geschlecht und Verbrechen, Großstadt-Dokumente, Bd. 48, Berlin/Leipzig 1908, 3. edition, p. 13–14. On the construction of the sexualized, gendered consumer-citizen, see Christoph Conrad, Observer les Consommateurs. Études de Marché et Histoire de la Consommation en Allemagne, des années 1930 aux années 1960, in: Le Mouvement Social 206 (January-March 2004), esp. p. 16.

54 Arthur Leppmann, Ueber Diebstähle in den grossen Kaufhäusern, in: Ärztliche Sachverständigen-Zeitung 7 (1.1.1901), p. 32.

55 See Erika Rappaport, Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End, Princeton 2000, p. 53 and Dorothy Rowe, Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany, Aldershot 2003.

56 Schmidt, Der Stehltrieb, p. 11.

57 Nordmann, Die Warenhausdiebinnen, p. 85.

58 Thiekötter, Psychologische Wurzel, p. 2.

59 For a vivid example, see the 1919 play Purpus. Wilhelm Stücklen, Purpus: Ein Schauspiel in drei Akten, Berlin 1919.

fashion plates, easily seduced by the stores' advertising and the siren call of the commodity.[60] (For Friedberg, women shopped for their families and ended up buying for themselves.) In a 1900 newspaper article on the Tietz and Wertheim stores in Berlin, a journalist wrote that the department store owner, »has the woman caught in the trap. Now he can trust in the allure of a thousand ringed fingers tempting her to buy something, and he can be certain that even the most thrifty of housewives, who has come because of an unprecedented bargain, will go home weighed down with items she does not need.«[61]

III. The Psychodynamics of Department Store Theft

Spiekermann claims that the problem of kleptomania began to wane by the Weimar period, when it was folded into other diagnoses like hysteria and neurasthenia and when the department stores became less exceptional. While it is true that improved security measures and the heightened presence of store guards did cause the numbers to drop, Spiekermann perhaps underestimates the concern that continued to surround shoplifting and shopping and fails to take into account the vigorous discussion of the problem in the 1920s. (Joe May's 1929 Film *Asphalt* might be cited as an example of this lingering concern and indeed of the problematics of female desire and women as objects of desire.) And although the discourse on kleptomania and shoplifting was generally quite stable and consistent between the 1890s and the 1930s, the Weimar period did see the introduction of new voices and perspectives. For one, the problem was taken up by psychoanalysts who drew on, but reframed the long extant connections between kleptomania and female sexuality and anatomy. Secondly, as Spiekermann suggests, although it still had a great popular resonance, kleptomania began to disappear as a distinct medical diagnosis and was folded into other, preexisting pathological categories.[62] And finally, by the mid 1920s, the department store was no longer a novelty to most Germans, and shoplifting, given the economic trend of the later Weimar Republic, was increasingly associated with rational economic needs. (Hence, in his 1933 dissertation Thiekötter takes great pains to distinguish between theft in department stores (Diebstähle im Warenhaus) and department store theft (Warenhausdiebstähle): the former being a kind of opportunism by which criminals know that department stores offer many possibilities for theft, and the latter representing Magazinitis, an impulsive act triggered by the department store environment.)[63] Nevertheless, the discourse on pathological female desire and the phenomenon of the »Warenhausdiebin« remained largely in place.

In contrast to their predecessors, who as we have seen, emphasized female cycles and anatomical and constitutional factors, in the 1920s psychiatrists and psychoanalysts were more likely to point to the sexual dimensions of the shoplifting act or the sexual symbolism of the stolen objects. Sexologist Otto Gross characterized stealing as a sex substitute for sexually frustrated women. For Gross the key was the sensuousness of gripping the commodity and the discharge of affect through the risk of being caught and the act of transcending the

60 Spiekermann, Theft and Thieves, p. 140–141. See also Die Frau und der Einkauf, in: Deutsche Allgemeine-Zeitung (28.10.1924). Abelson makes a similar point for the American context in When Ladies Go A-Thieving.

61 Quoted in Spiekermann, Theft and Thieves, p. 141.

62 See, for example, Deutsch, Zur Frage der Kleptomanie.

63 Thiekötter, Psychologische Wurzel, p. 4.

boundaries of normal, acceptable behavior.[64] Others explained the propensity to steal as a kind of ersatz-satisfaction for women too inhibited to allow themselves normal sexual pleasures; a secret, symbolic taking of a forbidden object.[65] Umbrellas, for example, another frequently stolen object, unfolded in a manner suggestive of an erection, and hence were seen as a penis symbol.[66] And the kleptomaniac act, Leo Deutsch suggested, could be attributed to the »castration complex« and could well represent a form of penis envy.[67]

Similarly, several thinkers associated the act of shoplifting, with its pattern of tension and release, with sexual climax.[68] In a rather crude formulation, Stekel noted the frequency with which sharp pointy objects, like pencils, pens and cigars were stolen by women – no explanation necessary here, but he observed, perhaps with more subtlety, that dolls and other toys and sharp, shiny things like glittery jewelry were also frequently taken, suggesting that department store theft also involved a kind of infantile regression.[69]

According to Stekel, for a young woman a trip from the provinces to the capital city was tantamount to plunging into a den of iniquity (»Sündenbabel«).[70] The department store was perhaps the belly of the beast, the ultimate locus of modern urban consumption and problematic female desire. While some attributed the problem to women's weak natures or various psychodynamic processes, blame centered around the department store owners for luring in vulnerable women with their product displays and their seductive advertisements and placing (otherwise completely reputable) ladies in a situation where they could not control their desire for goods.[71] Common to all of these explanations, however, is a mixture of fascination and fear surrounding the department store as experienced by individuals and perceived by the nation. I want to suggest that these responses and the notion of the stores' mysterious, hypnotic powers overlapped and intersected with depictions of excessive Jewish power and influence over German economy and society achieved in part through the manipulation of German women. These connections demand further investigation, although my research on the anti-Semitic press has yielded consistent references to the »demonic powers« of the department stores, their portrayal as »economic vampires«, and a kind of obsession with salacious scandals involving department store owners and young shop girls, occurring, among other places, in Wertheim's tea room or in the store's underground tunnels.[72]

For a provisional conclusion, then, it is only fitting to turn to another representation of the darkness and dreaminess of the department store setting and to note that Georg Heym's character, in the expressionist short story, *Der Irre*, makes his way from the insane asylum to a department store.[73] The story begins in one site of psychopathology and progresses in surreal, dreamlike fashion toward another. And in the latter, overtaken by illusion and lost in his paranoid, demented dream world, the character strangles an innocent (female) shopper. The department store is dangerous. It is certainly no place for a woman.

64 Otto Gross, Über psychopathische Minderwertigkeiten, Vienna 1909.
65 Thiekötter, Psychologische Wurzel, p. 23 f.
66 Ibid., p. 25.
67 Deutsch, Zur Frage der Kleptomanie, p. 220.
68 Thiekötter, Psychologische Wurzel, p. 23.
69 Stekel, Impulshandlungen, p. 214.
70 Ibid., p. 209.
71 Schmidt, Der Stehltrieb, p. 15.
72 See citations in note 32 and Lerner, Shopping and Its Discontents.
73 Georg Heym, Der Irre, in: Der Dieb, Munich 1995 (originally published in 1913).