

SECTION TWO

Discourses on women and shoplifting:
a critical analysis of why
female crime mythologies past and present
operate to legitimate the incompatibility between
female gender roles and the idea of women
as active agents of crime

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I
SECTION TWO

INTRODUCTION

Why Review 'Official' Discourses about Shoplifting?

Shirley Pitts story about shoplifting, and my analysis of it, discussed in detail in Section One of this PhD, attempts to make use of what Foucault has called 'subjugated' knowledge about shoplifting in order to make a written contribution on the subject. The six chapters in Section Two of this PhD, that follow, offer a very different focus in that they review 'official' discourses about shoplifting from a variety of sources including statistical, literary, historical, psychiatric, criminological, sociological, and newspaper sources among others. These official accounts are those which are usually applied to the definition and explanation of shoplifting. Whilst some of these representations, accounts and theories about shoplifting do directly illuminate Shirley Pitts story, they are not primarily examined for this purpose. Rather they are included, discussed and analysed in this section in order to consider the way issues about power are present in all information that is constructed, specifically information about shoplifting.

The focus of the second section of this PhD I hope will clearly demonstrate the influence of Foucault, particularly his writing in the I, Pierre Riviere¹ essay collection (as well as in books like the History of Sexuality², Discipline and Punish³, and Power/Knowledge⁴). Indeed, following Foucault's example, in the second section of this PhD I have tried to interrogate knowledge about women and shoplifting and to illustrate the point that perhaps focus on shopping rather than the crime of shoplifting would produce a more fruitful way of understanding why and how people are involved in stealing from shops, department stores and shopping malls. In this connection I try to draw the readers attention to the visual dimension of shopping and make what I hope is an original argument about the scopophilic dimension of shoplifting,

The six chapters and conclusion that follow by no means offer a complete review and analysis of discourses about women and shoplifting. Instead, I have raided the

historical archives and tried to locate the most relevant information and sources that should be considered by any scholar who wishes to interrogate and understand why female crime mythologies, generated by discourses on the subject of shoplifting, operate to legitimise the incompatibility between female gender roles and the idea of women as rational and active agents of crime.

ENDOTES

¹ FOUCAULT, M. (Ed.), I. Pierre Riviere. Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother...A Case of Patricide in the 19th Century, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978.

² FOUCAULT, M. The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1981.

³ FOUCAULT, M. Discipline and Punish. The Birth Of The Prison, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979.

⁴ FOUCAULT, M. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972/1977, Brighton, Harvester, 1980.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER ONE

Origins Of Shoplifting: From literary representations of The Female Shoplifter to the Birth Of Consumerism

The chapters in the previous section have looked at subjugated knowledge about shoplifting. This chapter, the first of Section Two, will begin looking at more 'official' sources of information on the subject of shoplifting. It will draw upon a deliberately diverse range of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century historical sources including confessional pamphlets, diaries, novels, crime histories and dictionaries, as well as histories of design as they relate to the emergence of consumer culture. It will look at historical definitions of shoplifting in order to understand the way shoplifting as behaviour is represented and explained. As well as considering the emergence of shoplifting, the chapter will go on to offer the original argument that the phrase 'shop theft' rather than the word 'shoplifting' found in some dictionaries, would be more appropriate term to describe items stolen from shops before the emergence of mass consumerism in the late nineteenth century. It also raises questions about the emergence of the 'female shoplifter' and considers many representations of shoplifting across the centuries, starting with the fictional character of Moll Flanders and then moving chronologically, locating discussions of shop theft from medieval historical accounts to those of the late eighteenth century.

Moll Flanders

The account of Moll Flanders' life in Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders*¹ is worth looking at as an important historical source about women and crime, not least because it is generally acknowledged as the first true

English novel. Yet it has never exactly been established whether the sensational confessional aspect of Defoe's narrative is meant to be ironic or not. Despite these original questions and concerns the style has nevertheless now become very familiar: it is certainly mirrored in crime fiction as well as in many contemporary so-called 'true crime' autobiographies/ biographies - including the story of 'Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves', whose career according to one reviewer *'has many similarities with that of Moll Flanders - theft, fraud, prison, legions of illegitimate children - but with one important omission. Moll becomes a contrite ex sinner ... No such qualms affect Shirley...'*² Despite the fact that it is a work of fiction, Defoe's account suggests that behaviour like shop theft was known well before the eighteenth century. For this reason, given the lack of reliable criminal records, it is considered here even though it is noted by this investigation, that far too much writing about the history of consumer culture relies upon literary sources which are inevitably of limited value to the historian. Novels might not be an accurate mirror of society nevertheless they are a good indication of the cultural conditions that existed and what Raymond Williams has called the 'structures of feeling' of a society at a given time.

Moll Flanders, may not have been the first female character in the novel accused of criminal activity: before her there was Fanny Hill. But Flanders was quite possibly the first fictional character to be accused of shoplifting. The novel is written in the first person and, in the following passage, she relates her experience:

'tis true, there was a loose plate in the shop, but nobody could say I had touched any of it, or gone near it: that a fellow came running into the shop out of the street and laid hands on me in a furious manner. It was but three days after this, that not at all made cautious by my former danger, as I used to be, and long employed, I ventured into a house, where I saw the doors open, and furnished myself as I thought verily without being perceived with two pieces of flowered silk, such as they call brocaded silk, very rich. It was not a mercer's shop, not a warehouse of a mercer but looked like a private dwelling house, and it was, it seems inhabited by a man that sold

*goods for the weavers to the mercers, like a broker or factor. That I may make short of this black part of this story. I was attacked by two wenches that came open mouthed at me just as I was going out of the door ... that I had neither broken anything to get in, nor carried anything out, the justice was inclined to have released me: but the first saucy jade that stopped me, affirming that I was going out with the goods, but that she stopped me and pulled me back as I was upon the threshold, the justice upon that point committed me, and I was carried to Newgate.'*³

Moll Flander's activities were located in the seventeenth century, by Daniel Defoe; the last lines of his novel end with the words '*written in the year 1682*'. Yet Juliet Mitchell has argued that the novel is about '*the eighteenth century not the seventeenth century*', not just because it was clearly written in the early eighteenth century. Mitchell's point is that the novel is written at the really anxious period of transition during the unstable emergence of commercial capitalism, although the narrative offers a vision of a coherent picture of a more stable time. Mitchell observes about Moll Flanders:

*'Moll Flanders steals because she is poor; and leads a moral life when she is prosperous, and is able to afford morality.'*⁴

Perhaps it is only at this moment in history, amidst emerging eighteenth century mercantile capitalism, that such a rational account of women's active involvement in crime could have been written without reference to pathologising discourses such as those from psychoanalysis, criminology and psychiatry that emerge less than one hundred years later. Indeed, although Daniel Defoe's account of Moll Flanders does not describe stealing from a department store - as Emile Zola has done in his novels about women shoplifting in the nineteenth century - the account does suggest that the signs of mercantile capitalism were everywhere in the eighteenth century, and that consumerism had already begun to take shape and to affect the behaviour of women. His novel also makes early connections, that were to be reiterated in other media, concerning the passions of women and their consuming habits.

(1) Reviewing Definitions And Representations Of Shop Theft
Medieval To Early Eighteenth Century Sources

'Shoplifter' [f. shop. sb+lifter]. A person who steals from shops, a shop thief. 1680 [Kirkman], 'Shoplifting' ubl.sb [f. SHOP. SB+LIFTING vbl sb] The action of stealing from a shop. 1698 Act to Will III. 'Shoplift v. [Back-formation f. SHOPLIFTING vbl.s]. To steal from a shop while pretending to be a customer. 1820 [See shop-steal.]⁵

Dictionary definitions such as these reveal that the idea of an individual stealing from a shop, commonly called shoplifting, has been in popular usage for hundreds of years. Yet, even though for centuries dictionaries have used the actual word 'shoplifting', it is the contention of this investigation that the phrase 'shop theft' is probably what is being described, by historians and novelists like Defoe. Shop theft, before the nineteenth century, invariably included a shop keeper and some form of trickery to get stolen items out of shops. With the emergence of mass consumerism in the late nineteenth century, complete with self-service and 'open' shelving, shoplifting as we know it started to occur almost as a form of 'victimless' crime.

Shoplifting, therefore, is not necessarily a new or even 'modern' activity: it emerges in the nineteenth century with department stores and open shelves alongside other acts of shop theft from small shops that had been prevalent in the years before that. Some academic histories of British law make reference to definitions of shop theft that emerged before the sixteenth century, and which gave rise to the 'lifting law of 1597'⁶. Yet the offence was not officially recorded in law until the 1698 Act 10 of Parliament William III, C12, defined *'the crime of stealing goods privately out of shops and warehouses commonly called shoplifting'*⁷. Daniel J.I. Murphy has argued that :

'There is every reason to believe that theft from stalls is as old as the practice of buying and selling...'⁸

A similar observation about theft being as old as trade itself, has been made by the criminologist D.P.Walsh (1978), who has argued that medieval market stall holders, like today's shop-keepers, could not neglect the threat from potential thieves:

*'Over the years as street markets became more permanent and more organised, there developed specialised methods of buying and selling rituals ... which among other things were specifically constructed to reduce the probability of successful theft occurring.'*⁹

Walsh goes on to describe the way medieval fairs turned into marketplaces and the changes that occurred when permanent locations were established with shops. Early shops had no glass windows to protect them: *'the use of plate glass was not widespread until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'*¹⁰, to deter enterprising shop thieves. Earlier shops used shutters rather than glass windows, which limited the opportunities for visual display but still provided certain opportunities for theft. Gamini Salgado in his book The Elizabethan Underworld describes how male 'shop-lifts' were well known in the Elizabethan period. He writes:

'[the object] most commonly sought by the "lifts" were those most easily disposed of afterwards: plate, jewellery and cloth. The lift came into the shop dressed like a country gentleman but was careful not to have cloak about him, so that the tradesman could see he had no opportunity to conceal any goods about his person. His crony, the 'marker' who also entered with, had however, a capacious and specially designed cloak. The lifter asked to see various bolts of cloth and when a sufficient number were scattered about the shop, sent the shop keeper to fetch some article which required a few minutes. This was the signal for the marker to pack as much as he could into his cloak. At a signal from him the third party in the operation, the santar, who had been waiting outside walked past the open window of the shop apparently in a great hurry. The marker asked him to stop for a minute as

*he had 'a message to be delivered to Master So & So'. When the shopkeeper returned the marker was in earnest conversation with the santar, at the open window, where he delivers him whatsoever the lift hath conveyed to him. Even if the theft was discovered while the lift and the marker were in the shop, their outraged protestations of innocence carried the day as no stolen goods (or garbage in the thieves idiom) were found on or about them.'*¹¹

Through the use of the word 'lift' it is easy to imagine a connection between the shop thief and the pickpocket via the action of taking, and some of the escapades described by Shirley Pitts in Appendix 1 suggests this connection is still appropriate in the twentieth century. Mary McIntosh looks much further back and suggests both scams of theft were prevalent in Elizabethan London. Her observations are framed by the analysis that such crimes like pick pocketing and shop theft are intrinsically linked to the emergence of towns, and later to industrialisation, which allowed the sort of anonymity needed for the crimes to be successful. She suggests that *'in Elizabethan England for the first time there appears a criminal underworld'*¹². Towns provided greater opportunities for theft because the large number of residents in towns meant that detection and social control were less effective. Indeed, Mackintosh goes on to argue that:

*'a poor man could thrive as a thief or a confidence trickster without taking very much from any single victim. It became possible to develop criminal techniques of taking small amounts from a large number of victims, and these were repetitive and highly skilled techniques quite distinct from the rough and ready bravado of the outlaws attack.'*¹³

Despite the possibility of execution, theft in sixteenth and seventeenth London was a widespread activity, and is described by several crime historians such as Gamini Salgado, who documented an emerging criminal underclass during this period. Violent highway robbery, traditionally associated with men confronting carriages outside of

towns, continues in the Elizabethan period alongside highly routine thefts and trickeries that are also starting to emerge and become commonplace. McIntosh cites six important crimes of this kind: *'picking pockets, stealing from market stalls and shops, stealing from inside houses, counterfeiting money, documents and valuables, cheating at gambling games, and certain kinds of confidence tricks.'*¹⁴

Women are increasingly involved alongside men in routine, minor crime. In Elizabethan times the ransoming of objects seems to have been very common, although there are few statistical records from the period that accurately record such female involvement. Traditionally women's involvement in crime has been associated with witchcraft, prostitution or with giving refuge to thieves (usually male criminals) which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a very serious offence; in Scotland it was punishable by hanging. With these exceptions, there are few significant references to the activities of women criminals.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the records that survive do show a gradually changing picture and some increase in criminal activity by women. Indeed, Newgate records of the time discussed by crime historians reveal that both men and women were punished for the crime of shop theft¹⁵. Edwards, for example, describes how two women shop thieves were punished:

*'Moll Jones, A shoplift her Graceless Grace being sent to Newgate and condemned for her life at the Old Bailey, she was hanged at Tyburn in the 25th year of her age, on Friday, December 18, 1691.'*¹⁶

He also records the case of Nan Harris:

*'Nan Harris ..a Shoplift ... was called down to her former judgement and hanged in the 20th year of her age at Tyburn, on Friday, 13th July, 1705.'*¹⁷

Edwards goes on to observe that:

*'In the summer of the year 1726, shoplifters became so common and so detrimental to the shopkeepers, that they made applications to the government for assistance in apprehending the offenders: and in order, thereto, offered a reward and a pardon for any who would discover their associates in such practice.'*¹⁸

In such primary sources, the word 'shoplifter' is consistently used (rather than shop thief) which is no surprise since the distinction - original to this thesis - between these terms is explained later on in this chapter. Indeed in historical sources of the period, the word 'thief' and 'lift' are used interchangeably in some contexts. Few criminal records from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have actually survived, with the exception of sensational accounts in The Newgate Calendar: Comprising Interesting Memoirs of the Most Notorious Characters Who Have Been Convicted of Outrages on the Laws of England¹⁹ which bear out this point. Some other sources that contain accounts of crime and material culture from the period warrant review. For example, the 'confessional' pamphlets, popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including the confessions of thieves and murderers which are without question problematic as source material. Some are clearly fictional, others are of a more uncertain origin (the anonymous nature of the texts raises more problems of mediation that even those I have raised about the transcript of Shirley Pitts) and often resort to religious discourse or one of excessive piety, perhaps in the hope of winning a reprieve from the authorities. Nevertheless, they do reveal some insights into the material culture of the period, as can be observed from the alleged confession of Mal Cutpurse.²⁰ Mary Frith or Mal Cutpurse, as she became known in the late seventeenth century, dressed in men's clothes and earned a successful criminal living. Like Shirley Pitts in the twentieth century, Mal Cutpurse was exceptional in that she was one of the few women to surface and become known from earning her living from criminal scams. Her crimes included pick pocketing (for which she was most famous), highway robbery

and brothel keeping. Later, because she was branded on her hand - at least 4 times - 'pickpocket' - she worked in a less risky profession as a successful fence. As Jay Robert Nash has identified, one of Mal's most successful roles was working with 'shoplifters', to achieve the crime of extortion²¹. She sent thieves into mercer's shops and other emerging retail outlets of the time, not to steal commodities but to steal away the account books of the small businesses concerned. Cutpurse revealed her thoughts about this occupation in her alleged final confession in 1661 at Newgate Prison, which was later to be published as a pamphlet by W. Gilbertson of Giltspurt Street, Newgate in 1662. It contains the following passage about shop theft:

*'I was grown of late acquainted with a new sort of thieves called the Heavers, more fitly Plagiaries, whose employment was stealing shop books [account books], the manner thus; they would cruise up and down a stall when the master was at dinner or other way absent, about drapers or mercers especially, whose books lie commonly near the door upon a desk, and upon the turning of the backs of the servants, who are commonly walking to and fro, snatch it off and be gone, with the intent only of some redemptory money upon its delivery, for which they had the convenience of my mediation, which was ordinarily no less than 3 or 4 pieces award for the pains the thief had taken...'*²²

In this confessional pamphlet ('The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse'), the alleged 'voice' of Mal Cutpurse as can be observed from the excerpt quoted, does not admit to shop theft, but she apparently does admit to sending out both male and female criminal associates to do something that sounds very much like it. There are of course problems in assessing whether or not Mal Cutpurse's confession is authentic from surviving sources. For example, as the historian Gerald Hewson has identified, the session records for Newgate, which may have provided some corroboration, are '*fearsome documents*' and '*do not offer complete lists of all Newgate prisoners*' and therefore could not corroborate the authenticity of a document such as this²³. Additionally, the life of Mal Cutpurse has been subject to much

mythologising by dramatists and novelists, which renders it hard at this point in history to distinguish fact from fiction and to decide if her confession (located as an original document in the British Library) is true and not a parody created by pamphleteers of the period. Mal's criminal escapades - her penchant for cross-dressing in male attire - were romanticised in Middleton and Dekker's seventeenth century play The Roaring Girl and in many subsequent fictions, including 'feminist' fictions written by Aphra Benn and later by Ellen Galford, who represents Mal Cutpurse as a heroic, lesbian figure²⁴ .

Whether or not it can be accurately surmised that the legendary Mal Cutpurse sent people out thieving from shops in the seventeenth century, is a subject for historians to debate, but there is no denying that theft from shops was a recognised crime in this period. Perhaps one of the reasons for the notoriety of Mal Cutpurse is that she represents a transgressive figure that alludes to many of the cultural features of the late seventeenth century. For despite criticism of her femininity by her peers, (she was regarded as ugly according to the introduction to her confession), Mal Cutpurse appeared to successfully 'work' in a male world and indulge in a transgressive criminal behaviour. The context in which she lived is unique in as much as the Restoration period can be seen as a restoration not just of the monarchy, but of pleasure, luxury and spectacle. Such excesses may have opened up some social spaces that would allow Mal Cutpurse to operate as a criminal before her final execution.

Mal Cutpurse's excesses would have received even more censure in the eighteenth century than they did in the seventeenth century. Indeed, by the early eighteenth century a major cultural debate concerning the extent to which luxury was a vice or a virtue was already starting to produce a restraining social behaviour. All behaviour was open to scrutiny because on the one hand the new forms of luxury were seen as beneficial to the national economy and to individuals and, on the other, critics were arguing that luxury was immoral and dangerous and many people were being corrupted. In the early eighteenth century the distinction between the act of consumption and the act of theft was blurred in the popular arena because theft and other vices were seen as the inevitable consequence of the rise of luxury in society and, as Jules Lubbock points

out in his book The Tyranny of Taste, there were many debates about the meaning and progress of 'opulence'²⁵. Such discourses obviously clashed causing conflict in many areas of private life where women were increasingly being associated with dangerous consumer behaviour.

In the eighteenth century, possibly as a consequence of class ideologies of excess and restraint, there was an increasing preoccupation with theft, particularly with theft associated with luxury commodities. There were many attempts to remedy this perceived increase in crime. For instance, it was an offer of amnesty to informers in 1726 which led to the downfall of a troupe of eighteenth century 'common' shoplifters. Two women, Morphew and Burton, as well as their male accomplice Henry Kelly, stole lace and fenced it to the notorious Jonathan Wild. They were given up to the police and went on to also incriminate Wild as their receiver²⁶. Wild was well known for his activities and, until his death, operated an ingenious system of control over much of London's underworld²⁷. As well as operating as a fence and buying goods from thieves, Wild also acted as an agent so that victims could recover their stolen property, at a price. For example, a thief would steal a gold watch from a prosperous gentleman and approach Wild with a view to selling it. Wild would let it be known to the gentleman, either directly or through advertising, that he might be able to recover the watch for a fee, and the arrangement was duly completed²⁸. This system may have emerged because the criminal classes had no value for such objects, except as ransom objects. Luxury goods such as these were still linked to social class and position in a way that would make the objects far more socially immobile than they would become in the nineteenth century. The emergence of a fully-developed exchange economy in which the value of goods is determined by monetary value rather than social status, brought about many changes resulting in the increased mobility of objects. Wild used this system to great advantage to himself. Any thieves who did not co-operate with him, or keep him satisfied, were later duly arrested, often with the objects on their person and either transported or hanged, which is why Wild called himself 'the thief taker general'²⁹. His activities appeared to include involvement with a great number of

highwaymen, pickpockets, house-breakers, shoplifters and other thieves. Some of these thieves repeatedly returned to England after having been transported, even though such behaviour was illegal. Jonathan Wild was certainly known to many people of influence, including the writer Daniel Defoe. The historian Gerald Howson has gone as far to suggest that Defoe wrote and published a pamphlet about Wild in the seventeenth century³⁰, and allegedly interviewed some of the female shoplifters known to Wild. However, the authorship of this pamphlet is uncertain.

Wild's downfall occurred because one of the female shoplifters of lace, Margaret Morpew informed on her colleagues as well as on Jonathan Wild. The warrant for Wild's arrest listed two main indictments against him. The first charge against Wild accused him of stealing the lace along with Morpew, Burton and Henry Kelly. The historian, Howson, identifies:

'the first indictment against Wild was under the "Shoplifting Act"

*(10 & 11 William C.23 of 1699 by which theft of 5s or over from a shop was now capital) and charged him with privately stealing 50 yards lace, value £40, from the shop of Catherine Statham, in the Parish of St. Andrews, Holborn, on 22 January 1725.'*³¹

In court, both Morpew and Kelly testified that Wild *put them up to it*. In fact Henry Kelly argued he had visited Jonathan Wild the night before the theft and Wild had said to him:

*'there's an old blind bitch that keeps a shop within twenty yards of Holborn bridge and sells fine Flanders lace: and her Daughter is as blind as herself. Now, if you'll take the trouble of calling upon her, you may speak with [steal] a box of lace.'*³²

This charge was eventually dismissed because although Wild planned the act, he argued that he had not entered the shop, *so that he could not have seen and/or stolen the goods.*

The second indictment came under 4 George I, CII, Sec 4, which was first passed in 1718 as a section of the Transportation Act. Wild was charged and convicted of receiving ten guineas from the blind shop woman, from whom the lace was stolen and ransomed. Klockers describes the conviction as being *'for the return of her property without discovering, apprehending or causing to be apprehended the felon who had stolen the lace'*.³³ Wild was eventually found guilty of this charge, and hanged in 1726 after many attempts to bribe his way out of his predicament.

The details of Wild's life, as well as his fate, have been included in this chapter for two reasons. The first is because it has been argued by critics such as Juliet Mitchell³⁴, that the accounts of lives of the eighteenth century women who worked for Jonathan Wild inspired Daniel Defoe, who allegedly interviewed some of them when creating the fictional character Moll Flanders (to be discussed in the next section). Second, the activities and legal explanation of a visual component to theft which cleared Jonathan Wild of shoplifting (as mentioned above it was argued *'he did not enter the shop, so therefore could not have seen or stolen the lace'*) could help validate the notion that there is a scopophilic component to shopping and shoplifting.

In the second half of this chapter the investigation does consider how significant the visual component to shopping was in the nineteenth century, and whether increased visual provocation may have inspired more people to shoplift (although Jonathan Wild's activities are reviewed herein they are not looked at again). The significance of the visual component, connected to the display of goods in shops, is argued to be relevant to the epidemic of law breaking that occurred in the department stores of the nineteenth century and the enormous numbers of women found to be suffering from kleptomania.

The point being made about Wild and his female associates is that their case clearly reveals that in the eighteenth century shop theft occurred, that it had a clear visual component, and that shoplifting was even the chosen profession for some individuals who made their living from theft. Indeed, by 1824, the Newgate Calendar lists an account of the conviction of two women, Mary Jones and Elizabeth Paine, who were presumed to be 'career shoplifters'³⁵. They were of course duly transported, but their behaviour, perhaps like those of Wild's shoplifting associates, was either anticipated or mirrored by Daniel Defoe's fictional heroine, Moll Flanders.

Daniel Defoe is believed to have interviewed two Newgate prisoners who worked for Jonathan Wild in order to get his inspiration for the story of Moll Flanders whose name he clearly associates with lace. Perhaps in his novel we have not only information about the way women could live off crime, but also about a historical period in which the necessary conditions for shoplifting began to emerge. Yet shop theft, as mentioned even by genteel ladies, was known in the seventeenth century. For example, The Ladies Dictionary: Being A Gentle Entertainment for the Fair Sex (1694) as follows:

*'she would boldly go into a mercer's shop and there pretend to lay out a great deal of money; whereas her whole intention is to carry in her nap some piece of silk or satin ... she is commonly well clad.'*³⁶

Adele Pinch has suggested that such behaviour continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She suggests:

*'genteel ladies walking out of shops with stolen goods might productively be seen as analogues to the dandies who did not pay their tradesmen.'*³⁷

She goes on to argue that there was class antagonism between the newly-emerging shopkeeper class and the more established aristocratic class (who were the obvious consumers). By the nineteenth century historical sources show that an aristocratic contempt for shopkeepers had spread to the middle classes. Pinch looks at the credit system whereby shopkeepers extended credit and were routinely kept waiting for a whole year for their bills to be paid. She suggests:

*'walking out of shops with merchandise one hadn't actually payed for was the norm, rather than the exception. In this context, the difference between shoplifting and shopping indeed appears to be a difference of degree rather than of kind. Genteel shoppers constantly pushed at the boundaries of the credit system.'*³⁸

Whilst there is little empirical evidence to prove that genteel ladies were involved in shop theft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certainly shop theft had become so common place that by the early eighteenth century (1720) the police were offering amnesty to known criminals who would give up their criminal colleagues.

In the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century shoplifting was a capital offence, although no 'genteel' women appear to have been executed for it. It was mainly the poor who were hanged. Indeed, more people were executed in England at this time than in other countries in Europe, and there is no doubt that some of these cases included the punishment of alleged shop thieves. Whilst shop theft occurred in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, the logic of such punishment was connected to the idea that crime had a victim and that the law breaking demanded severe punishment. It is primarily in the nineteenth century, when the material culture of shops changed almost to self service, that shoplifting as we know it today can be seen to emerge. Indeed the nineteenth century acts of 'shoplifting' should be understood as 'shop theft' because they involve two components:

(i) a shop-keeper. Up until the emergence of self service, associated with department stores, shop theft involved a shop-keeper as well as a stolen object. Adele Pinch has pointed out:

*'open shelves were unknown until the late nineteenth century, and so a customer's access to all goods, in shops large and small, was mediated by the shopkeeper Thus shoplifting involved not a magical encounter between shopper and object of desire but a triangle of desire between shopper, object and shopkeeper.'*³⁹

Professional thieves of Georgian and later Regency England appear to have prided themselves on developing skills and other tricks for outwitting the shopkeeper.

(ii) a broker or receiver. Most objects stolen could not be easily disposed of because, before the eighteenth century, it was difficult to sell stolen goods publicly because they could be traced, particularly if they were hand made. As time went on, the populations of the cities expanded, mass produced goods were more available and opportunities increased for criminals because it became difficult to trace stolen goods. Indeed, Lemire argues that even before mass production:

*'by the mid eighteenth century the difficulty of tracing stolen goods was well known... and the London market in particular absorbed quantities of stolen goods... particularly second hand clothes.'*⁴⁰

Shoplifting in the late Eighteenth Century

The changing conditions of the eighteenth century warrant further review. Many historians argue that Britain was unique in the eighteenth century in witnessing what McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, editors of The Birth of A Consumer Society described as 'a consumer revolution'. They argue:

*'There was a consumer revolution in eighteenth century England. More men and women than ever before in human history enjoyed the experience of acquiring material possessions. Objects, which for centuries had been the privileged possessions of the rich, came within the space of a few generations, to be within the reach within a larger part of society than ever before, and for the first time, to be within the legitimate aspiration of almost all of it.'*⁴¹

McKendrick, Brower and Plumb also suggest that all but the poorest sections of society participated in a buoyant consumer economy. Indeed, many of the features of mass consumerism of the late nineteenth century are believed to have been in fruition in Britain in the eighteenth century. Foreign commentators, for example, frequently noted the fluidity of codes of dress in England, and even that farm labourers were found to be wearing fashionable clothes and wigs and that her ladyship was not always distinguishable from the milliner. The Sumptuary Laws⁴² that had regulated luxury goods in the seventeenth century had virtually disappeared by the early eighteenth century, perhaps as a reaction against the austerities of the Civil War period. In this context many of the features that were later associated with mass consumption such as the acquisition of identity through the consumption of objects, were already significant features of English culture in the eighteenth century. This situation may have affected shop theft, and not just that of second-hand clothes. It wasn't just the fact that stolen goods became more difficult to trace, people also became more socially and physically mobile because the whole question of identity was made more fluid by fashion and consumerism. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it became possible for some criminals to travel across the towns and country and, to some extent, use their anonymity to masquerade in the way that Shirley Pitts did in the twentieth century, thereby escaping early detection of their role in crime. Lemire argues that theft of second-hand clothing in pre-industrial and early industrial England was a significant phenomenon in helping individuals carve out new identities for themselves, and that *'such criminal behaviour must be reconsidered'*⁴³. Gareth Stedman Jones believes that

at this time society became subject to different types of labour distinctions and that this affected theft where semi-criminal children specialised in certain types of theft.⁴⁴

Lemire does incorrectly, in my opinion, use the phrase 'shoplifting' in regard to the theft of second-hand clothes from shops (shop theft is probably more likely what happened because shops usually had a shop-keeper and no customer access to open shelves). However, Lemire's main point is that such thefts of second-hand clothes had a role to play in enabling the lower echelons of society to participate more fully in the consumer economy of the eighteenth century, and perhaps to experience some fluidity of identity. The mobility of objects and appearance, that become more fluid as the centuries passed, is something that Shirley Pitts used to her advantage.

Indeed, the late eighteenth century shopping, and its obverse shop theft, had started to become a common event because more goods were circulating in the shops. Arguing from a Marxist perspective, the historian Eric Hobsbawm writes in The Age of Revolution:

*'Some time in the 1780s, and for the first time in human history, the shackles were taken off the productive powers of human societies, which henceforth became capable of the constant, rapid and up to the present limitless multiplication of men, goods and services ... no previous society had been able to break through the ceiling which a pre-industrial society structure, defective science and technology, and consequently periodic breakdown, famine and death impose on production.'*⁴⁵

Although the term Industrial Revolution was not used until the 1830s, Hobsbawm argues that it is important in describing the beginning of a process which started well before the Victorian period.

'Indeed, if the sudden, qualitative and fundamental transformation, which happened in or about the 1780s was not a revolution then the word has no common sense

*meaning. The Industrial Revolution was not indeed an episode with a beginning and an end. To ask when it was 'complete' is senseless for its essence was that henceforth revolutionary change became the norm.'*⁴⁶

More recently revisionist historians such as John Styles have argued that the idea that the late eighteenth century witnessed a consumer 'revolution' is an exaggerated claim. In his essay 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design', John Styles questions the use of the word 'revolution':

*'There is little doubt that the range and quantity consumed in England... did expand in the course of the eighteenth century, but it is much more questionable whether that expansion was so fast and so all transforming as to constitute in any meaningful sense a revolution.'*⁴⁷

Nevertheless, whether one places the consumer revolution in the late seventeenth, late eighteenth or even late nineteenth century, it is clear that new revolutionary forms of consumption emerged in a short period of two hundred years. Such forms were certainly already in place by the late eighteenth century, although this investigation accepts that such conditions do not compare with the mass consumption of the late nineteenth century.

ENDNOTES

¹ DEFOE, D., The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, London, Penguin Books, 1987.

² GAMMAN L. Gone Shopping - The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, London, Signet Penguin, 1996. <http://www.twbooks.co.uk/reviews/gamman.html> See p.1-2. The book is recommended by main reviewer on p.1 but the next review, p.2 is written by an anonymous literary scholar! This review offers a High Culture dismissal of what was meant to a true crime popular read. The reviewer, "J.R.C." suggests Gone Shopping is 'rambling and episodic' and unfavourably compares it to Daniel Defoe's novel. The review also complains that Shirley, unlike Moll Flanders does not make a true and appropriately contrite confession. Suffice it to say Gone Shopping would have rambled less if I had made it up.

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⁴ DEFOE, D., The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, London,

Penguin Books, 1987, p.203.

⁵ SIMPSON, J.A., & WIENER, E.S., Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition Vol 15, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, Shop theft, before the nineteenth century, invariably included a shop keeper and some form of trickery to get stolen items out of shops. After self service and open shelves emerged with mass consumerism of the late nineteenth century, shoplifting as we know it today, started to occur almost as a form of 'victimless' crime.

⁶ WALSH, D.P., Shoplifting: Controlling a Major Crime, London, Macmillan, 1978, p.23.

⁷ Ibid.

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⁹ WALSH, D.P., Shoplifting: Controlling a Major Crime, London, Macmillan, 1978, p.1.

¹⁰ WALSH, D.P. *ibid*.

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¹² McINTOSH, M., 'Changes in the Organisation of Thieving' (Ed), COHEN, S., Images of Deviance, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p.98-129.

¹³ *ibid*. p.102.

¹⁴ *ibid*. p.104.

¹⁵ HOWSON, G., It Takes a Thief: The Life and Times of Jonathan Wild, London, Century Hutchinson, 1987, p.156.

¹⁶ EDWARDS, L.E., Shoplifting and Shrinkage Protection for Stores, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1958, p.4-5.

¹⁷ EDWARDS, L.E., *ibid*, p.8.

¹⁸ EDWARDS L.E., *ibid*, p.8.

¹⁹ The Newgate Calendar: Comprising Interesting Memoirs of the Most Notorious Characters Who Have Been Convicted of Outrages on the Laws of England, London, J. Robins, Vol.5.

²⁰ The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith, Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse, Exactly Collected and Now Published for the Delight and Recreation of All Merry Disposed Persons, London, printed for W. Gilbertson at the Bible in Giltspur-Street without Newgate, 1662.

²¹ NASH, JAY ROBERT, Look For The Woman, London, Harrap, 1981, p.109.

²² The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith, Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse, Exactly Collected and Now Published for the Delight and Recreation of All Merry Disposed Persons, London, printed for W. Gilbertson at the Bible in Giltspur-Street without Newgate, 1662.

²³ HOWSON, GERALD, 'Who Was Moll Flanders?', The Times Literary Supplement, 18 January, 1968, p.64.

²⁴ GALFORD, E., Mal Cutpurse, London, Virago, 1984.

²⁵ LUBBOCK, J., The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550 - 1960, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1995, p.87-137.

²⁶ KLOCKARS, C.B., The Professional Fence, London, Tavistock, 1974, p.16.

²⁷ HOWSON, G., It Takes a Thief: The Life and Times of Jonathan Wild, London, Century Hutchinson, 1987, p.156.

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²⁹ HOWSON, G., The Thief Taker General: The Rise and Fall of Jonathan Wild, London, Hatchinson, 1970, Introduction.

³⁰ HOWSON, G., Who was Moll Flanders? Times Literary Supplement, 18 January 1968, p. 64.

³¹ HOWSON, G., *ibid* 1974, p.259.

³² HOWSON, G., *ibid* 1974, p.260

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³⁴ DEFOE, D., The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, London, Penguin Books, 1987, p.5-25, Introduction by Juliet Mitchell.

³⁵ The Newgate Calendar: Comprising Interesting Memoirs of the Most Notorious Characters Who Have Been Convicted of Outrages on the Laws of England, London, J. Robins, Vol 5.

³⁶ Quoted in ABELSON, ELAINE S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York, Oxford, 1989. On page 215 the author identifies a definition for shoplifting in seventeenth century England originally in The Ladies Dictionary: Being A General Entertainment For the Fair Sex, London, John Dunton, 1694, p.477.

³⁷ PINCH, A., 'Stealing Happiness; Shoplifting in Early Nineteenth-Century England' in SPYER, P., (Ed), Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces, New York and

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³⁹ PINCH, A., *ibid*, p.127.

⁴⁰ LEMIRE, B., 'The Theft of Clothes and Popular Consumerism in Early Modern England', Journal of Social History, 24, 1990, p.258-259.

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⁴⁴ STEADMAN-JONES, G., Outcast London: A Study In The Relationship Between Classes In Victorian London, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, p.71.

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SECTION TWO**CHAPTER TWO**

**Tracing the Emergence of Shoplifting in the
Changing Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Department Store Interior**

The last chapter of this investigation has looked at theft in terms of the emergence of changing consumer conditions. This chapter will go on to argue that a paradigm shift occurred in the nineteenth century when department stores, self services, anonymity, open shelves and the apparently victimless crime of shoplifting came to characterise the definition as we understand it today. However, any consideration of theft must start from the assumption that up until the nineteenth century the motivation for theft from shops is directly connected with levels of poverty.

Early attempts to remove shoplifting from the list of capital offences, and to change the 'shoplifting' law were made in 1810, 1813 and 1816, as Samuel Romilly¹ suggests, but were successfully defeated. This is not surprising. In law poverty has never been recognised as an 'excuse' for stealing, even in extreme conditions where people starved rather than steal a loaf of bread. In such harsh conditions the law breaker was rarely seen as a victim, but instead as a dishonest criminal (who should willingly starve rather than steal). The pathologising, but nevertheless more liberal, discourses concerned with the mitigating circumstances of crime (such as those which explained kleptomania) that emerged in the nineteenth century, at first excluded the poor from their accounts. This may be because the laws on shoplifting were championed by those devoted to protecting the shopkeepers' rights. Certainly, in a punitive culture where fear of crime was part of a reactionary political climate, poverty to the point of starvation was not seen as a mitigating factor in theft. The climate of isolation and suspicion of radical politics which resulted from the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon caused a heighten sensitivity to issues of social deviance. Within this reactionary climate new

attitudes towards criminality were beginning to emerge as Foucault identifies in Discipline and Punish², attitudes which were beginning to see and make criminals responsible for their actions. Punishment was no longer seen as the right of the state to give and take life. Instead, punishment began to express a new concept of state power, one based on self regulation: the role of punishment increasingly became one in which the perpetrator was made aware of his/her responsibility for a crime. In 1820 Sir James Mackintosh finally succeeded in revising the Act on shoplifting when he was able to abolish the death penalty for the offence of '*stealing five shillings from a shop*' in favour of Transportation orders. In reducing shoplifting from being a capital offence to one that instead invoked Transportation orders, the law on shoplifting revealed itself to be moving towards a new criminal paradigm in which the perpetrator made amends for shop theft. In reality this law was often unworkable because juries would let people off lightly by circumventing the law and suggesting that the value of goods stolen were under five shillings (when they may have not been) and fines for first offences started to become far more common.

There were further reforms to the law in the nineteenth century which had the effect of replacing Transportation orders with imprisonment and fines. Local judges were given considerable latitude in sentencing: there was wide variation in the treatment of offenders and between new enfranchised social groups emerging in consumer society. At this time more people had access to goods and services than ever before, nevertheless dire poverty was still an increasing part of city life, not least because the population of cities continued to grow. The Victorian journalist Henry Mayhew made this point when he observed:

'There are thousands of neglected children loitering about the low neighbourhoods of the metropolis and prowling the streets, begging and stealing their daily bread. They are to be found in Westminster, Whitechapel, Shoreditch, St. Giles, New Cut, Lambeth, the Borough

and other localities... These juvenile thieves find an ample field for plunder at the stalls and shop doors in Whitechapel, Shoreditch, Edgware Road and similar localities, where many articles are exposed for sale, which can be easily disposed of to some of the low fences...

*As these young fellows advance in years they branch off into three different classes, determined partly by their natural disposition, and partly by the circumstances in which they are placed. Many continue through life to work as common thieves, others become expert pick-pockets, and some ultimately figure as burglars...These common thieves are of both sexes and of various ages.'*³

Whilst Mayhew doesn't really discuss shoplifting, the poor were transported for such acts and by the mid nineteenth century the difference in the treatment of the poor and the middle class in respect of the crime of shoplifting is very significant. The memoir written by Eliza Smith from Dublin who was transported to Australia for shoplifting in 1839, found as a manuscript in the British Library, reveals that in the nineteenth century poor women who had more than one conviction for shoplifting were treated very harshly indeed. Eliza Smith says that after *'the Lord took my baby unto himself, I now did not care what happened to me.'* She goes on to explain, *'on the 29th of September I became acquainted with a woman whose line of life was shoplifting and with her I went into many shops to deprive my fellow creatures of their property. In October I was taken and sent to Newgate for trial and sentenced to six months imprisonment in Grange Gordon Prison... I came out determined not to return to my old trade. I often thought to gather up a few shillings and give up my robbing, so strong was my love of spirits that it made me keep on.'*⁴

Eliza Smith appears to accept her destiny of transportation, in her confession to shoplifting, because she saw herself as *'depriving fellow creatures of their property'* and relied on religious discourse to frame her account. Her intention in writing such a confession may include both making her peace with her God as well as trying to

persuade those with power that she had atoned and seen the error of her ways and was worthy of redemption. With the help of a philanthropic Lady prison visitor, Mary John Knott, who wrote the introduction to the confession, Eliza Smith repented of her sins in Grange Gordon Prison, but was nevertheless sent, as she put it *'to a distant land, and neither my husband or children know any thing of me.'*⁵

This testimony should be compared with the writing of Harriet Martineau, who wrote outraged in 1849 of a middle class woman who had been, in her opinion, 'unfairly' imprisoned for similar behaviour.

*'It should appear to a stranger from another hemisphere a strange thing that we should boast of our Christian civilisation, while we had such a spectacle as was seen even at a later time than this. An elderly lady, of good station and fortune, might be seen on the treadmill in Cold Bath Fields prison, in the jail-dress, and with her hair cut close - for the offence of shoplifting. It is difficult to write this fact; and it must be painful to read it; but the truths of the time must be told.'*⁶

By the 1840s, when Eliza Smith and other poor women like her were being regularly transported for shoplifting, middle class women started to receive more lenient treatment. In fact, between 1840 and 1890, they were almost excused for shoplifting. In Victorian England, as Elaine Abelson has documented, it was usually the case that rich women were diagnosed as suffering from 'shopping mania'⁷ while the poor were either transported or imprisoned. Indeed, Harriet Martineau's outraged comment, and similar accounts by doctors, social commentators and penal reformers, probably helped establish the sort of moral hegemony that provided the right conditions for the psychiatric discourse of Kleptomania to emerge, but it took many years before such liberal thinking was extended to the working class. On one level this discourse of Kleptomania, as discussed in detail in Chapter Three that follows, can be seen as a more humane approach to shoplifting. But the discourse can also be seen, in the Foucaultian sense, as exemplification of the growing power of scientific and medical

discourses to define and control the behaviour of women. By the 1890s Kleptomania, as an explanation of shoplifting by middle class women, had become so commonplace that there was little question of the stores prosecuting genteel women (poor women of course were prosecuted as common thieves). Such an extreme situation and epidemic numbers of middle class women suddenly involved in breaking the law by shoplifting, can only be understood, perhaps, with reference to the history of shopping which significantly changed in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of the department store.

Shopping Reviewed

By the nineteenth century, with increased industrialisation, significant changes to the organisation of daily life had occurred. The emergence of the new forms of shopping experience such as the covered arcades of the early nineteenth century and the department store of the late nineteenth century, had profound consequences, in the first instance particularly, on the daily lives of middle class women. As Elaine Abelson observes:

*'The profound change in consumption patterns was the direct consequence of technological developments and market expansion. The links between production and consumption were clear. Needs multiplied because there was more to be had and an increased standard of living that made more things feasible.'*⁸

The idea central to newly emerging consumer discourses, that 'shop bought' as opposed to 'home made' was preferable, was part of a massive ideological shift that affected the lives of middle class women. It meant that for women shopping, even more than ever, became a part of efficient household management as well as a suitable leisure activity. Of course middle class women had always gone shopping. But this period saw the establishment of modern forms of advertising and the growth of consumer magazines

which played such a crucial role in educating the female consumer in fashion and taste - a role previously occupied by the personal relationship between the shopkeeper and the consumer. In this new shopping arena the creation of desire by ideas that new modern goods were preferable to home made, allowed the ideology of planned obsolescence to influence the lives of the middle class more than ever before. This period also saw the emergence of a more impersonal, 'mass' consumer society, magazine advertising and shifts in retail design via self service and open shelving. For instance, the idea that commodities do not just involve a relationship between buyer and seller, was changed by the recognition that commodities needed a context or 'theme'. This was achieved through the design of shops where the relationship of one object to another (product differentiation) was rethought completely. The new idea that shopping was so important that it should not be seen as simply a functional act but rather as an activity involving a pleasurable as well as sensory and visual experience served to reinforce these changes.

Integral to the changing experience of shopping was the new role of fashion design which linked dress and accessories to what Martin Jay has identified as an overall modern 'scopic regime'.⁹ Thus a woman would not only be bombarded by consumer messages from magazines that got her into the department store in the first place, but the design of the department store environment with its emphasis on display and visual excess, offering a plenitude of textures, colours, and visual codes, meant that shopping *became a social event*. Even the clothing of the female shopper, who now presented herself as the new woman shopping about town, was involved in the relay of looks and exchange. Whatever the new scopic regimes, and the consumer logic that effected the presentation of the female self in society, the fashions of the period provided good cover for shoplifting. Indeed, some of the outfits worn almost provided a screen for the middle class women (or any others successfully masquerading as middle class) to shoplift. In the Victorian period, as Chesney has mentioned, fashion as well as morality often screened women shoplifters from detection because:

*'The sheer size of a crinoline shalwed, puff sleeved woman could make her a useful screen for thieves in public places. A woman accomplice was not only less apt to be suspected in the first place but much more of a nuisance to deal with if she was. Victorians of all ranks could be touchy about the treatment of women: feminine modesty was a sensitive topic and a Constable needed to be sure of his ground before taking an apparently decent woman into custody and carting her off to a station house where she could be searched by a matron. ... If she broke down she would have to be removed in a cab, for which, if there was no conviction, the officer was likely to pay.'*¹⁰

Emile Zola made a similar point, but his descriptions also revealed some of the humour that could be generated in the public imagination about women thieves:

*'Then, without any transition, the policeman told them how that very morning he had arrested a fine, strapping young woman who had just been shoplifting in a pork butchers. When they had stripped her at the station they found ten sausages on her suspended round her body, front and rear.'*¹¹

In the popular imagination, well dressed women, and both shopping *and* shoplifting, were now being connected in a discourse anxious about the new leisure pursuits of women. Shoplifting was also connected to mental instability and/or to the biological inferiority of women, who were thought to be too weak to be left to their own devices when shopping. In fact, middle class women who were found to have stolen things were not seen as criminals, but rather as too weak to avoid impulse stealing, or the disease known as kleptomania. Patricia O'Brien observed:

*'If they were women who had money and still stole, one could conclude they were suffering from debilitate mentale. By this means shoplifting became associated with low intelligence and weakness of spirit in bourgeois women.'*¹²

There were many explanations of kleptomania that emerged between 1840 and 1920, most of which stressed genetic or biological causes, as to why otherwise decent middle class women stole things from department stores. Yet few of these accounts take into consideration the changed shopping experience of women confronted with the new alluring visual culture of the department store and the excitement and social freedoms it gave them, preferring instead to concentrate on genetic or biological explanations to explain theft by 'the fair sex'.

Shopping gave women many new freedoms as Christopher Breward has identified,¹³ and it is no wonder that patriarchal anxieties about women (issues about sexual and social control), should have seized upon shoplifting incidents as clear evidence of the need to exert control over women. Even though the discourse of Kleptomania was a covert discourse of control it became increasingly significant in framing the debate about shoplifting. Few medical practitioners who spoke through it considered the material changes that had effected the department store, or the relationship of these changes to the rise in shoplifting. Instead they preferred to blame biological 'flaws' in women's genetic dispositions. Those medical practitioners who were aware of contemporary arguments about conspicuous consumption and moved away from biological discourse by trying to address the significance of material changes, were few and far between. But some did manage it. For example, Bucknill (1863) observed:

*'...in the new and peculiar duty of life called "shopping". Can we be surprised that when the means fail to gratify the desires thus stimulated ... that in some instances the desire of the eye should prove too strong for the moral sense?'*¹⁴

Observations like these raised arguments about the changed scopic regime created by the department store, and about the issue of visual provocation regarding some forms of shoplifting, often misdiagnosed as Kleptomania. These arguments are looked at in the next section of this paper, which attempts to conceptualise the emergence of the

department store in terms of ideas about commodity fetishism and the society of the spectacle.

(ii) Visual Provocation: Shop Design and 'Kleptomania' Reviewed

The precise date of the emergence of modern forms of shopping is the subject of some debate. Historians have argued for and against the idea that the late nineteenth century department store was prefigured by the arcades of the early and mid nineteenth century (such as Burlington Arcade and the Paris arcades). The historian Alison Adinburgham (1966) has gone much further back and implied that the Royal Exchange of the late seventeenth century also prefigured the emergence of the department store.¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, described the Paris arcades of the mid nineteenth century as already obsolescent by the end of the century and as representing 'the pre-history of modernity'.¹⁶ These arguments about when modern forms of consumerism actually occurred are directly linked to historical arguments about modernity and the modern which need to be addressed.

There are many theories of modernity and it should be noted that the idea tends to be conflated with 'modernism' on the one hand and the 'modern' on the other. For the purposes of this investigation ideas about the modern will be used in a general sense to mean simply the new. Modernism, by contrast, is an ideological movement which emerges at the beginning of the twentieth century with a clear and often utopian understanding of the role of design and the designer in changing the world. Modernity is a more slippery concept. It is often used to describe a cultural experience rather than a specific movement. It emerged in late nineteenth century sociology (via Durkheim, Simmel et al) as a way of explaining the cultural features of mass urban society where cultural experience changed so significantly that its effects could be seen clearly in the psyches of individuals. Changes in cultural life and subjectivity which appeared to contribute to more suicides than in previous periods, for example, were viewed by

Durkheim as characteristics of modernity and alienation of industrial life.¹⁷ Perhaps the best known account of the experience of modernity is articulated by Walter Benjamin who analysed the ways of life created in late nineteenth century France as a result of the emergence of new forms of shopping. He considered how this changed the people's sense of material culture. The proliferation in the range and diversity of commodities, together with the speeding up of communications and the introduction of new forms of technology such as electrical lighting, power and cinema, created a sense of limitless possibility combined with sensory overload. For Walter Benjamin, shopping was seen as a process which negated other forms of experience, an extension of the sort of disavowal that Marx described in Part One of Capital Volume One where he discussed the effect of commodity fetishism on the relation between people which '*assumes the fantastic form of a relation between things*'.¹⁸ Michael Taussig, in summarising Marx's position, suggested that commodity fetishism involved:

*'The attribution of life autonomy, power and even dominance to otherwise inanimate objects and presupposes the draining of these qualities from the human factors who bestow the attribution.'*¹⁹

Similarly when Walter Benjamin wrote about the arcades, he argued that the life and vitality which appeared in the shops, constructed through visual display among other things, were nothing more than the '*phantasmagorias of progress*' involving '*a staged spectacle and not reality*'.²⁰ Explicit in Benjamin's account (which does reveal a unique understanding of the visual culture of the period) was the idea that the abundance of goods in the shops created for the individuals shopping in the arcades a sense of modernity and the real, which obscured the real political conditions of existence. Indirectly, Benjamin's early account also makes reference to changing spatial arrangements and different way of conceptualising them. Danny Miller who, though critical of Benjamin, nevertheless summarised his position as follows:

*'Writing in the Hegelian tradition, there was no worse crime than the systematic deprivation of consciousness. The shopper in the arcades is deluged with fantastic images that have as their purpose the mystification of the shopper, a dream world of mass culture that hides the failure of political progress, in the image of progress as material abundance.'*²¹

Certainly when Sir Joseph Paxton built the Crystal Palace of 1851, the design itself was an unprecedented attempt to represent an image of progress through a building. Its size, range and scope and the spectacular pleasures offered visitors at The Great Exhibition of 1851 was unlike anything else before and was intended to represent the material abundance of this cultural moment. Thomas Richards, in his excellent book on The Commodity Culture of Victorian England (1991)²² has argued that the Crystal Palace - and the Great Exhibition of 1851 - was so significant in connecting progress with material goods that it *'helped to shape the way advertisers represented commodities for the rest of the century and to define the most familiar imperatives of modern commodity culture.'*²³ These imperatives included the idea that the spectacle of objects on display should monopolise attention. Indeed, the 1851 Exhibition was unique in that the visual spectacle itself was the commodity because people paid for tickets and could only look at the vast array of commercial objects. The design of the Crystal Palace, particularly the way it constructed objects to be looked at, adapted garden architecture as well as the by then familiar shopping arcades, but introduced them on a much larger scale. Alongside developments in steel and glass, the creation of the Crystal Palace was to greatly influence the design of the department stores that developed in the later nineteenth century. As Thomas Richards observes:

'Nothing happened at the Great Exhibition but the sight of things just sitting there, mute and solid. The design of the building, however, produced a kinetic environment for inert objects. Like a prototypical department store, it placed them in a climate-controlled landscape, it flooded them with light, it isolated them in departments, it channelled people through them, into the focal points of aesthetic and linguistic

*contemplation. Its peculiar ambience charged things with special significance and made it difficult to perceive them as static. In many different and complementary ways, as we shall see, the Crystal Palace succeeded in producing a space that drove consumers to distraction.*²⁴

Thomas Richards goes on to suggest:

*"...the Crystal Palace placed the commodity at the centre of cultural life and invited visitors to lose themselves in a utopia of visible commodities."*²⁵

This large greenhouse aimed at the Victorian gentry and middle class was not however, organised for shopping. Instead, the Crystal Palace provided an enclosed environment for exhibition leisure and vicarious consumption of the objects on display.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that the way the design of the 1851 exhibition, including the layout and presentation of commodities, encouraged the idea of looking and consuming. Indeed, Thomas Richards suggests it: *'systematised and synthesised elements of spectacle by putting them altogether under one roof in the service of manufactured objects'*²⁶

The concept of a large, enclosed space for shopping and leisure did not become an important design concept until after the building of the Crystal Palace in the mid nineteenth century. As already mentioned, shopping environments such as London's Burlington Arcade or the Royal Opera Arcade off Pall Mall, which dates from 1822, were far more modest in scale than the glass architecture of the Crystal Palace. Like those nineteenth century arcades on the Right Bank in Paris, perhaps these arcades should be seen as upmarket precursors of today's contemporary shopping centres, rather than of the large shopping malls. They were lavish in their display and in the way they created spectacles of conspicuous merchandise in order to inspire shoppers to buy "imaginatively". However, they were not as lavish as the department stores that

emerged later. As Thomas Richards suggests the mode of consumption was changing in the second half of the nineteenth century:

“Many were aware, as the Westminster Review pointed out, that “the general system of shop-keeping seems on the eve of change,” but few dared to hazard a precise prediction about what this system would look like, and there was much nostalgia for the good old days (whenever they were) when the hard sell was still soft. The Exhibition was not a blueprint but a prototype, a model on which later stages of development are based and against which they can be judged.”²⁷

Critics have remarked how, in the nineteenth century, both the shop windows and the shop interiors of the arcades offered shoppers the opportunity to linger and look. Baudelaire, for example, noted that the shop windows ‘gives the flaneur somewhere to rest his eyes’.²⁸ The nineteenth century flaneur with ‘his aestheticizing gaze’ was described lingering over objects and people without arousing undue attention. Reciprocal looking was achieved, as Pasi Falk points out, not only through eye-to-eye contact with other individuals, but also because “the flaneur presented themselves to be looked at (the ‘exhibitionist’ dandy)”.²⁹ Mica Nava has argued that in the nineteenth century women too, despite arguments to the contrary, were observers and recorders of modernity. She believes that the female flaneur exists because there was ‘a rapid expansion of what counted as respectable, or at least acceptable, public space for unaccompanied women. The category included the great exhibitions, galleries, libraries, restaurants, tea-rooms, hotels and department stores.’³⁰ Certainly by the 1870s the arcades had made way for department stores: the physical size of retail units started to increase significantly, as did the quantity of products for sale in them. Also, at this point, the arrangements of goods on display became more and more elaborate, as Abelson (1989) has identified:

‘When Siegel Cooper of Chicago was planning its New York store in the 1890s, the intention was to “include as many departments as can possibly be

put under one roof”: which in this case meant birds and animals (including presumably the elephant): wines and liquors, groceries, hardware, sewing machines, drugs, meats, a bank, a barber shop, a jeweller, a photo gallery and an intelligence office [an employment agency for domestic help]. Given this sort of merchandising, the carnival was implicit.’³¹

It was in department stores of the late nineteenth century that the visual component to shopping was significantly highlighted and re-emphasised. Interestingly though touch too now had a role to play. For the first time goods could be handled as well as looked at and it is no wonder so many women, as documented by Elaine Abelson, felt compelled by touch as well as viewing to steal. It was not just the commodities that looked provocative; the architecture of stores such as Harrods and Selfridges in London, which accommodated ideas about consumption as spectacle made everything more available and borrowed ideas from the circus about entertainment and spectacle. The American stores also embraced and extended ideas about themed retail culture. Huge department stores like Macy’s in New York did such a good trade and offered such visual stimuli and provocation that by 1870 the stores found themselves in a dilemma over whether or not to prosecute the persistent middle class female shoplifters who, when arrested, appeared intoxicated by the things they had stolen.³²

At the time of writing Capital, Marx had no inkling of the sort of ‘conspicuous consumption’ that came to characterise the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The original explanation given by Marx in ‘The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret’ locates fetishism as a consequence of the *exchange* of commodities rather than the *consumption* of commodities. Walter Benjamin tries to extend this argument to shopping and to the way the true meaning of things is mystified by illusion. He shares Marx’s concern about a material culture that is able to confer status upon the owners of objects (as Veblen describes). Benjamin, more so than Marx, is fascinated with the way visual illusions invisibly enter human life along with the commodity form. Benjamin’s writing is crucial because it comprehends the way Victorian culture,

through the emergence of the department store and forms of modern advertising it engendered, gave rise to increasing speciality and changed ways of looking. Later, twentieth century Marxist critics concerned about the widespread influence of advertising carrying consumer mythologies as well as grand claims for many new products, have taken up Benjamin's ideas and assessed what Guy Debord was to later describe as 'the Society of the Spectacle'.³³ This will be discussed in the next section.

Reviewing The Twentieth Century Society Of Spectacle And Scopophilic Motivation To Shoplifting

Although the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács, writing some fifty years after Marx, never directly discussed the 'Spectacle', he nevertheless virtually explains it. When he describes the way the commodity form invisibly enters human life so that individuals are unable to imagine or fully comprehend non fetishistic social relations, outside capitalist logic, he locates the space the Spectacle occupies - i.e. virtually everything. Lukács argued that capitalist production is inseparable from commodity production and its logic is such that it *reifies* itself to the extent that it assumes there can be no relationship of people outside the world of commodities. He states:

*'The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of "ghostly objectivity" cannot therefore content itself with the reduction of all objects for the ratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man: his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are the things which he can "own or dispose" of like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic qualities into play without their being subjected increasingly to the reifying process.'*³⁴

Lukács' writings on reification were adopted by the Frankfurt School to help them describe what they pessimistically saw in terms of the development of consumer culture in America after the second world war. The malling of America that occurred after the 1930s had significantly prepared the way for further development of the department store. Hugh Ferriss's fantasy of the Metropolis Store of Tomorrow in 1929 reflected a shift in the conceptualisation of shopping because it took into the account integration of shopping and transport which resulted from the widespread availability of automobiles. The Victorians had walked or travelled by carriage to the department store as a matter of course but by the early twentieth century the motor car was to change all that. Indeed, by the 1950s, many architects like Victor Govern, who is regarded as the 'Father of the Mall', identified that the American landscape, in particular, was so massive with no one obvious town centre, that it made sense to capitalise on the surplus of cheap land out of town. By the 1950s, shopping in the USA at least became intrinsically connected with design for the 'driver' living in suburbia, who needed a centre to focus upon. All the features of the former department store were there but with the added value of the commodity culture the new malls offered a complex blend of image, theatre and 'Buy More' ideology. The undesirables were also screened out and downtown, poor non-consumers were abandoned.

There were few areas of social life, by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that remained unaffected by the massive extension of commodity culture and everything and everyone was touched by it. As Thomas Richards has pointed out :

*'For a series of fleeting moments capitalist representations saturated social space with a world of self referential signs. At its height, however, that saturation never lasted for more than a few weeks - about the life span of a media event today. By the turn of the century advertising had taken precedence over the manufactured object, but even so it remained grounded in real things...'*³⁵

By the early twentieth century the commodity culture generated in the Victorian period was well established across Europe and America, not least because of the modern advertising that started to emerge in the nineteenth century and continued to influence the form in which modern communication developed in the twentieth century. When Guy Debord started to write about the spectacle of commodities in France in 1967³⁶, the process of objectification that had started in the Victorian period, was already one hundred years old. In the twentieth century Guy Debord was able to view the consequences of the emergence of Victorian commodity culture and advertising: his book describes the way the process of specularity has established itself and has been able to transform people into things or mere abstractions. He concludes that by the late 1960's all social life is saturated by the commodity culture of advertised spectacle, to the extent that social relations are objectified and there is virtually no space outside of the spectacle. He asserts that human thinking, as well as human spaces and scopic regimes, are dominated by the complex and imaginative discourse of commodity culture. But, unlike his contemporary Baudrillard, he accepts that the discourse of commodity culture can be challenged, as shall be discussed in the conclusion to Section Two.

The effects of consumer culture on British life were to become most significant during the post war period but during the 1960s and 1970s there were still alternative discourses in the areas of social planning that offered some resistance to the commodity culture of the department store. For example, in the 1960s, the first shopping centres that were being built in the new towns in Essex (where London communities wiped out by the blitz were re-housed) were informed by a utopian architectural discourse (modernism) as well as by consumer logic. Ideas about leisure shopping and increased profits were not the only factors informing the building of such centres. Many of them obviously had a consumer rationale. But a *civic purpose* was connected more with town planning directives. However, perhaps as anticipated by Guy Debord by the late 1970s, retail culture was becoming increasingly Americanised and the dominance of civic objectives by as early as 1976 was beginning to be surpassed by commercial

objectives. Many critics have argued that the emergence of the shopping malls only became a significant phenomenon in Britain in the late 1980s when, under Margaret Thatcher, the objectives of commodity culture were no longer tempered by others. Figures published in Retail Week in October 1988 found that there were 550 new shopping centres being built (excluding retail parks) in Britain at that time.³⁷ Contrast that figure with 660 shopping centres built in Britain between 1965 and 1986 and it becomes clear why critics Carl Gardner and Julie Sheppard (1989) ironically comment:

*'Clearly, in terms of their centrality to the environment, the resources they consume, the architectural and design attention lavished on them and the new forms of devotion they inspire, shopping centres could be described as the secular cathedrals of the late twentieth century, dedicated to the twin gods of consumption and profit.'*³⁸

One of the reasons of the popularity of the cathedral metaphor is the disembodied quality of the desire system of shopping experience. Another and more material reason is similarities between the ground plans of malls and religious buildings, with features which seem to correspond to naves, crossings and ambulatories, etc. The building of the Brent Cross Shopping Centre in north London in the late 1970s, which in economic terms became one of Britain most successful malls, was measured solely in retail terms. Brent Cross adopted an interior plan based on the USA model with the mall anchored at each end by a department store. Its commercial success, with a turnover of £130 million by 1978, inspired many imitators. Such changes in the organisation of shopping also inspired many more shoplifters, as Shirley Pitts clearly describes in Appendix 1, where she outlines her own changing shoplifting techniques which respond to the changing store environments in which she finds herself. Indeed, it is not surprising that proportionate to the population, the number of convicted shoplifters has doubled since the 1950s, because during this time the way we do our shopping has radically altered. Shopping centres and the more elaborate shopping malls like the Metro Centre, tend to protect the consumer from reality by screening out negative features and social conflict in favour of sanitised fantasies. These fantasies create a

hyper-reality that for some is better than reality. As architectural historian Margaret Crawford has commented about shopping malls:

*'Reality always has its detrimental aspects like crime, homeless people, dirt. In a situation of hyper-reality like a shopping mall, everything is reduced to a set of agreed upon themes, so people feel more comfortable here than in a real situation. The accurate urban reality is replaced by the falsehood of the shopping mall.'*³⁹

Whilst I take issue with Crawford's unquestioning use of the word "reality", I do agree shopping malls manipulate perception by controlling where people look, and how they look. Indeed, the architectural blueprints and design and the visual communication which achieves control of the human gaze in shopping malls often transform it into the shopping gaze. Martin Jay has described how modern vision is connected with controlling things from a distance (the rationalist perspective). Certainly the detachment and mastery implicit and explicit in terms of the control of space and vision in the shopping mall is connected to such logic. The contained shopping space, all on one level, offers the consumer the fantasy that he/she is the master or mistress of all that is presented to his/her eye for consumption. Jean Baudrillard suggested that these sophisticated retail displays come before us:

*'in the image of the gift and the inexhaustible and spectacular prodigality of the feast'*⁴⁰.

Is it any wonder, surrounded by muzac in a safe environment offering so many warm and inviting messages, that some people feel compelled to carry things away, even if they can't really afford to pay for them and resort to credit cards or even stealing.

Baudrillard's observations about the person who overspends in the mall together with my own about the person who shoplifts, are based on the assumption that the hyper-reality of shopping centres themselves promotes more thefts. Yet despite the fact that

some criminological research has shown that 1 in 8.5 of normal shoppers steal things⁴¹, critics like Gardner and Sheppard (1989) have argued that thefts in some of the newer British shopping malls of the 1980s are *'lower than city centre stores.'* They relate details of *'one estimate claiming that only 0.3 per cent of visitors commit crime'*⁴². Perhaps, therefore, the alleged issue of lower shoplifting in malls is connected with the focus on signs of surveillance, security staff and alarm detection that is offered to shoppers in the shopping mall as a part of the scopic regime. There are no definitive studies to corroborate comparative figures between malls and shopping centres across such a broad geographical location such as England and Wales. However, shoplifting statistics (measured across England and Wales) discussed later in Chapter Six do reveal that since the 1950s shoplifting levels have increased as a direct consequence of the change to self service. Such a rise in shoplifting demands further analysis. Certainly it is the contention of this investigation that emphasis on visual provocation does promote greater sales, but inevitably attracts more shoplifting. Indeed, this investigation would go as far as to suggest that some shopping experiences, like those generated by lavish department stores and shopping malls, virtually inspire people to take things they don't need. The social arrangement of space in these environments, the relay of looks created between the products and the consumer, coupled with the message to consume now and pay later, virtually encourage people to pick things up and 'forget' there is a price to be paid for the goods in question.

Conclusion

Shoplifting became intrinsically linked to new forms of self service organisation and open shelves, commencing in the nineteenth century, that involve anonymity as well as to the accelerated visual experiences of shopping that is familiar to the shopper in the late twentieth century.⁴³ Of course, the most significant change in the organisation of shopping that occurred in the nineteenth century compared to that of earlier periods is that people could now handle goods without being impeded; so the sense of 'touch' may be significant in terms of the way thefts have actually occurred in the last hundred years. However, this investigation argues that sight is more significant than touch in

terms of understanding shoplifting as well as increased sales. Colour and visual detailing attract the eye. Theft occurs first in the eye before it reaches the hand and this is why 'The Theft Act of 1968', which regulates shoplifting today, locates intention so centrally in the definition of the crime:

*'A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it and "thief" and "steal" shall be construed accordingly.'*⁴⁴

Section 7 of the Theft Act prescribes the main penalty (on indictment) for theft which includes shoplifting to be a period not exceeding 10 years imprisonment.⁴⁵ Although the 1968 Act is clearly a more humane law than those of the nineteenth century, the introduction of the concept of 'intention' into the law (perhaps inspired by the discourse of Kleptomania that emerged in the nineteenth century) has given rise to the idea that some incidents of shoplifting are 'unintentional', and genuinely demand the comprehension of mitigating circumstances. The appropriateness of this significant change to the law is accepted by this investigation without hesitation. Yet, it is noted that not ALL cases of alleged Kleptomania in the nineteenth century, nor ALL cases of alleged accidental shoplifting in the twentieth century, are either unconscious and/or unintentional and that such arguments have been used to acquit some of those who did intend to steal things.

Context is everything. Individual cases of shoplifting should be reviewed within specific conditions and social contexts. This comes to be especially significant in the late twentieth century where changes to the new technologies of vision have accelerated the experience of hyper-reality in the stores, and will continue to do so.⁴⁶ Indeed, such technological developments may influence the experience of hyper-reality and the reality of unwitting theft.

Perhaps the crucial distinction between shoplifting in the nineteenth century compared to shoplifting in the late twentieth century, is that the increased virtual environments and even the security and surveillance systems involving technological developments, have replaced the mediating role of the individual shopkeeper or the department store detective and this may have increased the possibility of unwitting theft. Technological surveillance is often installed in the stores and the malls as a 'deterrent', one that recognises that the incitement to touch created by self service and visual displays, perhaps provides temptations and opportunities that are difficult for the consumer with greedy eyes to resist. Such security also recognises that during the toil of shopping itself items may sometimes fall into baskets or bags, even where there was no intention on the part of the shopper to steal things. Shoppers are thereby encouraged to police themselves against accusations of shoplifting, to internalise the logic on surveillance. This discourse may be inappropriate to the absent-minded and the innocent.

Baudrillard's writing looks at issues of surveillance in the context of consumerism. He posits a consumer who is caught up in a self-referential circuit where everything is focused on consumption, one where there seems to be no space outside of this arena. For Baudrillard there is no exterior to this circuit and therefore, following his logic, there can be no moral distinction between a shoplifter and a shopper. This is problematic given the different motivations of the professional thief compared with others tempted to steal on the spur of the moment. Whilst Baudrillard might be correct when he argues that the commodity form produces a self-referential culture complete with its own sign system, Thomas Richards has pointed out that he is quite '*wrong when he says that commodity culture is the only culture there is*'.⁴⁷ Most people don't shoplift and don't react to the urge to steal because they have a very real sense of the real consequences of such an action.

Shoplifting may be part of shopping and consumerism, but it also constitutes theft and therefore its meaning as a cultural practice is not exclusively linked to consumerism, but also to ideas about 'crime', although admittedly about the crime against property.

The chapters that follow this one review whether or not it really is appropriate to abstract shoplifting issues away from the general discussion about shopping and to focus on shoplifting as 'crime', as many criminologists have done. Despite the fact that the vast majority of shoplifters are not professional thieves or criminals, but ordinary shoppers, such focus has occurred. One of the reasons this and the previous chapter has looked at shoplifting in terms of the history of consumerism and shopping, is to redress the imbalance of criminology which often focuses on accelerated crimes and/or criminal statistics rather than on the changing social contexts which produce such phenomena. Overall this chapter has tried to show that shoplifting is linked to the emergence of consumer culture. It does not make any direct argument that shoplifting offers any clear form of resistance to consumer culture, nor does it argue that shoplifting offers any resolution to the social and shopping dilemma of never-ending consumer messages and the spectacle of never ending consumption.

The assumption that women have been particularly significant in the history of shopping has emphasised agency and activity by women and suggests that shop theft has been a form of law breaking that women have been particularly involved in and to consider the implication of this. The next chapter will review the discourse of kleptomania. It suggests that in order to understand the significance of shoplifting by women it is necessary to review many discourses which culminated in the idea that still has currency today in some arenas, that women are not biologically equipped to engage in crime. The construction of femininity has been deeply implicated in questions of desire, consumption and display. Perhaps its not surprising that shop theft has been particularly associated with imbalances in an economy of femininity.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁴ SMITH, E., 'Memoir of Eliza Smith Who Was Transport for Shoplifting' written by herself, Bishopsgate Street, London, Edmund Fry and Son, 1839, with Introduction by Mary John Knott. This is an original document found in British Library.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ MARTINEAU, HARRIET, A History of the Thirty Years' Peace, Vol 2, London, G. Bell & Sons, 1849-50, p.84.
- ⁷ ABELSON, E., When Ladies Go A-Thieving. Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.8.
- ⁸ Ibid, p.25.
- ⁹ JAY MARTIN, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in the Twentieth Century, Routledge, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, p.150.
- ¹⁰ CHESNEY, K., The Victorian Underworld, Harmondsworth, Pelican Books, 1970, p.154-157.
- ¹¹ ZOLA, E., L'Assommoir, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.296..
- ¹² O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in the Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History, 17, 1983, p.67.
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- ¹⁵ ADBURGHAM, ALISON, Shopping in Style: London From the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance, Hampshire Thames, 1979, p.15
- ¹⁶ This issue has been discussed in BUCK-MORSS, SUSAN, The Dialectic of Seeing - Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1989.
- ¹⁷ DURKHEIM, E., Suicide: A Study in Sociology, translated by SPAULDING, J.A., & SIMPSON, G., New York, Free Press, 1897.
- ¹⁸ MARX, K., Capital, Volume One, Pelican, London, 1986, p.164.
- ¹⁹ TAUSSIG, MICHAEL, T., 'The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America', University of Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1983, p.31.
- ²⁰ BENJAMIN, WALTER, quoted in MILLER, D., 'Could Shopping Ever Really Matter' in FALK, P., & CAMPBELL, C., The Shopping Experience, Sage, London, 1987.
- ²¹ MILLER, D., 'Could Shopping Ever Really Matter' in FALK, P., & CAMPBELL, C. The Shopping Experience, Sage, London, 1987, p.34-35. It should be noted that Danny Miller is critical of Benjamin's account that virtually equates shopping with illusion and false consciousness and suggests 'what Benjamin could not allow for, indeed what would have been his ultimate nightmare, is the acceptance of this world of shopping as mere reality. In Benjamin's notes there seems to be no attempt to understand the practice of those who used the arcades and we are almost always confronted by two rather hollow figures: the bourgeois and the worker, for whom the arcades are supposed to have evoked this or that possibility, or more commonly illusion.'
- ²² RICHARDS, T., The Commodity Culture of Victorian England, London, Verso, 1991.
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- ²⁴ Ibid, p.30-31.
- ²⁵ Ibid, p.32.
- ²⁶ Ibid, p.21.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p.72.
- ²⁸ BENJAMIN, WALTER, 'Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism', translated from the German by Harry Zohn (and Quintin Hoare), London, NLB, 1973, p.192.
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³³ DEBORD, GUY, The Society of the Spectacle, Detroit, Black and Red, 1983, first published 1967.

³⁴ LUKÁCS, G., History and Class Consciousness, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1971, p.100.

³⁵ RICHARDS, T., The Commodity Culture of Victorian England, London, Verso, 1991, p.15.

³⁶ DEBORD, G., The Society of the Spectacle, Detroit, Black and Red, 1983, first published 1967.

³⁷ The following table (from Euromonitor 1988) about the emergence of the shopping mall between 1965-1986 in GARDNER, C., & SHEPPARD, J., Consuming Passions: The Rise of Retail Culture, London, Unwin Hyman, 1998.

Table: Growth in Additional Shopping Centre Floor Space 1965-86

	Floorspace ('000 sq. ft)	No of Schemes
1965-69	16,009	97
1970-74	27,223	160
1975-79	26,945	157
1980-84	15,020	118
1982	2,549	21
1983	3,366	22
1984	3,366	22
1985	2,148	20
1986	4,771	38

³⁸ GARDNER, C. & SHEPPARD, J., Consuming Passions: The Rise of Retail Culture, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 96-97.

³⁹ Ibid, p.95.

⁴⁰ BAUDRILLARD, J., Selected Writings, London, Polity, 1978, translated by POSTER, M.p.29-56.

⁴¹ ASTOR, S.D., Shoplifting Survey, Security World, Vol 8, part 3, 1971, p.34-35.

⁴² GARDNER, C. & SHEPPARD, J., Consuming Passions: The Rise of Retail Culture, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.111.

⁴³ Shoplifting records at Public Records Office Clerkenwell revealed 'shop theft' not 'shoplifting' as form of her court records (Marylebone which regulates Oxford Street) describe shoplifting.

⁴⁴ Home Office Act, London, HMSO, 1968, p.1.

⁴⁵ See discussion MURPHY, D. J. F., Customers and Thieves: An Ethnology of Shoplifting, Harts, Gower Publishing, 1986, p.90-91.

⁴⁶ This factor may have inadvertently contributed to accidental theft, as ROBINS, K., has pointed out in Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision, Routledge, London, 1996, : 'the development and proliferation of new images in our culture (from global media through surveillance systems to virtual environments)...(is) undergoing a "revolutionary" transformation...', p.84.

⁴⁷ RICHARDS, T., The Commodity Culture of Victorian England, London, Verso, 1996, p.14.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER THREE

Psychiatric Perspectives - Hysterical And Demented But Definitely Not Perverted:

Kleptomania 1840-1920 Revisited

*'The personal appearance of kleptomaniacs is easily recognised by many distinct marks ... They are commonly tall and stoutly built, but clumsy and badly knit. Their carriage is very noticeable. They walk with a nimble step, carrying the leg rigid from the hip downward and especially stiff at the knee... The eyes never look straight. They shift easily from side to side, the glance is habitually aslant. They are of neutral colour, which frequently changes its predominant tint; green when dejected red when furious...'*¹

In 1868, Dr. David Wilson of London, wrote of his concern about reports that a Minister '...holding an important office of State' was 'a confirmed Kleptomaniac'.² As a consequence of what he saw was his civic duty, Dr. Wilson duly advertised offering a prize of one hundred guineas for the winning essay on the subject of kleptomania to be written with, '*a view to determine whether kleptomaniacs should be held disqualified for employment of trust and authority*'.³ The winning essay by Henry Allan, Esq., 75 pages long simply entitled 'Prize Essay on Kleptomania', was duly published in February 1869. It included descriptions of the assumed [male] kleptomaniac (see quote above) using language that almost echos the language of the Witchfinder General's accounts of how to identify a witch⁴ (rather than a shoplifter).

Such inflated description of the kleptomaniac is not surprising because, in the late nineteenth century discussions of 'Kleptomania' were already part of medical and forensic discourse. Kleptomania was seen as a disorder experienced by both men and

women. Yet in some popular accounts the crime was being more strongly associated with women. Indeed, Bucknill quotes The Times of 1855 insisting that:

*'everyone who is acquainted with London society could at once furnish a dozen names of ladies who have been notorious for abstracting articles of trivial value from the shops where they habitually dealt.'*⁵

Only twenty years later, with the explosion of the culture of consumption, 'Kleptomania', as it became known, became intrinsically linked in the popular imagination with well-heeled ladies who shopped at the newly emerging department stores. Indeed, around this period Mark Melford wrote a farce, called Kleptomania, which was performed in three acts, in June 1888 at The Strand Theatre, London, and made much humorous play of the fact that the leading character was a titled kleptomaniac. Indeed, changed understandings of the crime of shop theft were visible in as much that by the late 1880's if the perpetrator was female and middle class, she was presumed to be ill, suffering from 'kleptomania'. Only those not in direct need of items stolen were seen as kleptomaniacs. The poor, meanwhile, were regarded as thieves. The kleptomania diagnosis at the time was seen as a reasonable medical explanation of why rich women - who were imagined to experience faulty biological plumbing - could be excused of the crime of theft, as close scrutiny of the history of the term reveals. As Patricia O'Brien (1983) identifies:

*'if they were women who had money and still stole one could conclude they were suffering from "debilite mentale". By this means shoplifting come to be associated with low intelligence and weakness of spirit in bourgeois women.'*⁶

History Of The Term 'Kleptomania'

When the term 'kleptomania' emerged in France in 1816, in the writings of a Swiss

doctor Andre Matthey, the crime was certainly not associated with women. Theft from shops and the emerging department stores - described as 'thieving mania' as well as 'kleptomania' - was interpreted, as Patricia O'Brien (1983) has identified, as an aspect of monomania - a rather broad medical term, used to describe *'an impulse of the diseased imagination of the affluent: a manic state that overwhelmed the individual who obviously had no economic need to steal things.'*⁷ Consequently, both rich men and women were believed to suffer from it (the rest were considered common thieves) and Matthey's discovery of this condition meant that after 1816 the judiciary could use the condition as grounds for leniency, if the case was thought appropriate.

The collection of essays edited by Foucault (1975), discussing the alleged madness of Pierre Riviere, offers fascinating analysis of the limitations of the concept of monomania which by 1820 Pinel⁸ understood to be a mental state *'which presents to the observers the strangest and most varied phenomena'* and which embraced *'all the mysterious anomalies of the sensibility.'*⁹ Georget's (1825) revision allowed the term to be understood to explain seemingly motiveless crimes (like kleptomania) if 'victims' were thought not to 'need' the goods, or if they could have easily afforded to pay for them. By the 1830s this definition was becoming increasingly subject to criticism because the 'catch-all' diagnosis 'monomania' was viewed with increasing scepticism by critics who described the:

*'hostility of the jurors and courts alike to the term... yet there is no getting away from the fact, however, that the concept of monomania, disputed and controversial though it was continued to foster an uncertainty ... in the area of the impelling factor...'*¹⁰

In the 1840s the term 'Kleptomania' was developed further in the writing of C. C. Marc, a French forensic specialist (physician to Louis-Phillipe) who discussed the significance of social background and theft. The poor who stole from shops were in this schema still criminalised. Middle class women however, were now increasingly

subjected to biological or medical explanations of the phenomenon if they were thought to steal for the sake of stealing.

The explosion of consumer culture between the 1860s to 1890s, and the emergence of department stores in Britain, France and the USA, meant that shoplifting as a phenomenon was on the increase. So the subject of kleptomania was clearly on the agenda for discussion. In France it was addressed by Morel (1890s)¹¹ who saw it as an unhealthy symptom in an otherwise healthy person. Magnan's (1890s)¹² writing led to the term being more formally integrated into forensic and judicial investigation at the time, as it had been in the works of earlier writers in Britain. To quote Abelson (1989):

*'Elaborating the legal understanding of kleptomania for a medical publication in 1879, Ernest H. Crosby explained 'Kleptomania ... is a very common form of moral insanity. The acts of theft are often of the most unreasonable character. Exemplary in all other respect, Crosby asserted, such women were literally 'forced to steal.'*¹³

The link, made by Orphus Evert (1887), of Kleptomania as a form of behaviour generated by 'womb disease'¹⁴, meant legal defence and medical diagnosis were substantiated by arguments that referred to female physiology. Most of these individual cases came at the end of the 1880s. At this point in time consumerism had changed consumer relations in Britain significantly. Also, as Susanna Barrow identifies in her study Distorting Mirrors, medical writing was excessively concerned with women's hygiene and/or illness¹⁵, so feminist accounts of the 'condition' were already occurring and were, as Abelson mentions, exacerbated and indirectly given further scientific credence by Darwin whose work gave authority to Victorian assumptions about the biological differences between the sexes.

Sexual Stealing

Ideas about abnormal sexual thefts have been discussed at least since the end of the

eighteenth century. Papers published on this subject include those by Lichtensberg (1801) who argued, *'the sexual impulse often led to theft'*¹⁶; Hitzig (1828)¹⁷ also reported fetishist theft as did Nichols-Flachs (1828)¹⁸; Schmidt records, *'in the years 1870-1880 there was a series of striking thefts which had unquestionable sexual motivations'*.¹⁹ Baron R Von Krafft Ebing, writing in *Pyschopathesis Sexualis* (1886),²⁰ is therefore not the first nineteenth century writer to make the connection between theft and an abnormal sexual life, nor the first to connect criminal behaviour in women with sexual deviance; but he is the first to connect stealing with sexual perversity. Krafft Ebing, whilst acknowledging a sexual dimension to some instances of criminal theft, particularly connected to robbery of female handkerchiefs, shoes and silks etc., primarily associates this sexual perversion with men which he terms *'fetichism'*.²¹ Yet, at the time, he was forced to admit he had *'so far not succeeded in obtaining facts with regard to pathological behaviour ... in women'*. Only one year later Dr. Orpheus Everts (1887) described larceny, hysteria and eroticism by a woman with a history of stealing in a paper entitled *'Are Dipsomania, Kleptomania, Pyromania, etc. Valid Forms of Mental Disease ?'*²² His paper was not a contribution to the discourse on perversity that appears to start with Ebing, but it anticipated Freud's work on hysteria, rather than that on fetishism. Indeed, Dr. Orpheus Evert discussed *'womb disease mania'* and implicitly made reference to the biological inferiority of women whom he saw *'suffering'* from this mental disorder. In this sense Orpheus Evert's ideas were connected to evolutionary psychiatry which utilised discussion of kleptomania as another proof of female inferiority. The discussion surrounding Kleptomania was very important therefore within the nineteenth century conflation of ideas about sex and gender in terms of the definition of female identity. The timing of this discussion was significant, as Elaine Showalter has identified, because at this point in history:

'Darwinian, determinist or evolutionary psychology dominated the English scene, from about 1870 to the First World War, and brought with it changes in the view of the psychiatrist's role and of the proper conduct and treatment, as well as in the definition of madness itself. Darwinian psychiatrists extended their professional

*roles far beyond the asylum walls. They sought to capture a wide sphere of power in the late nineteenth century society; namely in the courtroom where they made pronouncements on the family, on education in the bedroom where they defined acceptable sexual behaviour and in the state, where they proposed mental hygiene as the model of social discipline.'*²³

Elaine Abelson's meticulously researched case studies in When Women Go A Thieving demonstrate that most diagnoses of kleptomania were linked to the on-going discussion of insanity and the female reproductive system, rather than to criminality. However, the idea of the 'born criminal', associated with Lombroso and Ferrero, to some extent conflated the distinction between insanity and physicality. Abelson's work identified why poor women who stole things from department stores were interpreted as cunning thieves, whereas the middle class women who stole for no clear purpose were interpreted as being mentally deficient as a consequence of their biology, which was thought to cause the 'criminal' problems.²⁴

On the specific subject of Kleptomania, Abelson reiterates the point made by Showalter (about the female malady in general) and suggests that it was significant that such discussions took place after 1870 because at this moment in history they were '*supported ... by the logical implications of Social Darwinism*'.²⁵ Kleptomania as a form of hysteria or mental deficiency became an excuse for the criminal behaviour of middle-class women. It took the influential writings of Freud and his contemporaries on the unconscious to push physiological issues into the background by creating a discourse that replaced medical arguments about women's biological inferiority with psychological ones. The problem with these Freudian arguments, however helpful compared to previous accounts of kleptomania, was that as well as inappropriately diagnosing the behaviour of women who stole things from shops, they also constructed a discourse about unconscious or hysterical motivation. These ideas about unconscious behaviour were conflated with Victorian ideas about the biological inferiority of women and meant for a time the idea of female agency was almost negated.

The Legacy of Freud

It is the intention of this investigation to show that the writings of Freud changed understanding of the meaning of shoplifting by women and influenced the debate on kleptomania. His work about human 'disavowal' connected to objects gave rise to a theory of the psycho-sexual development of individuals and also to a theory of perverse sexual practices. His model of perversion, however, excluded women from the account and argued instead that, some behaviour of women was unconscious and hysterical and passive compared to men's. The inability of Freud's model, when applied by other practitioners, to adequately conceptualise the idea that some of the middle-class women who stole things may have been 'active' (as shoplifters or even perverts) was a problem, but had a few bonuses. For sure, many women were let off for their crimes and some women were successfully shielded from the pathologising discourse of perversion. But, at what price?

Initially within the Freudian framework women were spared the label of 'pervert' because perversion was thought to require male agency. Consequently the behaviour of the female kleptomaniac was judged in terms of sexuality but indirectly connected to hysteria rather than perversion. Whilst in his first discussions of fetishism (1905²⁶ and 1909²⁷), Freud mainly appeared to be documenting cases to explain the strange relationship some of his patients had to things (some of which had been stolen), female kleptomaniacs were not specifically addressed by him. In the first paper Freud only described fetishism as pathological when the associations became intensely sexual when the, *'fetish becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object.'*²⁸ At this point women are not excluded from debate because he accepts that *'some degree of fetishism takes place in normal love'*. Similarly, in 1909 when he read a paper 'On the Genesis of Fetishism' to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society as

work in progress, Freud argued for fetishism as a perversion rather than a form of hysteria, claiming that the pathological form it took was specifically due to unconscious anxieties. Ebing's earlier argument that the fetish object originated from an association with the subject's sexual excitation was accepted by Freud in order to explain the oddity of some of the object-choices of his patients. He specifically linked fetishism to the repression of the drive to look, the scopic drive. Freud said, for example, the clothes fetishist, repressing the sight of [his] mother's 'castration' idealised the clothes that prevented [him] from seeing this awful truth. Fetishism was also linked to a love of odours and smells and hence to the object-choice of feet. Almost as a joking aside, the paper went on to state:

*'half of humanity must be classed among the clothes fetishists. All women that is, are clothes fetishists... It is a question again of the repression of the same drive, this time however in the passive form of allowing oneself to be seen, which is repressed by the clothes, and on account of which clothes are raised to a fetish.'*²⁹

Here, Freud assigns to all woman a form of fetishism as an explanation of why even intelligent women follow the demands of fashion and wear items of clothing which '*do not show them to best advantage*'.³⁰ This argument about repression and the connection to perversion could well have been extended to address the behaviour of some female 'kleptomaniacs' which by that period was well documented. The element we need to draw out here from Freud's discourse, however, is the passivity of the behaviour he describes and its universality to all women (whose role is clearly assumed to make themselves as attractive as possible to what has been defined as the 'male gaze').³¹ Freud is not arguing that women actively practise the perversion, but that, repressing their desire to be looked at naked, they idealise the clothes that prevent this: yet he did leave some space for the *active* behaviour of women to be addressed. However, it is at this point that the investigation into shoplifting encounters serious problems with Freudian formulations. Freud's subsequent account of 'penis envy', and more specifically his phallicised account of the resolution of the Oedipus complex (connected

to fetishism) obscured understanding of female fetishism.³² This meant that women kleptomaniacs could not be construed as fetishists, because female fetishists were thought to be 'rare', and so were more likely to be constructed as hysterics.

Comparable sexual stealing by men, by contrast, was imagined to be aggressive and active when dealing with trauma and discussed directly in terms of fetishism and perversion. Yet there was a brief period in history when kleptomania and fetishism by women were considered as similar behaviour to that of men. Some analysts took up Freud's earlier papers (1905, 1909) and suggested that perversion was a more likely explanation of shoplifting than hysteria. However, such accounts were few and far between.

To recap: Freud's earlier work on fetishism (1905, 1909) did not phallicise the account of fetishism (this occurred in 1927) and so was taken very seriously by some psychiatrists working with women 'Kleptomaniacs'. In France, for example, earlier work of Pierre Janet and Paul Dubuisson (1898)³³ had discussed the epidemic proportions of female kleptomaniacs emerging with new consumer relations. They used forensic case histories to distinguish between criminal and pathological theft. Like the psychiatrists influenced by Darwin they cited criminal 'periods' in the female reproductive system that were capable of affecting the brain: menstruation, pregnancy and menopause. After this time, while there was some discussion of fetishism, the Freudian account of hysteria began to dominate analysis and discussion of kleptomania in a way which will now be reviewed. Even though, as Stephen Heath has identified, ideas about hysteria have been with us since the seventeenth century,³⁴ this process of Freudian redefinition meant that a different emphasis on ideas about unconscious hysteria was developed.

Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Case Studies on Kleptomania

There are a number of important psychiatric and psychoanalytic case studies on kleptomania that should be reviewed in order to demonstrate how discourses on

kleptomania were not only sexist but also operated to exclude women from the account of perversion.

Roger Dupouy(1905)³⁵

Dupuoy is among the first writers on the subject of kleptomania to use the case study to pathologise the female patient. He made a perverse reading of kleptomania with the idea that women act in such way to achieve sexual gratification through theft:

*'The sexually perverted fetishist draws her sensual pleasure, for example, from crumpling a certain fabric - generally silk...'*³⁶

It is difficult to gauge precisely why this line of enquiry was abandoned, and no full English translation of Dupouy's work exists. Other French psychiatrists as early as 1908 appeared to be moving away from the perverse reading. They started to suggest that kleptomania might be fetishistic but also that women's sexual behaviour was not as 'strong' as men's in this area. These conclusions can be observed through a discussion of Gatian de Clerambault's work, the psychiatrist now subject to much retrospective celebration by Lacan (who has praised Clerambault for his work on mental automanism).³⁷

Gatian Gaëtan de Clerambault (1908)

In the writing of Gaëtan de Clerambault, the erotic behaviour of women referred to him for psychiatric assessment informed the investigation in regard to the alleged 'kleptomania'. Clerambault's involvement occurred because he was called, via judicial process, to attend and assess the mental condition of women accused of kleptomania. So Clerambault's involvement was part of the legal process. He must have attended many different types of cases of alleged kleptomania (not all of them involving the

erotic fixation), yet he appears only to have written about women who had a penchant for stealing fabrics. This may be significant as Leslie Camhi (referring to Joan Copjec's earlier research) has implied that fabrics were the subject of Clerambault's own academic and sexual obsessions. In his paper, 'Women's Erotic Passion for Fabrics' (1908)³⁸, Gatian Gaëtan de Clerambault considered the significance of women's behaviour and commented:

*'The fabric seems to work upon them with its intrinsic qualities, its consistency, shine, smell, and sound - but even most of these are secondary to its tactile qualities. These tactile qualities are certainly very variegated, subtle, complicated, innumerable for a fine epidermis ... their ensemble, however, appears very minimal and schematic next to the complex of sensorial, aesthetic and moral evocations which the fetish evokes in man.'*³⁹

Clerambault's discussion accepted that his female patients masturbated with silk, but argued that the silk was not a true fetish because the women in question lacked the imagination to transform it into a vehicle of *'homage to the opposite sex'*. Here the same assumptions about the inferiority of women were being reiterated as was the case with Freudian and other discourses of the period. Clerambault went on to observe that *'the women are passive in their contact with silk'*, compared with Krafft Ebing's observations of male fur fetishists, whose pleasure, he noted, stemmed from the fact that they like the tactility of fabrics (he quoted the fur fetishists as saying *'we like silk to glide by itself over the back of our hand'*).⁴⁰ Overall, Clerambault concluded: *'The women are passive in their contact with the silk'* and therefore *'not really sexual fetishists'*. Some feminist accounts of kleptomania that refer to Clerambault (despite the fact that there is little precise evidence concerning the objects his women patients stole) make the case that his female kleptomaniacs were actually involved in *'stealing the feminine'*. This is an argument I have developed further in Section One when discussing the way Shirley Pitts literally stole the feminine, but link it to masquerade not fetishism.

Lesli Camhi 's account states that:

*'The kleptomaniacs stolen goods of preference included lace , silk handkerchiefs, gloves, combs, and all articles of feminine adornment. Never used, they were largely "useless" objects, their entire utility consisting in the service they rendered to the feminine masquerade.'*⁴¹

Camhi's analysis and reading of Clerambault is persuasive. She also says his patients raised issues about the feminine masquerade although she presents no hard evidence to substantiate her claims that it was items relating to feminine adornment that were primarily stolen by alleged 'kleptomaniacs'. It may be that the concept of the masquerade can be appropriately applied to some nineteenth century women who shoplifted but Camhi's analysis is very broad and generalised in its claims. However, the oral testimony of Shirley Pitts, as already mentioned, may offer a more detailed opportunity to analyse issues about the feminine masquerade in regard to shoplifting by women. This is because the objects Shirley Pitts stole can be substantiated and do appear to have a relationship to the idea of 'stealing the feminine'.

Wilhelm Stekel (1911)

Similar conclusions to those presented by Clerambault were also found in the writings of the psychotherapist Wilhelm Stekel, in his article 'The Sexual Root of Kleptomania' which was published by the Journal of the American Institute of Criminology and Criminal Law in July 1911, (summarised and abridged by Mr. Adalbert Albrecht).⁴² Stekel looked at the sexual nature of theft through the case studies of several female patients including one, of whom he said, '*After a time she suffered from irresistible attacks of kleptomania*'. Yet, he argued, none of his patients were sexual fetishists: '*the persons concerned were not fetishists, but neuropaths who out of ungratified sexuality*

performed symbolic (forbidden) actions. His account hinted at thwarted emotions motivating the thefts and implicitly suggested revenge was part of the unconscious and hysterical motivation of the kleptomaniac. This theme was pushed forward more forcibly in later work influenced by Freud's analysis, which tied the shoplifting mania to various interpretations of individual psychology.

Karl Abraham (1920)

By the early twentieth century it was clear that the psychology of women, rather than their biology, was the focus of inferiority identified by psychiatrists and psychotherapists working with kleptomania. Despite the problems with the work of Dupouy (1905) Clerambault (1908) and Stekel (1911) their accounts did in fact shift discussion on from physiology to psychology and so made a significant improvement on earlier assessment of kleptomania by psychiatric, Darwinian perspectives. In this shift '*Wandering wombs*' were replaced by 'neurotic impulses to steal' as causal mechanisms underlying the explanation of kleptomania in middle class women. Many psychiatrists, such as F. Alexander (1922)⁴³ and Fritz Wittel (1929)⁴⁴ adopted Karl Abraham's stance. Their work traces a debate about whether 'loss' or 'lack' was a causal mechanism in Kleptomania. They conducted further reviews of Freudian formulations in order to link kleptomania to hysterical 'revenge' fantasies as the motivation of theft, suggesting that such fantasies could be traced back to childhood.

Reviewing Fetishism

In all the early work on sexual stealing (1840 -1920s) that has been reviewed so far - including that influenced by the Freudian formulations about the unconscious - there is much slippage about the sexual nature of the kleptomaniac. On the one hand, there was the idea that the behaviour was influenced first by physiology and then, unconsciously,

by perverted or redirected sexual drives. The idea that the kleptomania is linked to generalised forms of sexual sublimation is also suggested. On the other hand, there was the idea that sexualised stealing produced a direct sexual release for women i.e. that shoplifting was a form of female fetishism. This work, primarily by Clerambault (1908) and Stekel (1911), was nevertheless associated with the notion that the sexual charge achieved by females was not as strong or directly comparable with that received via similar male sexual behaviour. In brief, the female behaviour of fetishism was not comparable to that associated with male fetishism. Such pronouncements occurred even though the voices of female thieves heard through the papers did not sound so markedly different to those male voices cited in the comparable case studies.

The moment when Freud's writing on fetishism started to create a discourse that completely excluded the behaviour of female kleptomaniacs as sexual fetishists, occurred in the 1927 article 'Fetishism', when the concept of an orthodox sexual fetishism was phallicised. Freud said in this article:

*'in the last few years I have had the opportunity of studying analytically a number of men whose object-choice was dominated by a fetish.'*⁴⁵

From the beginning the practitioner of fetishism was delineated as a man and the trauma conceptualised as occurring to a little boy; the practice was located as a denial of the male castration anxiety, for '*probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of the female genital*'.⁴⁶ Women, having no penis to protect them from this trauma, were therefore naturally eliminated from the account. By 1937, the genderisation had become overt and the fetishism was summarised by Freud:

*'This abnormality which may be counted as one of the perversions is, as is well-known, based on the patient (who is almost) always male.'*⁴⁷

This phallogocentrism inherent in the debate on fetishism was significant to accounts of

kleptomania. It suggested that female 'hysterical' behaviour was distinguishable from perverse male fetishism in terms of a response to a trauma. The Freudian account may have also contributed to the fact that in the early twentieth century debate on kleptomania waned and middle class women's thieving began to be seen as one of a cluster of neurotic and hysterical symptoms. Whilst this investigation is cautious about reading too much into the publication of Freud's work, because it took some time after publication for his ideas to really be taken up, it is clear after the 1927 paper, all new discussions of kleptomania were rarely linked to female fetishism. (Female fetishism was now problematical, presumed to be a 'rare' occurrence, as has been discussed by L. Gamman and M. Makinen, 1994)⁴⁸. Indeed, after the 1930s, shoplifting was more often linked in medical and newspaper accounts to simple dishonesty and/or by psychiatry to one of a number of neurotic symptoms. Fenichel, for example, in 1945 listed a number of cases of 'Cleptomania' [sic] in relation to the discussion of 'impulse neurosis'.⁴⁹

Of course, it is not surprising that the account of Kleptomania inspired by Freudian formulations was flawed as a discourse. It emerged in a period that was unable to recognise ordinary female desires - including lesbian desire. Even though the Freudian discourse developed the concept of the unconscious opening up an exciting debate, there was little space within this model to adequately understand sexual activity by women or to understand the full scope of female desire. It should be noted, that this investigation does not refute the idea that in a minority of cases some acts of stealing by women may have been unconscious. However, it does challenge the way Freudian and other psychiatric or psychoanalytic formulations have been appropriated in discussions of kleptomania, a disease which is now generally dismissed, except in a minority of cases when reviewing stealing by women. Despite the revisions to Freudian theoretical explanations - by Lacan and by the French feminists - the Freudian model continues to some degree to be unable to fully comprehend active behaviour by women and for this reason is viewed as useful but flawed as is discussed in full in Gamman and Makinen (1994).⁵⁰ Yet, as Elaine Showalter has pointed out:

*'the feminist critique of Freud should not obscure the fact that the early years of psychoanalysis offered a considerable advance on biological determinism, and moralism and it did not judge the hysteric as weak and bad, but saw hysterical symptoms as the product of unconscious conflicts beyond the person's control.'*⁵¹

Indeed, many feminist critics including Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose, and Parveen Adams, have utilised Freudian concepts in their work via ideas developed within French feminism, to make the case for female desire. They have abandoned ideas about penis envy and made original re-readings of primary psychoanalytic texts. Such work has demanded and sought revisions to the original explanations of female sexuality. Yet, despite all this eloquent writing, women's relationship to perversity and their own perverse behaviour is still not fully recognised or understood, a fault which may lie in the Freudian understanding of the role of the mother and castration anxiety, with the focus on 'lack' rather than 'loss'. This was polarised in the account of fetishism, which the philosopher Michael Foucault, in The History of Sexuality (Vol.1), argued emerged as the foundation model of perversion on which nineteenth century psychiatry was built.⁵² In this way Foucault has directed feminist critics not only to flaws in the foundation of the model of perversion, but also to the discursive implication of excluding women from the discourse of fetishism. Of course, on the one hand, the absence of women from the discourse of perversion spares them the full brunt of pathologisation. On the other, the absence of women from Freud's model of perversion is a serious omission, not least because it fails to comprehend the full extent and range of female desire and the way that desire may manifest itself.

The arguments that female behaviour, such as anorexia, bulimia, and even shoplifting may reflect perversion as well as 'perverse compliance' in women are now being made. A number of feminist psychoanalysts and critics have looked at female desire and have tried to provide explanations of the psychic mechanisms that are at work. For example, mothers, as well as fathers, may sexually abuse their children. It is only recently however, that women's perverse behaviour has been seen as a serious cause for

concern.

The new work by feminist critics working within a psychoanalytic framework⁵³ is very important and, indirectly, with its focus on 'loss' rather than 'lack' sheds light on the nineteenth century phenomenon of 'kleptomania' which was clearly a cultural epidemic, with cultural consequences for the understanding of female psychology. This investigation would argue that, in general, the behaviour of middle-class female shoplifters was a reasonable response to the late nineteenth century context of consumerism and was more likely linked to commodity fetishism as explained by Marx and conspicuous consumerism as explained by Veblen, rather than to sexual fetishism as explained by Freud. Yet women's shoplifting, read as 'kleptomania', was often incorrectly pathologised by a psychiatric discourse which could not recognise that the new emerging consumer context was more 'unwell' or 'perverse' in many ways than women's response to it. Some women may indeed have been hysterical or perverse shoplifters, but certainly the vast majority appear to have been a product of their times, their so-called 'abnormal' behaviour connected to significantly changed retailing practices.

Psychoanalytic and other psychiatric accounts of kleptomania, as this chapter has shown, tended to ignore the historical explanations about the changed material conditions in which kleptomania emerged. Initially this suppression of the historical dimension operated through the discourse of biological inferiority (associated with Darwinism) which is used to explain kleptomania as linked to physiological abnormality. Later, it operated through the discourse of hysteria (associated with Freudian psychoanalysis) which had covertly been utilised to explain kleptomania as linked to psychological abnormality. Both these accounts interpreted shoplifting as a pathological condition when middle class women were involved (and a 'criminal' condition when the poor were involved) and saw it as a passive rather than an active phenomenon.

In retrospect, whilst this investigation would not rule out a sexual component to some cases of kleptomania which occurred in the late nineteenth century, it acknowledges that it is inappropriate to make general arguments without access to new sources of historical evidence. One hundred years after the event it is impossible to gauge with any real degree of accuracy if evidence of shoplifting by middle-class women really points towards sexual behaviour. Traces still exist, but there is no precise evidence about what items women stole more frequently than others, and why, and how, if at all, sexual release was achieved from objects. Hardly any of the relevant criminal records exist but some comparisons can be made. Not all women who wore corsets in the nineteenth century, for example, received an erotic charge from tight lacing, as explained by Kunzle⁵⁴. Yet a very small proportion of them, who unlike the vast majority of women did not wear standardised corsets (which inhibited tight lacing in any case) may have done so.⁵⁵ Similarly a small proportion of female shoplifters may have derived a sexual thrill from stealing specific items, but we will never know whether or not it constituted sexual fetishism or whether it reached 'the fourth degree' as summarised by Gebhard's continuum of intensities of fetishism, featured below:

'Level 1: A slight preference exists for certain kinds of sex partners, sexual stimuli or sexual activity. The term 'fetish' should not be used at this level.

Level 2: A strong preference exists for certain kinds of sex partners, sexual stimuli or sexual activity (Lowest intensity of fetishism).

Level 3: Specific stimuli are necessary for sexual arousal and sexual performance. (Moderate intensity of fetishism).

Level 4: Specific stimuli takes the place of a sex partner. (High level fetishism)

[This is the Freudian reading].⁵⁶

One of Gatan de Clerambault's 1908 patients said she found stealing a lot more thrilling and orgasmic in terms of the sexual rush it provided '*than sex with her husband*'⁵⁷ Perhaps she had a particularly unfulfilling marriage, we will never really know for sure, but her comments, in common with those of many other female patients

found in the case studies on kleptomania, do sound as though they have reached the fourth intensity of fetishism defined by Gebhard above. Gebhard's model of three stages, leading up to 'orthodox' sexual fetishism is helpful for two reasons. First it enables critics to distinguish between those people who can only achieve orgasm from a fetish object (orthodox fetishism) and those who engage in fetish practices to heighten their experience of sex. Shoplifting may well involve fetishism: it may be a practice that heightens some individuals experience of sex but few modern professional thieves interviewed by criminologists such as Gibbens and Prince on this precise point '*spoke of direct sexual excitement*'⁵⁸, which makes the sexual confessions of the nineteenth century 'kleptomaniacs' a real curiosity. No significant conclusions about female sexual fetishism therefore will be drawn from the psychiatric and psychoanalytic case studies on kleptomania reviewed in this investigation, except to suggest that two significant events occurred as a consequence of this discursive formation.

The first event concerns the fact that the psychoanalytic discourse of kleptomania did not 'expire' in the 1920s but continued before and after the Second World War in various journals. Indeed, contemporary psychoanalytic case studies on kleptomania such as these published between the 1970s and 1980s, continued to look at kleptomania as part of a cluster of symptoms rather than as fetishism. Yet there is a whole psychoanalytic literature on the margins of the journals that link kleptomania to fetishism. The most significant case study linking kleptomania and fetishism was written by George Zavitzianos (1971),⁵⁹ who is one of the few modern analysts to make the case for female fetishism. He suggested that kleptomania was derived from fetishism and that there may be a close relationship between perversion and some psychopathic personalities.

In the case study presented in the 1971 paper, Zavitzianos suggested kleptomania developed after the fetish became detached from its sexual function. This coincided with the patient's severe childhood anxieties which led to the complete suppression of masturbation. Kleptomania, as well as some psychopathic behaviour, developed in the

patient, according to Zavitzianos, as a consequence of acting out in the environment the perverse fantasies of the phallic phase. The links between kleptomania and fetishism are also made by Micheline Castaigne (1983)⁶⁰, Harvey Schwartz (1986)⁶¹ and Thomas Wise (1985)⁶², William A. Warman (1980s)⁶³ problematically turned to aversion therapy in the treatment of kleptomania as did John Glover (1985).⁶⁴ Their papers warrant review by any scholar wishing to develop an argument about whether or not kleptomania constitutes fetishism.

The second significant event to emerge from the discourse of kleptomania, concerns the near exclusion of women from orthodox accounts of fetishism and perversion. This exclusion has serious consequences for the conceptualisation of the behaviour of criminal women, particularly those involved in sex crime or homicide. Mary S. Hartman's (1977) review of the nineteenth century English and French women of 'respectable' middle class status, who were accused of murder, revealed the problems with excluding or excusing women from culpability. She argued that the inability of the Victorians to construe the aforementioned murderesses as perpetrators rather than 'victims':

*'both trivialised and distorted the rich and varied stuff of these women's lives ...by ignoring their homicidal activities.'*⁶⁵

If we are to distinguish shoplifting from kleptomania, and to consider whether any types of theft at all by women are connected to sexual fetishism, such a body of work is needed today by the courts as well as by other institutions of psychiatry and psychoanalysis which influence the discussion of criminal behaviour. Estelle Weldon's work on maternal perversion (1986), points to the need to define a female psychosexuality outside of the field of the phallus. This discussion of kleptomania makes similar observations. Rather than rejecting psychiatry or psychoanalysis altogether, it requires that significant revision be made to the account. Some thefts by women may need a psychiatric explanation, because they move beyond the framework of shopping

as discussed in Chapter One and Two. But it may be appropriate that in many instances of shoplifting the perpetrator is not subjected to psychiatric assessment. It may be hasty to abandon the discourse of kleptomania, as new work drawing on Zavitzianos's account (1971), suggests it could be useful to explain some types of behaviour but its formulations warrant review and perhaps should be approached with caution when trying to explain shoplifting. Some women who shoplift may simply take the notion of the bargain, and of shopping, to extremes. Others who shoplift, may do so for unconscious reasons, which are connected to fetishism or a perverse compliance with social values that they find impossible to cope with in any other way - i.e. shoplifting as a by product of hyperconformity. In Shirley Pitts's case, as discussed in Section One, hyperconformity through masquerade had a functional aspect: Shirley Pitts had to blend in with her environment in order to be an effective shoplifter. Although during the discussion of Shirley Pitts's masquerade in Section One, I have tried to point towards the perverse element of this behaviour in connection to the discussion of masquerade and to point towards the fact that Shirley Pitts continually reinvented herself even when it wasn't necessary to do so. Perhaps this sort of hyper-conformity is what Estelle Weldon (1996) is hinting at when she suggests:

*'Perhaps the end of this century offers a mirror to the end of the nineteenth century: if psychoanalysis began with the study of hysterical nonconformity, its development will be stimulated by the study of perverse compliant deception. Of course, in so far as this comes to pass, women will be subjected to the same patterns of punishment that have been reserved for men. We shall not escape lightly.'*⁶⁶

Conclusion

The discussion of kleptomania was reviewed in this chapter in order to demonstrate how misunderstandings about women's 'nature' have been reproduced across a number of discourses. Whilst acknowledging the importance of Freud's writing about the

'unconscious', it should be noted that this chapter is at times critical of psychiatry, especially Evolutionary psychiatry. Evolutionary perspectives that made pronouncements on the subject of kleptomania, were particularly problematic as well as the early twentieth century mobilisations of Freudian concepts which were used to explain kleptomania. Yet the review of kleptomania, offered herein, does not completely abandon psychoanalysis altogether but simply suggests that the wholesale pathologisation of huge numbers of women as 'kleptomaniacs' in the period looked at was quite inappropriate.

Nevertheless, with the aid of some feminist rereading, Freudian formulations are useful in the sense that they raise questions about whether evidence of thefts by women point to accounts of female fetishism. Such an apparently eclectic approach is typical of feminist research presented by those such as Elaine Showalter, who utilises psychoanalytic concepts whilst nevertheless still questioning the status of nineteenth and twentieth century psychiatric discourse which makes assumptions about the 'essential' nature of women. It is during this questioning that the insights of Foucault have also been drawn upon. Indeed, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate the social effects of powerful discourses which promoted essentialist thinking about women. This thinking, articulated through criminal and pathological labels, obviously influenced behaviour and the subjectivity of individuals and so, to some extent, may have involved individuals (despite free will) in collusion with their own oppression. Indeed, Elaine Abelson's work cites many women who start to speak back to the courts the discourse of "overwhelmed impulses" that frame understandings of kleptomania in order to be treated leniently for their stealing. The criminologist Cressey (1971), reviewing the nineteenth century discourse of kleptomania, has gone further than simply saying the discourse of kleptomania influenced the subjectivity's of individuals diagnosed. He suggests that past knowledge about kleptomania informs traces in the present, specifically in the way it has influenced linguistic constructs and thus affected the parameters of contemporary knowledge about shoplifting. His account suggests that some of today's shoplifters may discuss their behaviour in terms of 'uncontrollable

urges', the idea that there is *'no real use'* for the things stolen. The argument he puts forward is that, on these occasions, shoplifters may use such vocabulary because they don't know any other way to explain their behaviour. When they are compelled to provide a rational account, he suggests, shoplifters engage with the most likely or familiar explanations and utilise the discourse of the kleptomaniac which waits in the archives ready to be reiterated once again. There seems to be evidence to support this view. Dr. Epps's (1962) study of female shoplifters imprisoned in Holloway found:

*'The degree of premeditation was hard to assess ... It was rarely allowed that anything more than a sudden impulse preceded the act ... The phrase 'of no use to me' became a familiar one in the course of excuses and explanation of the theft.'*⁶⁷

It is here that the work of Foucault in Power/Knowledge (1976) may be helpful.

Foucault's writing about the emergence of medical discourse and the "expert" in order to explain the ways discourse regulates power/knowledge/observations. He suggests such expert information became popularised and consequently involves the *individual thus exercising the surveillance, over, and against, himself...* Most individuals who steal motivated by 'want' or 'greed' when caught may find it impossible to admit to such motivations. The 'I don't know what came over me' discourse locates the individual as irrational but is often far more socially acceptable than the discourse of 'irresponsibility' or 'criminal' intention.

ENDNOTES:

¹ ALLAN, H., Prize Essay on Kleptomania, with an Introduction by Dr. David Wilson, London, 1869, p.3.

² ALLAN, H., Prize Essay on Kleptomania, with an Introduction by Dr. David Wilson, London, 1869, p.III.

³ ALLAN, H., Prize Essay on Kleptomania, with an Introduction by Dr. David Wilson, London, 1869, p.IV.

⁴ DEACON, R., Mathew Hopkins: Witch Finder General, London, Frederick Muller Ltd, 1976, p.106-123,

⁵ BUCKNILL, J., (1863) 'Kleptomania', Journal of Mental Science 8, 24: 262-75, quoted in PINCH, A., 'Stealing Happiness: Shoplifting in Early Nineteenth Century England', In SPYER, P., (Ed.), Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces, New York & London,

Routledge, 1988, p.126.

⁶ O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History 17, 1983-4, p.67.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ PINEL quoted in RIVIERE, P., FOUCAULT, M., I Pierre Riviere. Having Slaughtered my Mother, my Sister and my Brother..., Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978.

⁹ Ibid, p.279.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.280.

¹¹ MOREL, B.A., Paris, 1860, quoted in O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History 17, 1983-4, p.65-77.

¹² MAGNAN, V., Paris, 1876, quoted in O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History 17, 1983-4, p.65-77.

¹³ ABELSON, E., S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. p.185.

¹⁴ EVERTS, Dr. O., quoted in ABELSON, E., S., *ibid*, p.188.

¹⁵ BARROW, S., Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late 19th Century France, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1981, p.46.

¹⁶ Identified in GIBBENS, T.C.N., and PRINCE, J., Shoplifting, London, ISTD, 1962, p.70.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ KRAFFT EBING, R.VON, - Psychopathesis Sexualis, Rebman Ltd, London, 1899.

²¹ *ibid*, p.207-269.

²² EVERTS, Dr.O., quoted in ABELSON, E. S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. p.173.

²³ SHOWALTER, E., The Female Malady, London, Virago, 1987, p.105.

²⁴ ABELSON, E.S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.191. Abelson goes on to point out that more than questions about gender were involved in these debates about kleptomania. She states: '*Kleptomania was a concept constructed upon cultural assumptions about gender, particularly about the irresponsibility and generative phases of women, it was also a class concept. Only the middle classes seemed to suffer from it, stealing by other classes was simply theft.*'

²⁵ *ibid*, p.105.

²⁶ FREUD, S., 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' The Standard Edition of the Complete Works, translated by James Strachey, London, Hogarth, 1953-64, Vol 7, p.154.

Further discussion by Freud, see also 'Fetishism', Standard Edition, Vol 7 p.152-7.

²⁷ FREUD, S., 'Unpublished Minutes of Vienna Psychoanalytic Society', published ROSE L Psychoanalytic Quarterly 57, 1988, p.147-60.

²⁸ FREUD, S., Standard Edition, Vol 7 p.152-7.

²⁹ FREUD, S., Standard Edition, Vol 7 p.152-7.

³⁰ MULVEY, L., 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Screen 16 (3), Autumn, 1975.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1994.

³³ JANET, P., and RAYMOND, F., Nervroses et Idees Fixes, Volume 2: quoted in O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History 17, p.65-77, 1983-4.

³⁴ HEATH, S., The Sexual Fix, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982, p.X.

³⁵ DUPOUY, R., De la Kleptomanie, 1905, p..412-413, quoted in O'BRIEN, P., 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth Century France', Journal of Social History 17, 1983-4, p.65-77.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.69.

³⁷ LACAN's homage to GATIN GAËTAN DE CLERAMBAULT is discussed by CAMHI LESLI in 'Stealing Femininity: Department Store Kleptomania', Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 1993. Vol. 5. No.1.

³⁸ CLERAMBAULT, GATIAN, GAËTAN DE, discussed in 'Is Female Fetishism Rare?' see GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1994, p.96-7.

³⁹ CLERAMBAULT, GATIAN, GAËTAN DE quoted in CAMHI, L., in 'Stealing Femininity: Department Store Kleptomania', Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 5.1., 1993.p.39-47

⁴⁰ KRAFFT, EBING, R.VON, Psychopathesis Sexualis, Rebman Ltd, London, 1899, p.255-259.

⁴¹ CAMHI, L., 'Stealing Femininity: Department Store Kleptomania as Sexual Disorder', Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 5.1, 1993, p. 31.

⁴² STEKEL, W., in his article 'The Sexual Root of Kleptomania' which was published by the Journal of the American Institute of Criminology and Criminal Law in July 1911, (summarised and abridged by Mr. Adalbert Albrecht).

⁴³ In ALEXANDER, F., Psychoanal, 8, 121, 1922, Alexander looked at ideas about castration as explained by Freud's account of the Oedipus complex, as well as ideas about 'penis envy'. As Gibbens and Prince identified, he suggested male kleptomaniacs were motivated by the wish to steal the father's phallus and female kleptomaniacs were motivated by an unconscious response to the understanding of their lack being linked to the idea that the penis had already been stolen from them. (GIBBENS, T.C.N. and PRINCE, J., Shoplifting, London, ISTD, Publication, 1962, p.70). Alexander's analysis suggested that '*absolute kleptomania was only found in women, who used theft unconsciously in order to try and steal a symbolic penis*'. Penis envy was linked by Alexander as a causal mechanism (lack) and the excesses of kleptomania, i.e. stealing goods not needed, was seen as an unconscious, hysterical response to lack. Later work, influenced by Abraham, tended also to emphasis loss. It was suggested by the Freudian accounts that the replacement of lost love occurred through the things stolen (perhaps because of slippage in understanding concerning the difference between ideas about 'lack' compared to 'loss'). This gave rise to the understanding of kleptomaniacs as symbolically 'stealing love'. Indeed, in many later papers on the subject, there was a lot of speculation about the symbolism of the things stolen: fountain pens and umbrellas producing the analysis by crudest Freudian conclusions. The account by KAPLAN, L.J., Female Perversions, The Temptations of Madame Bovary, London, Pandora Press, p. 284. is symptomatic of this. Her account of kleptomania asserted that the idea that unconscious behaviour in women kleptomaniacs could be summarised as based on a fantasy of '*what they once stole from me I shall steal from them*' (p. 285).

⁴⁴ Fritz Wittel (1929) explained the psychology of one of his female patients in terms of childhood trauma. He suggested: '*a child feels injured or neglected in respect of proofs of love - which we have equated with gifts - or in some way disturbed in the gratification of its libido. It procures a substitute pleasure for the lost pleasure, and at the same time takes revenge on those who have caused it the supposed injustice.*'. See ABRAHAM, K., quoted in ABELSON, E.S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victoria Department Store, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 199.) Dr. Fritz Wittel went further and observed that some women kleptomaniacs used theft to recreate the sex act, quoting his patient as saying: 'When I have taken an object in a department store I thrust it in my bosom under my blouse, hide in the next doorway and wait with my heart beating. When I see that I have not been noticed I feel a wild triumph, a lust the like of which nothing else can offer.' (WITTEL, F., M.D., 'Kleptomania and Other Psychopathic Crimes', Journal of Criminal Psychopathology Vol. 4, Oct. 1942, p.207-8. Abelson (1989), commenting on the way female emotional problems were now being read by Abrahams and Wittel as speaking through the thefts of middle-class women, suggested that: 'The sublimated anger and aggression implied by the desire for revenge can also be seen in the image of the nineteenth century female hysteric'. See ABELSON, E. S., When Ladies Go a Thieving: Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 199.

⁴⁵ FREUD, S., 'Fetishism', Standard Edition, London, Hogarth Press, 1953, Vol.21, p.152.

⁴⁶ FREUD, S., 'Fetishism', Standard Edition, London, Hogarth Press, 1953, Vol.21, p.54.

⁴⁷ FREUD, S., 'Outline of Psycho-Analysis', ch., 8, 'The External World', The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, etc., London, Hogarth Press, 1953, Vol., 23, p.202.

⁴⁸ GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1994, submitted as Appendix One. See in particular chapters:1,2,3.

⁴⁹ FENICHEL, O., The Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel... Collected and edited by Hanna Fenichel and David Rapaport, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954, p.55.

⁵⁰ There is a full discussion of problematic Freudian psychoanalytic formulation in the work of Lacan and in French feminist thought in GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1994, p.95-144.

- ⁵¹ SHOWALTER, E., The Female Malady, London, Virago, 1987, p.161.
- ⁵² FOUCAULT, M., 'The History of Sexuality', Vol., 1, Harmondsworth, Penguin, p.154.
- ⁵³ de LAURETIS, T., The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999, makes an interesting argument about narcissism and loss. being connected to pre-Oedipal desire. She suggests loss not lack drives female narcissism *'What is disavowed must be the loss of something which the body has knowledge of pain, and pleasure, and something to which she has instinctual aims. This is not, cannot, e a penis, but is most likely to be her body itself (body image and body ego)a although the symbolic structure rewrites that loss as lack of a penis'* p.288. See GAMMAN, L., and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1994, We put forward the idea that female fetishism is not rare and has been overlooked because of the focus on 'lack' rather than 'loss'. We suggest fetishism can be understood in women if we move back the arguments about phallic castration to an earlier stage of ego development, namely separation from the mother. There, fetishism is a strategy designed to renegotiate the loss occurring through individuation. PHELAN, P., Mourning Sex, New York and London, Routledge, 1999, discusses 'militant narcissism'.
- ⁵⁴ KUNZLE, D., Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tightlacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpture in the West, New York, Ravan and Littlefield, 1982.p.36
- ⁵⁵ See the discussion that eroticism achieved from tight-lacing is not the same thing as fetishism in STEELE, V., Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.p.30
- ⁵⁶ GEBHARDT, P., 'Fetishism and Sado-Masochism', Science and Psychoanalysis, Vol., 25, p.71-80.
- ⁵⁷ CLERAMBAULT, GATIAN, GAËTAN DE quoted in CAMHI, L., in 'Stealing Femininity: - Department Store Kleptomania', Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 1993, Vol. 5. No.1.
- ⁵⁸ Identified in GIBBENS, T.C.N., & PRINCE, J., Shoplifting, London, ISTD Publication, 1962, p.70.
- ⁵⁹ ZAVITZIANOS, G., 'Fetishism and Exhibitionism in the Female and Their Relationship to Psychopathology and Kleptomania', International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 52, 1971.
- ⁶⁰ CASTAIGNE, M., 'Considering Fetishism', Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse, Vol., 47,(1), Jan. Feb., 1983. who identified kleptomania and fetishism as symptoms of deep psychic disorder and confused expressions of power. Her article went on to suggest that perversions such as fetishism and kleptomania were considered to be connected to the symbolic expression of the 'maternal phallus'.
- ⁶¹ SCHWARTZ, H.J., 'Bulimia: Psychoanalytic Perspectives', Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, Vol., 134(2), 1986, p.439-462. This matter hints at a similar fetishist connection in his discussion of bulimia and kleptomania in a case study of a female patient, who he implies developed an illusory phallus which informs the sexual fetishism. He went on to observe that eating disorder and kleptomania become masturbatory equivalents of depressive castration reactions and are informed by sadistic impulses towards the mother. Not all later work on kleptomania links the behaviour to unconscious processes.
- ⁶² WISE, T.N., 'Fetishism - Etiology and Treatment: A review from multiple perspectives' Comprehensive Psychiatry, May, June, Vol., 26(33), 1985, p.249-257. for example, discusses kleptomania, among other things, as linked to fetishist arousal but is very careful about stating what causes its aetiology, suggesting that sociocultural, biological and behavioural issues need to be addressed. He also mentions that in a minority of cases of kleptomaniacs he found temporal lobe dysfunction which, he speculates, may account for their fetish and required treatment via anticonvulsant medication. Indeed, a number of the studies that discuss kleptomania, published in the 1980s, appear to value medical treatments in addition to therapy.
- ⁶³ WARMAN, W.A., 'The Use of Aversion Therapy to Treat Kleptomania', Pyshopathologie Africane, Vol., 16(1), 1980, p.77-82.
- ⁶⁴ GLOVER, J.H., 'A Case of Kleptomania Treated by Covert Sensilisation', British Journal of Clinical Psychology, Sep., Vol., 24(3), 1985, p.213-214. John Glover's whose female patient was subjected to imagery of nausea and vomiting to dissuade her from acting on impulses of kleptomania. These latter case studies were not only troubling because they appear to locate and treat kleptomania in a physiological way but because Glover's study, in particular, appears to be unaware that many psychiatric reports reveal that a number of shoplifters were later found to be bulimic. His imagery utilising nausea and vomiting to dissuade his patient from acting on impulses of kleptomania, may have been unwise to say the very least. What all these case studies share in common is acceptance of the idea that

kleptomania can be treated and an understanding that shared agreement and psychoanalytic discourse is so far inadequate in terms of the information it can bring to bare on the phenomenon of kleptomania.

⁶⁵ HARTMAN, M.S., Victorian Murderesses: A True History of Thirteen Respectable French and English Women Accused of Unspeakable Crimes, Channel Islands, Guernsey Press, 1977.

⁶⁶ WELDON, E., British Journal of Psychotherapy, 1996, 12(4), p.486.

⁶⁷ Dr. EPPS quoted in SMART, C., Women, Crime and Criminology, London, Routledge, 1977, p.111.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

Reviewing Twentieth Century Ideas about 'Born' Criminals and 'Deviant' Identities

The previous chapter looked at conceptualisations of women as intellectually inferior to men, based on outmoded nineteenth century ideas about kleptomania. This chapter will review a number of distinct and separate early twentieth century discourses i.e. criminological, psychiatric, genetic, medical and even newspaper discourses under two subject themes. The first concerns discourses about 'born criminals', the second reviews discourses about 'deviant' identities and 'criminal deviance'.

(i) Biological arguments - Reviewing 'Born' Criminals in the Twentieth Century. From Eugenics to Biocriminology.

Although the work of Cesare Lombroso on physical signs of criminality became unfashionable with criminologists very shortly after it appeared¹, it nevertheless still had some influence upon general criminological enquiry in the twentieth century². As explained in the last chapter, Freud's founding of psychoanalysis and his contribution to it, influenced the fact that psychological rather than physiological arguments became specifically significant in the explanation of women's theft. Yet, in terms of a general explanation of what motivates individuals to commit crime, the Lombrosian legacy, of biological and physiological assumptions about criminal types never quite went away and informed 'common sense' discourse.³ Additionally, the emergence and development of the Eugenics movement, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, did much to keep alive Lombrosian thinking about 'born criminals' and

'inbred characteristics'. The reasons for this are complex. Eugenicists such as Galton, (a cousin of Charles Darwin's) who wrote Hereditary Genius (1869), pointed out that the environments of the nineteenth century industrialised societies produced selection that operated in a dysgenic rather than eugenic direction. In this sense then Eugenics sympathisers had much in common with Social Darwinists but were critical, in particular, of Social Darwinist ideas about the survival of the fittest. As Conway Zirkle (1959) observed:

*'the man who left the most descendants was definitely not the type to evolve into an awaited superman. He was merely the type who breeds most rapidly when protected by civilisation.'*⁴

The Eugenics debate about inbred characteristics developed at a moment in history when ideas about 'biological rejuvenation' were attractive to many, offering a simple solution to emerging and complex social problems.⁵

The first priority of the Eugenics manifesto was directed at encouraging the marriage of suitably intelligent and hardworking (read middle class) peoples, and discouraging procreation of those deemed to be 'dysgenic'. This category embraced the physically unfit, the feeble minded, the morally deplorable, including habitual criminals etc. Thus the twentieth century Eugenics movement, inspired by Sir Francis Galton's writing (1869)⁶, made a clear contribution to debates about crime (if not specifically shoplifting) primarily because many Eugenicists believed in population control and the associated idea that inherited criminal tendencies could be eradicated within three generations. Before these ideas were taken to negative extremes by Hitler and the Nazis (leading to the widespread extermination of Jews, homosexuals and others considered to be dysgenic or unhygienic) positive Eugenics, advising contraception and improvements to healthcare was a respectable discourse. This fact has been identified by Carl J. Bageman in his scrupulous editorial commentary on Eugenic writing from 1865-1971.⁷

The effects of Eugenics discourse in developing ideas about criminal 'types' was also significant. Charles Goring, a junior medical officer in the English prison services at the turn of the century, was much influenced by Eugenics and seized the opportunity, provided by his job, of measuring Lombrosian principles against criminal data. In the early 1900s he used statistical analysis to see whether or not Lombrosian characteristics could be identified in the prison population and whether the evidence from the prison population differed vastly from a similar project undertaken with non criminal participants. Goring published his data in his influential book The English Convict (1913)⁸. After finding no major differences between criminal and non-criminal groups he concluded:

*'No evidence has emerged confirming the existence of a physical criminal type, such as Lombroso and his disciples have described - our inevitable conclusion must be that there is no such thing as a physical criminal type.'*⁹

Goring did concede, however, that most criminals were physically inferior in terms of height and weight to the general population and suggested that physical inadequacy:

*'may tend with time to become an inbred characteristic of the criminal classes, just as, with the passage of generations, the upper classes of the non criminal community have become differentiated in physique from those lower on the social scale...'*¹⁰

At this time European criminology was already paying far more attention than ever before to adverse environmental and sociological factors, as causes of crime.

Nevertheless, Goring's observation that *'68% per cent of male offspring of criminals themselves become criminal'*¹¹ was taken very seriously, particularly in America, where 'biocriminology' remained popular. Eugenics thinking, implicit within some of these biocriminal studies, then as now, found easy answers to complex social problems through the discourse of the born criminal.

Earnest Hooton's book The American Criminal (1939)¹², was to give biological arguments a new lease of life at a time when environmentally led thinking about crime - associated with the Chicago School among others - was becoming increasingly popular with criminologists. After looking at 10,000 criminals and civilians, Hooton concluded that there were eleven distinct physical tendencies of the criminal. He summarised these as including:

*'tattooing; thinner beards and body hair, (although thicker head hair); straight hair; red brown hair (and grey and white hair infrequently); an excess of blue-grey and mixed eyes; excessively low and sloping foreheads; high narrow nasal roots and high nasal bridges; thinner lips and compressed jaw angles; marked overbites less often; ears with slight rolled hix and a perceptible Darwin's point; long thin necks and sloping shoulders.'*¹³

Hooton saw criminals as constructed by both biology and culture. This work, even though not ground-breaking, had some influence and was taken seriously by those in law enforcement who considered, and may still consider, physical description as central to the detection of criminals. However, the Second World War and subsequent Nazi experiments with Eugenics rather dampened enthusiasm for biocriminological arguments. Indeed, in the post war years, sociological rather than biological arguments were the order of the day in criminology. Even new biological studies couldn't avoid this discourse and started to identify social interaction and the importance of environmental considerations, as well as biological causal mechanisms, when summarising data.

There were numerous biological crime studies. Two of the most significant should be mentioned here: Sheldon's (1949)¹⁴ study produced the concept of 'Soma types' - a physical explanation of criminal body types, achieved through research which looked at 200 delinquent boys. Sheldon confirmed that Mesomorph (lean muscular and thicker

skinned) bodies rather than Ectomorph (flat fragile bodies) or Endomorphs (a short well nourished body) were most likely to become criminals - although his work was later invalidated for only looking at the institutionalised.¹⁵ The study by Jacob, Brunton and Melville (1965)¹⁶ should also be mentioned. Theirs was one of the first to apply today's understanding of modern 'genetics' to crime. It moved the arguments on from ideas about physiology (and suspicion about hormonal activity) to consider the effects of chromosomal evidence when discussing 'born' criminals. The location of the XYY Chromosome (possessed by only one male in a thousand) caused subsequent researchers to suggest that genetically different male XYY individuals were more likely than ordinary men to commit crime, to be institutionalised in prisons or hospitals, to be taller than ordinary men and to be less intelligent. XYY chromosomes were seen as the genetic inheritance of the 'born criminal'.¹⁷ Subsequent work contradicted the authority of these findings but this biocriminological discourse inspired further and important sociological studies on twins¹⁸, on adoptees,¹⁹ on intelligence²⁰ etc., in order try and uncover the causal links between biology and crime. Such work linking criminal behaviour and heredity was largely inconclusive and eclipsed by the later sociological and psychological studies of the post war period which brought with them residual thinking about the effects of biology on criminality.

Contemporary Psychiatric Studies

Post war psychiatric studies invited biological arguments in through the back door when trying to explain the motivation for shoplifting. They, once again, linked law breaking by women to explanations connected with physiological or hormonal causal mechanisms. Many of these studies of female shoplifting 'offenders', which precede the emergence of feminist criminology, discussed the minds of convicted women shoplifters in relation to psychology: by strange biological impulses; hormonal imbalances; problems concerning reproduction; maternal instinct or just innate passivity. All explanations referred to medical and psychiatric discourse in order to

explain the behaviour of individual thieves. Consequently, familiar sexist themes have emerged in contemporary work, specifically that on shoplifting. In this work, the explanations for the behaviour of female thieves construe women as psychological victims 'suffering' from many disorders.

What all these explanations of women shoplifters have in common is that they don't seem so very far away from the nineteenth century observations about wandering wombs, which saw co-called 'deviant' behaviour in women as being connected to their physiology. Furthermore, studies by Neustatter (1954), Rourke (1957), Ordway (1962), Badonnel (1968), and Versele (1969) .²¹ ordinarily were based on small samples of women, who were medicalised, rather than imprisoned or fined, for their crimes. Unlike most of those who were convicted of crimes of violence or motoring offences (like road rage or drunken-driving) which could be directly linked to passing psychological states, these women, through the psychiatric or discursive, medical accounts were ultimately positioned as 'mad', rather than bad, 'victims' rather than aggressors. The problem with this tendency, as Ann Lloyd has pointed out, is that *'by over-emphasising women as victims, you run the risk of depriving women of their moral agency.'*²²

This tendency to medicalise the social problem of shoplifting has parallels with excuses for theft central to late nineteenth century explanations of kleptomania. The nineteenth century epidemic of middle-class women shoplifters was not understood at the time as a cultural phenomenon despite the huge numbers of women apparently suffering from the same symptoms. It was in this social context that quasi-psychological explanations of theft caused great confusion. They were less obvious than biological arguments about wandering wombs or born criminals and appeared to make assumptions about women's essential nature without explicitly stating the biologism embedded in either their readings or the theories adopted to explain behaviour. These implicit assumptions about women's biological nature and the link to damaged psychology, are what feminists have spent years trying to refute through the nature/nurture debate. For this

reason it makes sense to review this debate, not least because the discourse of genetics has recently allowed outdated ideas about 'born criminals' to resurface.

Beyond Nature and Nurture: Against the 'Criminal Gene'

Brown and Jordanova (1980) have pointed out that:

*'since the mid-nineteenth century the opposition between nature and culture has become central to evolutionary theory and allied sciences, to debates on heredity and environment, nature versus nurture, the measurement of intelligence and education... Currently debate centres on the dichotomy of women being seen as closer to nature and men as closer to culture, and is used to 'explain' the apparently universal secondary status of women in all societies.'*²³

Whether nature or culture explains women's lack of equality in all areas of social life is the crux of the debate. McCormack and Strathen (1980) suggested that the binary opposition nature female/culture male, which informed the nature/nurture debate, was what is wrong with the way the debate is framed. They observed very pointedly, that in all the research they had undertaken, binary oppositions existed but simplistic gender analogies were refuted. They stated that although:

*'all peoples considered use binary constructs contingent upon nature or gender, none of these resulting symbolic equations can be reduced to a simple 'nature: culture: female: male analogy.'*²⁴

Much of the feminist discussion - particularly within anthropology²⁵ - that took place in the early eighties was keen to refute these arguments and to put forward the idea that the alleged biological inferiority of women had caused: (a) the unequal division of income and labour across the world, (b) inequalities about wealth between men and

women, and/or (c) was the reason why historically patriarchal relations had dominated. Stressing the distinction between sex (genital, hormones etc.) and gender (learned social roles) many subsequent post-structuralist feminists, such as Marjorie Garber, tried to demonstrate that ideas about 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are not natural but socially produced and culturally learned notions. They refuted ideas that 'biology is destiny'.²⁶ Indeed, by revealing historical differences and changing definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman in one century or culture compared with another, feminist critics have tried to reveal that such categories themselves are not fixed or essential in any way, but linked to false and mythical ideological gender constructs. Some critics, like Marjorie Garber, have even tried to reject binary oppositions like male/female and make the case for a '*third gender term*'. Garber's work on cross dressing and transvestism is informative, but extremely problematic, in this context. It proposes simple answers to questions about ambiguous categories and anomalous gender boundaries, to which this investigation will return when discussing images of female deviance.²⁷

The problem with feminist cultural accounts of the acquisition of gender, as well as with feminist 'deconstruction' of 'essentialist' myths about gender, is often that they are more complex to comprehend than simple and popular accounts of 'natural impulses'. 'A man can't help acting on impulse' is perhaps easier to comprehend than the idea that masculinity is a fictional construct that is socially learned and repeated. The idea that sex and gender are not the same thing or that sex is between your legs and gender between your ears, are complex and require analytical enquiry. Many people resist such enquiry and, for this reason, feminists are often accused of being confused themselves about differences between the sexes. Such accusations of confusion are extended when feminists make arguments about gender roles as socially learned not innate and then produce empirical information that there are measurable behavioural differences between men and women. Here feminists often use empirical information to explain the consequence of being born into ideology and of the learning of social roles which produce conformity in women compared to men. But the significance of

this point is missed by critics who believe such behaviour is only the consequence of biology rather than ideology. This point particularly relates to work put forward by feminist criminologists - who often argue that women are more law abiding than men, not because they are biologically inferior and/or morally superior but because of the social production of conformity linked to the ideologies of femininity that affects that behaviour. However, because this work is rarely subject to appropriate mediation and representation in non-academic contexts, information can often be slanted in confusing ways in order to support reactionary arguments. Take for example the arguments that women are less prone to violent acts, as well as sexual crimes, than men. The case has been made by biologist essentialists that women are less likely to initiate such crimes because they don't have the right genital or biological equipment for the act of rape²⁸. These arguments fail to understand that rape is rarely about sex or biological impulses. It is more likely to be about power and culturally constructed meanings about sex, overdetermined and reiterated in more than one place. Indeed, feminist criminologists like Dobash and Dobash (1979) have argued persuasively that men are more likely to be violent than women, not because biological difference causes men to have more testosterone and increased aggression, but because violence and aggression in men is connected to the ways in which men learn to articulate their masculinity. Yet in the 1990s these sensible cultural arguments about learned gender social roles are increasingly under threat by the thinking around innate aggression. This thinking was given new validity by the scientific discourses of molecular genetics, behavioural genetics, neurobiology and socio-biology. Arguments originating from these sources are significant but are often deployed out of context by sensational journalism to suggest that aggressive or violent behaviour in all humans is part of genetic legacy or inheritance or connected to a rogue criminal gene.

Genetics has made an important contribution to knowledge. However, genetic discourse appears more meaningful in terms of hard 'evidence' than is actually the case. One example is in the genetic work on DNA fingerprinting. This important scientific breakthrough was supposed to offer foolproof evidence of precisely who has committed

crimes through blood, saliva and semen traces, etc. Despite newspaper reports and spectacular crime solving by film and television detectives, DNA traces do not present 'a foolproof crime test':

*'DNA fingerprinting is a statistically reasonable - but not infallible method of identification and its used in court, as in the OJ Simpson trial, has been contentious. Laboratories that produce DNA fingerprints are still striving to control errors. The commonly used DQ Alpha Method of testing DNA is not particularly precise - the odds that two people will have the same combination of markers are currently estimated as ranging from one to twenty per cent - quite different from the figure of 4 to 5 trillion to one quoted in some popular literature.'*²⁹

Today's optimistic genetic narratives taken together offer a powerful discourse about the sort of control the biological future holds. These discursive moments have reinforced older cultural myths, as well as newer expectations about the significance of biology in our lives. Knowledge about how gender is acquired may be imprecise but debates about IVF, cloning, etc., have given a new emphasis to the cultural signs of biological effects, so that the old connotations are reproduced in new discourses.

In their book, The DNA Mystique: The Gene as a Cultural Icon, D. Neiken and M.S., Lindee³⁰, have suggested that confusion about the nature/nurture explanations of gender is not surprising considering the way the new genetics have been represented in popular culture, sci-fi programmes, detective series and novels. Even in non-fiction accounts, genetics is represented as a site of power. Neiken and Lindee cite two covers of important magazines published within a ten year period as providing a metaphorical demonstration of what the political transformations of the meaning have been for the nature/nurture debate. This illustrates why there might be so much confusion. In 1981, 'Just How the Sexes Differ' was featured on the front cover of Newsweek, which contained an article stressing the overriding importance of different social experiences and expectations in the behaviour of boys and girls. The article cited many authors,

making the case for nurture not nature, one of whom insisted, 'show me a sex difference and I can show you culture at work.'³¹

Just eleven years later, the 1992 article 'Sizing Up the Sexes' featured on the front cover of Time contained an article stressing that recent scientific research conclusively showed that 'gender' differences have as much to do with the biology of the brain as with the way we are raised.'

This is an important connection because, whilst this investigation would not contest that some uncontroversial human 'dispositions' are inherited - such as a universal range of facial expressions utilised by human actors across culture and/or the human capacity for language acquisition, hair and eye colour - it would query ideas about the born criminal as well as the determining significance of inherited dispositions. For example, as Nelkin and Lindee point out:

*'Even behaviour known to be genetically inscribed, such as the human ability to learn spoken language, does not appear if the environment does not promote them. Children do not learn to speak unless they hear spoken language, even though the ability to speak is genetic, a biological trait of the human species.'*³²

The discourse on 'Addiction' is also located within the same battleground. It may only be time before the shoplifting gene is 'discovered' alongside the IQ or Homo gene. The evidence of biological causes for smoking, alcoholism, gambling, overeating, crime and even shopping, is inconclusive. Yet popular arguments about addiction present some form of the closure of debate. The discourse on addiction, by locating 'biological disposition' or 'genetic determination' as the cause of social problems, pre-empts further discussion. These arguments about the effects of biology, for instance, via PMT or addiction to sugar (Twinkies' syndrome),³³ may be useful in legal defence trials but such arguments provide a very narrow way to understand cultural life and the social

meaning of crimes like shoplifting. Perhaps that is why they are currently so popular, as this investigation will show..

She's Gotta Have It - Reviewing Female Desire

The language of shopping 'addiction' is changing. Historically, many reports of shopoholics - including reports on public figures such as Fergie, the Duchess of York, have discussed shopping addiction in terms that implied chemical/hormonal links:

*'Christmas shopping gives an estimate 700,000 Britons a 'high' similar to that felt by drug users. They are the nations shopping addicts, most of them women.'*³⁴

More recent press coverage, however, suggests issues about self worth rather than chemical explanations are now favoured in the discourse on shopping addiction. But even these explanations are patronising and/or pathologising. One newspaper points out:

*'people addicted to shopping are not suffering from psychological disorder, as previously thought, but spend excessively to bolster low self esteem.'*³⁵

The 'excesses' of women as desiring subjects have always posed a problem for psychological or psychoanalytic accounts. Questions about female desire, as Ros Coward (1984)³⁶ and Louise Kaplan (1994)³⁷ have pointed out, are often flawed by biological determinism. Or worse, they are simply not addressed because there is no adequate conceptual framework with which to address all factors affecting women. It is within these flawed models that biologically linked 'hormonal' stereotypes and mythologies about women's shoplifting emerge and transform a diverse social history of consumerism into an unchanging essentialist understanding of female nature.

Female Crime - 20th Century Specificity

Carol Smart, Pat Carlen, Suzanne Edward and Francis Heidensohn - among other feminist criminologists - refute explanations of female crime which link deviant female behaviour to biology rather than poverty. Most of their conclusions concur with QC Helena Kennedy's observation that:

*'women commit crime largely because of social deprivation and most of the women in our prisons should not be there.'*³⁸

Indeed, Pat Carlen in Women Crime and Poverty, through her study of convicted offenders (67% of whom were shoplifters³⁹) suggests that four major social factors are significant to an understanding of women's law breaking. These are cited as connected, not to hormones, but stemming from: (1) poverty; (2) having been in/or in residential care; (3) drug/alcohol related addictions; (4) quest for excitement or escape from 'boring' lives.⁴⁰ Carlen's work does acknowledge the effects of poverty in relationship to 'want', as well as 'need' in women's lives. She discusses the 'sod it syndrome' where women use shoplifting as a way out of difficulties and/or 'as the best method of both solving financial problems and getting some control over their lives'⁴¹.

Significantly, discussion of the influence of consumer culture on women's criminality is not analysed by Pat Carlen and other feminist criminologists, whose specialism as 'criminologists' appears to bar them from discussing consumerism in depth. Overall, feminist criminologists seem more concerned to measure the effect of inadequate social policy on the lives of women, and in this context stress links with poverty in terms of the motivation of female crime, rather than with more complex feelings of relative deprivation. This omission may be a product of assumptions underpinning criminological discourse which traditionally focused on criminal behaviour rather than looking at the totality of the lived criminal experience.

Many 'radical' criminologists have similar methodological difficulties in terms of analysing crime in the broader context of material culture and the specificity of consumer discourse on women's lives. However, they do expand the category of poverty even further and, in the context of the gender difference within crime, discuss the wholesale 'feminisation of poverty'. In this latter schema, it is not only those in Carlen's category 1, above, for example, such as homeless women who may literally be starving, that are located as those who are most likely to steal, but many other women, including 'survivors' on welfare; divorced women; single parents; women in low skilled and therefore low-paid occupations; in brief poorer working class women. Pat Carlen's data, which suggested 32 of the 39 women she looked at, 'had been poor all their lives'⁴² is therefore also supported by the work of many radical criminologists. Stephen Box and Chris Hale (1983), for example make the point:

*'As women become economically worse off, largely through unemployment and inadequate compensatory levels of welfare benefit, so they are less able and willing to resist the temptations to engage in property offences as a way of helping solve their financial difficulties...'*⁴³

Overall, crimes involving women, particularly crimes of theft, are linked by many criminologists to their position in the unequal, gendered labour market, i.e., unequal social roles are reproduced in selected types of crimes committed. For example, women's embezzlement is related to the subordinate position of women in the gendered division of labour: 81% of those who embezzle the smallest amounts (\$1=\$150) are women; whereas only 30% of embezzlers who stole over \$1000 are women.⁴⁴ Lack of access to opportunity is cited as a causal mechanism as to why women are rarely involved in corporate crime but are more commonly found to commit crimes such as shoplifting. Many studies including those by Gibbens & Prince (1962)⁴⁵ and Cameron (1964)⁴⁶ present observational evidence that women who shoplift take more items but that these items are of a much lower value than those taken by men.

Kathleen Daly's (1989) work on embezzlement also suggests that women's occupations, for example as bank 'tellers' rather than 'managers' or 'officers', means that women are more likely than men to take cash from the till, while men are more likely to manipulate documents.⁴⁷ The most significant issues raised by gender differences in terms of theft through embezzlement, concerns questions about underlying motivation. It is argued by Daly that women are more likely than men to embezzle for altruistic or family motives, rather than for selfish or business interests.⁴⁸ Dorothy Zietz's (1981) study makes similar observations about female altruism and the priorities of 'the family' and suggests that:

*'women consciously sacrifice their positions of trust in an effort to meet responsibilities associated with the role of wife and mother. Their behaviour seemed to have a Joan of Arc quality, a willingness to be burned at the stake to obtain for a loved one the medical care needed or some service essential to his welfare...'*⁴⁹

Daly's work reinforces the idea that women are more likely to embezzle for the sake of family members than for selfish motivation. Even within criminal subculture it appears such female altruism is reproduced in terms of the crimes women are likely to commit or be involved in. Ann Campbell reports in Girls in the Gang (1984):

*'The traditional structure of the nuclear family is firmly duplicated in the gang. In straight society the central pivotal figure is male. His status in the world of societal and material success is the critical factor, while the woman supports, nurtures and sustains him. The gang parodies this state of affairs, without even the economic infrastructure to sustain it, for the male rarely works and often it is the female who receives a more stable income through welfare. Nevertheless, the males constitute the true gang. Gang feuds are begun and continued by males; females take part as a token of their allegiance to men.'*⁵⁰

It has been argued that female delinquency differs from male delinquency because young women need love and crave acceptance more than young men. Indeed Cohen (1955)⁵¹ and Konopka (1966)⁵², have argued that promiscuity is prominent in young, allegedly 'mal-adjusted', females because of this need for acceptance and love. Most feminist critiques of these arguments conclude that ideologies of romance are important to any structural understanding of women's participation in subculture⁵³ but what is far more significant are the double standards that emerge over the way male and female behaviour is viewed and defined by the institutions that regulate crime. For example, expectations that men are more violent, more criminal, than women may impact on how women's crime is viewed and are implicit in the 'Nature versus Nurture' debate. They are also implicit in the political positions that inform many of the criminological studies referred to in this investigation, studies that seek to understand women and crime and, in particular, women's shoplifting. In any understanding of the relationship of women to crime it is absolutely necessary to understand the cultural context in which it occurs.

Accounts that do not adequately look at issues raised by culture (such as the essentialist discourse about 'born criminals'), prevent any real understanding of female deviance. Indeed, many of the theoretical discussions about deviance appear to refute the idea that deviance is something that individuals are born with. Modern theories of deviance that emerged in the twentieth century locate criminally deviant behaviour within society. These offer far more sophisticated accounts and theories about why crime emerges than biological arguments can. Inevitably, there is a gender gap in much of the work on deviance which, like so many other psychological and sociological models, fails to understand female desire or its relationship to deviant female criminal behaviour. This point will be discussed specifically with reference to shoplifting in which the 'formal' deviant status is problematised .

(ii) Social Arguments - Reviewing ideas about 'deviance' within contemporary criminology,

What is Deviance? Reviewing Men on Men

The history of sociology is connected very strongly to the study of deviance, not least because the founding thinkers had much to say on the subject. In 1893 Durkheim was one of the first sociologists to reject the idea of an inherent criminal nature because, he argued, criminality simply was not in the nature of the person, or even in the act itself but in the definition given to it by society.⁵⁴ These important ideas were taken up by later contemporary theorists, including W. I. Thomas,⁵⁵ Edward Sutherland of the Chicago School who developed the theory of differential association⁵⁶ and Robert Merton (a student of Talcot Parsons) who, writing in the 1930s and 1940s, developed Durkheim's ideas about anomie in relation to crime. Some of these studies, particularly Sutherland's (1937)⁵⁷, focused on the lived experience of male criminals and were important in demonstrating that ideas about 'born criminals' did not hold up and that criminality was learned through being introduced to a community, so that individuals become criminals by association. Indeed virtually all the later studies on deviance, many of which emerged in the 1960s focused on the male experience. Howard Becker's groundbreaking book Outsiders (1963)⁵⁸, may have had some influence upon this later work. Many criminologists of deviance cite Becker and seem very inspired by his 'boy's own' account of the life of jazz musicians and marijuana smokers, which ignored the involvement of women.⁵⁹ In the book Outsiders Becker observed:

*'social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of an act the person commits, but rather the consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label.'*⁶⁰

Becker's account of deviance, as well as that of Edwin Lemert who developed a similar theory about deviance around the same time⁶¹, suggested that deviance began with the

first, socially constructed, deviant act or through the introduction to a group designated as deviant (that is through association). Since then many criminologists and sociologists have been inspired to study deviance, and particularly, deviant men. They have produced an enormous body of literature on deviant behaviour. There is so much work it would be impossible to summarise all of it. Writer Erich Goode suggests there are three strands that divide the canon.⁶² The first is the American positivist schools which have tended to study 'hard' criminal behaviour such as robbery, rape, murder and burglary. The second is both American and British schools of criminology which have focused on the creation of categories of deviance, in particular the ways law, state and the ruling elite are involved in controlling and defining criminal deviance. In this regard the work of Stanley Cohen (1972)⁶³ as well as that of Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) is cited as the most influential British work. The third strand concerns a broad collection of symbolic interactionists who are varied in approach but whose social-psychological focus has produced extensive research on deviant behaviour. Such investigations have looked at issues raised by deviant identities; the creation of deviant categories; deviant stereotypes; learning deviant subcultures; deviant 'careers' and deviant life stories; and to some extent they identify interests shared by this investigation. But there are differences too. Not only because this investigation explains functionalism, but also because even though shoplifting may be viewed as a soft crime, it is nevertheless clearly a criminal offence. Whereas Erich Goode makes the point that while symbolic interactionists:

*'are more likely to focus on 'soft' deviance: behaviour that may be technically against the law' he suggests that they are most interested in behaviour that is 'unlikely to lead to arrest and is punished mainly informally, unofficially, interpersonally.'*⁶⁴

All modern deviance theory problematises whether or not 'deviance' and 'crime' can be used as interchangeable terms. In all the schools or categories of work on deviance there is recognition that both criminal and non criminal deviance may violate the norms

of society and represent 'a class of behaviour for which there is the possibility of negative sanctions'. But punishment for formal and informal deviance is distinct and different. For example, condemnation may evolve from all types of deviant behaviour but the crucial difference is that criminal deviance violates both formal and informal laws of society and there is institutionalised punishment for formal rule breaking.

Shoplifting may be a soft crime but it is clearly a deviant form of shopping behaviour as well as a criminal act. What appears to be at stake is not whether the crime of shoplifting constitutes deviance but whether the issue of law enforcement always regards shoplifting as a significant criminal offence. Certainly, in different periods of history, shoplifting by some groups - for instance middle class women thought to be Kleptomaniacs - has not always been the subject of strict enforcement by the law. Even in the contemporary period when shoplifting is usually regarded as 'theft' and prosecuted by retailers, who say they have strong policies on prosecution, there are many grey areas. Shoplifting shifts from being formal deviance to informal deviance in such accounts and this investigation intends to explore the meaning behind such shifts. Indeed, criminological evidence suggests that there are moments when the issue of 'caution' appears to store employees as more valid law enforcement strategy than prosecution. Perhaps this occurs because the items are of insignificant value or perhaps because the 'intention' of the perpetrator is unclear, or is simply difficult to quantify.

Shoplifting is not one type of behaviour. It embraces not only a multiplicity of behaviours but also differentiated signs of behaviour. Cameron's (1964) study made distinctions between the booster, who shoplifted to earn money and the snitch who did it almost as a consequence of going too far in some way.⁶⁵ Examples of this may include the shoplifter who takes the logic of the bargain or of thrifty shopping too far, or when teenagers engage in social shoplifting as peer-led behaviour. Cameron's work, however, is problematic because the distinctions break down very quickly when applied to statistical data about shoplifting and the reduction of types of shoplifters to 'booster' and 'snitch' is far too narrow to conceptualise the different meaning of different acts of

shoplifting in order to fully understand them. For example, officials and department store detectives often make crucial distinctions about whether the petty acts in question (label switching etc.) are criminal or not; or whether the 'offenders' may or may not be worth prosecuting. This presents serious anomalies for the process of categorising, defining and understanding the meaning of shoplifting. Underage sex, between consenting heterosexual children of the same age is against the law but rarely prosecuted, and at times shoplifting is subject to similar treatment. But this is not always the case; so shoplifting falls between definitions of formal and informal deviance and therefore between the schools of academic interest. This investigation would argue that contemporary shoplifting by women needs to be reviewed in a broader framework that starts from the premise that shoplifting is not one specific form of theft but is a label that embraces many different types of theft.

Clearly, 'shoplifting' as a term describes many types of crime. Obviously perception and definition of the acts of shoplifting are crucial to the discussion of shoplifting because, even though it is a recognised crime, sometimes it is disregarded as an insignificant crime. The law on shoplifting warrants review here because, as mentioned in Chapter One, the law that regulates shoplifting (a colloquial term) is connected to The Theft Act of 1968, which implies that theft is part of a deliberate strategy or intention to steal. The question of intention here is crucial to understanding shoplifting. As explained in Chapter Two, the assault on the individual accomplished by the visual and aesthetic stimulation of the department store may overwhelm the individual and therefore may be seen to be a mitigatory factor in shoplifting. Displays, which promote visual excitement and the incentive to consume, could be construed as a form of entrapment. Obviously, the issue of premeditation and intention is central to an understanding of the Theft Act of 1968. It is therefore the contention of this investigation that, in some circumstances (but not all), full discussion and understanding of shoplifting as a cultural form and process cannot take place without recognising that: (a) certain contexts may promote shoplifting and (b) that behaviour may be so petty and spontaneous in terms of theft, that it is often regarded by retail staff

as behaviour not worthy of criminal prosecution. This is so complex that it therefore makes sense to review the status of psychological studies of criminal deviance in order to understand why there has been so much muddled thinking about the psychology of the shoplifter.

What is Psychological Deviance?

Psychological and sociological approaches to the study of deviance may look for the theories answering the question, 'what causes crime?'. So far, both discourses have failed to provide a definitive answer to the question. Sociologists/criminologists are often able to locate the sorts of environments that seem to foster delinquency and crime. Despite being able to identify these and a number of other variables, they still cannot adequately explain why some individuals and not others, in similar environments, become criminals. Psychologists find themselves in a similar position. When looking at deviance they are often able to identify psychological traits that may mean some people are more likely than others to become violent and murderous. But they can't explain why all the individuals with these psychological traits don't go on to become criminals. Overall, as well as being unable to answer the question, 'what causes crimes like shoplifting?', both psychological and sociological perspectives often fail to integrate knowledge about crime from across the disciplines. As Richard Endleman points out:

*'the field of deviance - the study of outsiders, people in one way or another at odds with conventional society has been staked out by sociologists as their dominion. But alongside all this sociological work in this area a lot of other work has been asking psychological questions. Rarely have the sociological and the psychological works been brought together in a systematic way.'*⁶⁶

Yet many criminologists concerned with the study of hard crimes such as violence, robbery, rape, murder and particularly sex crimes, often utilise psychological definitions and suggest that certain acts, for example serial sex murder, can be explained only in relation to the damaged psychology of an individual. Murder produces this sort of discussion, as has been well documented by D. Cameron and E. Frazer in The Lust to Kill⁶⁷ and also by the more troubling radical feminist analysis put forward by Jane Caputi The Age of Sex Crime⁶⁸. In many of these discussions the idea of a 'psychopath', for example, is accompanied by the notion that psychopathic individuals have a predisposition towards delinquency or crime. This disposition is often linked to a troubled passage through childhood. In the literature there is often an emphasis on alleged damage to brain structure which may provide physiological or a psychological condition/motivation, which exists independently of sociological circumstances.

The term 'psychopath' is often used to discuss acts of violence and murder where the perpetrator appears to exhibit no remorse for the victims. Such psychiatric discourse about the motivation of crime stresses the individual's role in the event as the most significant and although shoplifters are rarely described as "psychopaths" many accounts mobilise Kleinian ideas about 'splitting' to explain why people are able to take things at the time without remorse or fear. Such constructions have been attacked by the sociologist Pfall⁶⁹ for not really comprehending socio-cultural forces in the genesis of crime. Even worse, in this psychological work on deviance and/or writing about psychopaths, there is no real agreement between psychiatrists and psychoanalysts about what is going on in the minds of these individuals. There are major disagreements too within psychoanalytic studies. Apart from acceptance of ideas about 'unconscious motivation', there is little general or specific agreement about what it is that activates and motivates psychopaths or sociopaths in terms of 'hard' crime.

Shoplifting falls into the category of soft crime but, again, there is little agreement about its motivation, so I would suggest that it can also be understood in terms of its

history and its relationship to the sociological context of shopping. Many studies of shoplifting operate either to criminalise and/or pathologise perpetrators. Examining the language and logic of shopping may show those criminalised by the system are not exceptional but have simply been caught : it would also problematise ideas about the form of deviance shoplifting actually constitutes.

Is Shoplifting Deviant Behaviour?

Shoplifting clearly constitutes deviance but whether this deviance is regarded as formal or informal depends on the measurement scales at work. This investigation has shown that such scales are often inconsistent and contradictory. For example, even today, shops do not always prosecute some of those accused of shoplifting. There are links with the nineteenth century ideas about Kleptomania in the way some of retailers approach shoplifting as a phenomenon that may not be 'criminally' motivated but may be a consequence of psychological damage or confusion. The measurement scales at work in defining deviance via shoplifting are crucial and lead us towards understanding (1) the meaning of deviance in relationship to law enforcement and (2) the relationship of deviance to gender issues. Shoplifting is a significant form of deviant behaviour by women. Compared to crimes of violence, shoplifting may not be morally reprehensible but it is significant that women constitute at least half of all those convicted. Given that women are generally far more law abiding than men, this makes shoplifting extraordinary in gender terms as, according to some critics, any criminal behaviour by women constitutes 'double deviance'.

Women - Why Double Deviance?

Endleman's comments above, about sociological and psychological perspectives failing to integrate knowledge about deviant behaviour, are very telling when focusing on the work on women and deviance. Such work tends either not to see women at all, or to pathologise women's behaviour and study women's deviance in terms of ideas about mental illness. Little early sociological work on deviance actually looks at women, with the exception of that by W.I. Thomas on prostitution - one of the few studies to actually avoid cliché stereotyping of the sexes. When researching prostitution, W.I. Thomas describes prostitutes 'as often intelligent women'⁷⁰ and focuses on the difficulties in their lives that created their transitional occupations as prostitutes⁷¹. Like Theodor Veblen, W.I. Thomas in his other writing is very clear on the issue of industrialisation and how it has changed and objectified the status of women. Despite his recognition that men are often responsible for the moral degradation of women, W.I. Thomas's work is certainly not rigorous in its analysis of gender as revealed by the biologically deterministic account of gender implicitly in the following extract:

*'The heavy, strong, enduring, patient often dominant type frequent seen among the lower classes, where a lone women is still enormously functional, is probably a good representative of what the women of our race were before they were reduced by man to a condition of parasitism, which in our middle and so-called high classes, has profoundly affected their physical, mental and moral life.'*⁷²

Yet Thomas's tone is a lot more sympathetic than later critics who wrote about women and deviance. Compare the quote above to the one below which comes from the writing of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1953-54) in Five Hundred Delinquent Women. They observe:

'The women are themselves on the whole a sorry lot. Burdened with feeble mindedness, psychopathic personality, and marked emotional instability, a large proportion of them found it difficult to survive by legitimate means. This swarm of defective, diseased, antisocial misfits, then, comprises the human material which a

*reformatory and a parole system are required by society to transform into whole, decent law abiding citizens!*⁷³

In fact there is very little sociological work on women and deviance, except as prostitutes, and most of it degrades women. In her seminal essay 'Images of Deviant Men and Women' (1975), Marcia Millman suggests (at the time of writing) that the reason there are more studies of criminal men is because:

*'sociologists should be criticised for their identification and sympathies with their subject... studies ... like Becker's are excellent partly because they do succeed in presenting an interior view of their subject lives. My point is rather that it is only male deviants who have been studied with such empathy and appreciation. We might also note that the underworlds and subcultures that Becker and Bell describe apparently consist of men only, and women appear in these worlds, and hence in these studies, only in degraded and unpleasant positions... Since there haven't been many sociologists who take note of women as deviants, women have largely been ignored in the literature or else abandoned to a few deviant categories (mental illness, prostitution, shoplifting) hard to glamorise (with the potential exception of prostitution) the way male deviant occupations are glamorised.'*⁷⁴

This investigation would take issue with the last line of the above quote but agrees wholeheartedly with the argument that women have not been addressed in literature on deviance. Indeed, much later feminist writers, such as Angela McRobbie (1980) looking at women and subcultural discourse, confirm that women are also absent from many important sociological accounts of non-criminal deviance. McRobbie cites excellent books on the subculture of youth, which unfortunately still ignore women, as including Jock Young's The Drugtakers: The Social Meaning of Drug Use (1971)⁷⁵; Stanley Cohen's Folk Devils and Moral Panics (1972)⁷⁶; Stuart Hall's and Tony Jefferson (Eds) Resistance Through Rituals (1976)⁷⁷; Paul Willis Learning to Labour (1988)⁷⁸; Paul Corrigan Schooling the Smash Street Kids (1979)⁷⁹ and Dick Hebdige

Subculture: The Meaning of Style⁸⁰. She goes on to suggest that patriarchal relations and sexism impact on the way women participate in subcultures and determines women's actual role in subcultures and their deviant behaviour. McRobbie also attributes problems of female omission to bias by male writers. Some, perhaps, have clearly identified too strongly with their subjects of study to even notice the absence of women in their work or the problematic way women are represented.

There are other problems with subcultural work too. Beyond simply not seeing women, the lack of gender analysis does mean that some real issues about the meaning of deviance as 'escape' through enactment of collective delusions, for example, are not fully understood. This is a complex but important point. Sociologists, psychologists and other academics have identified that collective illusionary views of the world are typical of subcultures: they have also cited romance as a form of escape for women.⁸¹ Not to consider how gender difference within subcultural groups affects the dominant fantasies is a crucial omission. For it fails to ask the questions which may be at the heart of the matter: what makes subcultural belonging desirable in the first place. Take for example, the world view of professional women shoplifters, such as Shirley Pitts, discussed in Section One of this investigation. Not only did Shirley Pitts and her associates regard shoplifting as a normal way of life, in Shirley's case her 'bread and butter' trade, but Shirley used the things she stole (for kids, partners, and other loved ones) as an essential part of her mothering. In Shirley's case the extent of her behaviour in terms of gift provision made her important to others and also made her feel rich and privileged. *'You don't feel poor in a £2,000 Yves Saint Laurent jacket'*, she once told me, *'even when you're signing on.'* Many criminals involved in criminal subcultures, as Duncan Campbell has observed, seem to have problems with defining reality. He suggests the phrase many old lags used after describing their behaviour *'it was like being in a film'*, is very telling and significant in terms of their inability to measure reality.⁸²

To ignore the issue of gender when looking at the deviant behaviour of women goes beyond the particular issue about exclusion from the criminological canon. Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first feminist critics to point out that by not being male, women are already deviant. To use her words, they are traditionally defined as 'Other'. In terms of perception of crime, this gender difference, and otherness, is very significant. As Ann Lloyd observes:

*'women commit fewer crimes than men and many fewer violent crimes. This means they can look 'freakish' in court and being exceptional women the fact that they have broken the law means they run the risk of appearing very, very bad. When women commit violent crimes they break two laws: the law of the land that forbids violence, and the much more fundamental law which says that women are passive carers.'*⁸³

Certainly to be a woman and a criminal is more of a problem for social definition and representation than being a man and a criminal. As this investigation has already tried to show, criminality and masculinity are not contradictory categories. Despite the ideological changes produced by history, the terms are united by an implicit connection with the notion of activity, particularly violent activity. Yet femininity implies passivity, despite the best efforts of the second wave feminist movement to change this thinking. Consequently, when women are active or aggressive and/or criminal, there is such incompatibility between the terms 'female' and 'criminal' that it often produces explanations that move beyond the idea of criminal behaviour. The discussion seems to move very quickly towards pathologisation as the earlier references to psychiatric studies of shoplifting are meant to demonstrate: there is a tendency to construe women's behaviour as more 'extreme' than it really is - indeed the reading of 'extremity' might well be negated if the logic of shopping was fully considered, and the specific context examined.

What is significant about shoplifting is that it is disruptive to the economic health of retail outlets. This disruption to capitalism, controlled by patriarchal relations, may be

the reason why women who have shoplifted have been the subject of so much heavy mythologising and stereotyping. Such mythologising has meant that at the end of the twentieth century, despite shifting definitions of women's roles effected by feminism, a slightly adjusted version of the same old tired explanations and images of women's criminality is churned out over and over again. Some women are themselves involved in colluding with this mythologising process. In the knowledge that marital status and nurturing of children will have an impact on sentencing, as Susan Edwards (1984)⁸⁴ has identified, it appears that many women who arrive in court accused of shoplifting will do their best to present a stereotypical image to negate the significance of their behaviour. These stereotypes perhaps conform with those in the media in the way the 'cosmeticised punkette' similarly disavows many women's lived experience of punk. Such attitudes mean that women who don't conform (divorced, separated or those from a 'deviant' sort of background) are more likely to have social inquiry reports against them which does not happen so often to men. Mary Eaton (1983) observed that, of 22 men and 122 women charged with shoplifting in a sample group from 1980, 11% of men and 27% of women had social inquiry reports made against them.⁸⁵

Women's roles as shoppers has meant that their participation in shoplifting is far less deviant role behaviour than crimes of violence. Yet, when surveying statistical information about women and shoplifting it becomes clear very quickly that there are massive differences in the way that 'criminal' women, as opposed to criminal men, are treated, not only by the courts but also by the media; and so it makes sense to review media's role in mythologising women's involvement in crime.

ENDNOTES

¹ LOMBROSO, C., *Criminal Man*, Milan, Hoepli, 1876. Given the impact of Social Darwinism, it is not surprising that in the nineteenth century the work of the criminologist Lombroso on the phenomenon of phrenology (based on now discredited conceptual thinking

about 'atavism' and evolutionary throwbacks), received critical attention. This work was premised on the assumption that criminals are 'born' (by natural process) not 'made' (through cultural process linked to environment and social circumstances) and presented itself as 'scientific'. Indeed, Lombroso construed criminals as the biologically 'inferior'. Such people were thought to be innately connected to an earlier evolutionary stage, as suggested by Social Darwinism. In order to gather evidence and prove the point that criminals were sub-human, Lombroso undertook much 'scientific' research published as Criminal Man. The first chapters of the book were the result of Lombroso's autopsies performed on 66 Italian male delinquents, the second chapter contained his analysis of 832 living delinquents. He concluded from these observations that there was a connection between criminality and biological inferiority which could be observed through physical dimensions. He stated: '*many of the characteristics found in savages and among the coloured races, are to be found in habitual delinquents. They have in common, for example, thinning hair, lack of strength and weight, low cranial capacity, receding foreheads, highly developed frontal sinuses... darker skin... thicker, curly hair, large indolence... facile superstition.*' Lombroso's work and reputation became known across Europe and was very popular in France in the late 1880's. The later study written with Ferrero on female criminals, The Female Offender (1895), also achieved recognition and popularity and expanded the biological connections, specifically to formulate ideas as to why women could never be true criminals.

² Criticisms of the concept of 'born criminal' were led by French sociologist GABRIELLE TARDE, (1843-1904), 'Problems de Penalte', in Criminalite Compare, Paris, Alcan, 1866.

³ 'Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the 'folklore' of philosophy and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those whose philosophy it is.' GRAMSCI, A, of FORGACS, D., (Ed.), A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writing 1916-25, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1988, p.343.

⁴ ZIRKLE, C., Evolution, Marxian Biology and the Social Scene, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959, p.527.

⁵ For example, the failure to conscript suitable soldiers for the Boer War in the 1890s started a panic about the declining physique of the working class.

⁶ GALTON, F., Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences, London, Macmilan, 1969.

⁷ BAJEMA, C.J., (Ed.), Eugenics Then and Now, Stroudsburg Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1976.

⁸ GORING, C., The English Convict: A Statistical Study, London, H.M.S.O., 1913.

⁹ GORING, op cit, p.145.

¹⁰ GORING, op cit, p.200.

¹¹ GORING, op cit, p.288.

¹² HOOTON, E.A., The American Criminal: An Anthropological Study, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1939.

¹³ HOOTON, E.A., op cit, p.300.

¹⁴ SHELDON, W., Varieties of Delinquent Youth, New York, Harper, 1949.

¹⁵ SHELDON, op cit, p.14-18 and 25-28 in particular.

¹⁶ JACOBS, P., BRUNTON, M., & MELVILLE, M., 'Aggressive Behaviour, Mental Subnormality and the XYY Male', Nature, 1965, 208: 1351-52.

¹⁷ NIELSEN, J., 'Prevalence and a 2 Years Incidence of Chromosome Abnormalities among All Males in a Forensic Psychiatric Clinic', British Journal of Psychiatry, 1971, 119: 503-12.

¹⁸ CHRISTIANSEN, K. O., 'A Review of Studies of Criminality Among Twins' in SARNOFF, MEDNICK and CHRISTIANSEN (Ed.), Biosocial Bases of Criminal Behaviour, New York, Gardener, 1977, p.45-88.

¹⁹ CROWE, R.R., 'An Adoptive Study of Psychopathy: Preliminary Results From Arrest Records an Psychiatric Hospital Records', in FIEVE, ROSENTHALL & BRILL, (Ed.), Genetic Research in Psychiatry, Baltimore, John Hopkins, University Press, 1975, p.95-103.

²⁰ HIRSCHI, T., and HINDELANG, M.J., 'Intelligence and Delinquency: A Revisionist Review', American Sociological Review, 1977, 42(2): p.571-87.

²¹ An hysterical personality caused by general events that initiated a hysterical response. This explanation was presented by the work of NEUSTATTER, W.L., 'The Psychology of Shoplifting', Medico-Legal Journal, 1954, Vol 22, p.18-30. Examples given were the death of a friend, an accident to the husband, or emotional conflicts within marriage; incidents believed to

motivate the women in question to shoplift: where female shoplifting occurs to gain status or acceptance; or to deal with a desire for punishment; or to deal with disturbed sexual feelings. This explanation was presented and discussed by the work of ROURKE, F. L., 'Shoplifting its Symbolic Motivation, Crime and Delinquency, 1957, Vol 3, p.54-58, and allegedly related to 87% of all shoplifters in the sample. Observations by ORDWAY, J. A., 'Successful Court Treatment For Shoplifting' Journal of Criminal Law and Police Science, 1962, March, Vol 53, p.344-347, of female shoplifters referred to Cincinnati Municipal Psychiatric Clinic, indicated that bereavement, and/or depression may precede many shoplifting bouts. Weaknesses of character and lack of a sound moral code. This explanation was presented by BADONNEL, R., 'Le Vol dans Les Grands Magasins', Chronique de Criminologie Clinique, 1968, Vol 92, p.103-106, who argued that female shoplifting could be compared to illness, linked to general depression and linked to schizophrenia or occurred as a result of desire to escape from reality. Shoplifting was also linked to the need to steal love. This explanation was presented by the work of VERSELE, S. C., 'Study of Female Shoplifters in Department Stores', International Criminal Police Records, 1969, March, p.66-70, who connected female shoplifting with inner emotional conflicts. Versele went on to argue that frustrated love, insecurity and feelings of emotional inferiority may be what motivates some women to steal as does lack of psycho-sexual fulfilment; sexual frustration, sublimation, lack of fulfilment of sensuous needs. These explanations were presented and discussed by the work of MEYERS, J.M., 'A Contribution to the Psychopathology of Shoplifting', Journal of Forensic Science, 1970, Vol 15, part 3, who gave examples of women who shoplifted allegedly because their sexual relationships with their husbands were poor. Loneliness and other unsatisfied emotional needs were also thought to motivate the shoplifter. This explanation was presented and discussed by the work of Russell (1973). ARBOLA-FLOREZ, J., DURIE, H., COSTELLO, J., 'Shoplifting an Ordinary Criminology', International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 1977, Vol21, p.201-207, went on, after surveying the psychological characteristics of thirty two patients who were referred for psychiatric assessment to define four types of shoplifter. Types identified included: (i) the psychotic - who shoplifts as a consequence of suffering from delusions; (ii) the snitch - who shoplifts regularly to accommodate an 'excessive' need to (iii) consume; (iv) the 'unusuals' - where there did not appear to be any apparent motivation. This was the only study, of the eight mentioned here, which recognised that there may be no psychological abnormality that induces shoplifting and recognised the relationship of shoplifting to shopping.

²² LLOYD, A., Doubly Deviant. Doubly Damned Society's Treatment of Violent Women. London, Penguin Books, 1995.

²³ McCORMACK, C.P., and STRATHERN, M., (1980), Nature. Culture. Gender. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.21.

²⁴ McCORMACK, C.P., and STRATHERN, M., (1980), Nature. Culture. Gender. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.21.

²⁵ McCORMACK, C.P., and STRATHERN, M., (1980), Nature. Culture. Gender. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.21.

²⁶ GARBER, M., Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety. London, Routledge, 1992.

²⁷ Ibid,

²⁸ Innate aggressionist thinking is discussed by LLOYD, A., Doubly Deviant. Doubly Damned Society's Treatment of Violent Women, London, Penguin Books, 1995.

²⁹ NEIKEN, D., and LINDEE, M.S., DNA Mystique: The Gene As Cultural Icon. New York, W.H. Freeman, 1995.p.29

³⁰ Ibid.104-6

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Twinkies Syndrome. Several studies have described, in a preliminary way, how violent behaviour is influenced by certain biochemical factors, including glucose and cholesterol levels (Virkkunen, 1987); carbohydrate intake (Lester, Thatcher, and Monroc-Lord, 1982) and diet in general. See discussion 'Biocriminology and Crime', in BEIRNE, P., & MESSERSCHMIDT, J., (Eds), Criminology, Fortworth, Philadelphia etc., Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1991, p.484-486.

³⁴ POULTER, S., 'Shopping Addicts: Season To Be Wary', Daily Mail, 8 December, 1997, App.2., p.15

³⁵ DANIELS, A., 'Shoppaholics Not ill...', The Daily Telegraph, 8 December, 1996, App.2, p.27.

- ³⁶ COWARD, R., Female Desire, London, Paladin, 1994.p.207-215
- ³⁷ KAPLAN, L., Female Perversions The Temptations of Madame Bovary, London, Pandora, 1991, p.18.
- ³⁸ KENNEDY, H., quoted in LLOYD, A., Doubly Deviant, Doubly Damned Society's Treatment of Violent Women, London, Penguin Books, 1995.
- ³⁹ CARLEN, P., Women, Crime and Poverty, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988, p.57.
- ⁴⁰ CARLEN, P., Women, Crime and Poverty, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988, p.12.
- ⁴¹ CARLEN, P., Women, Crime and Poverty, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988, p.32-33.
- ⁴² CARLEN, P., Women, Crime and Poverty, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988, p.71.
- ⁴³ BOX, S., and HALE, C., 'Liberation and Female Criminality in England and Wales', British Journal of Criminology, 1983, 22(3); p.35-49.
- ⁴⁴ MESSERSCHMIDT, J.W., Capitalism Patriarchy and Crime: Towards a Socialist Feminist Criminology, Totowa, N.J., Rowman & Littlefield, 1986, p.88.
- ⁴⁵ GIBBENS, T.C.N.,and PRINCE, J., Shoplifting, London, ISTD, 1962.
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- ⁴⁷ DALY, K., 'Gender and Varieties of White Collar Crime', Criminology, 1989, 27(14), p.769-93.
- ⁴⁸ op cit, p.781.
- ⁴⁹ ZIETZ, D., Women Who Embezzle or Defraud: A Study of Convicted Felons, New York, Praegar, 1981, p.80.
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- ⁵⁵ SUTHERLAND, E., (annotated and interpreted by), The Professional Thief. By A Professional Thief, Chicago, 1956.
- ⁵⁶ DALY, K., 'Gender and Varieties of White Collar Crime', Criminology, 1989, 27(4) p. 769-93.
- ⁵⁷ SUTHERLAND, E., (annotated and interpreted by), The Professional Thief. By a Professional Thief, Chicago, 1956.
- ⁵⁸ BECKER, H.S., Outsiders, New York, The Free Press, 1963.
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- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 9.
- ⁶¹ LEMERT, E., Social Pathology, New York, McGraw Hill, 1951.
- ⁶² GOODE, E., Deviant Behaviour An Interactionist Approach, London, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1978.
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- ⁸² CAMPBELL, D., 'Sixties Criminals as Folk Heroes', unpublished talk for '60s Week', London, Central Saint Martins College, 1995.
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CHAPTER FIVE

Criminal 'Stereotypes' and Mythologies about Women in Late Twentieth Century

Discourse

The previous chapter looked at ideas about deviance articulated through myths about 'born criminals' as well as theories of deviance. This chapter reviews stereotypes of criminal women that abound in the media. It examines what is at stake in the narrow range of images of female deviance which exist in the popular arena via two discrete sections. The first looks at ideas about 'archetypes', 'stereotypes' and 'permanent typifications' of criminal women. The second utilises the conceptual framework outlined in the first section to analyse newspaper reports of female shoplifters.

Reviewing 'Typifications', 'Archetypes' and 'Stereotypes' of Criminal Women

In her survey of female crime, and the very narrow mythological heritage that goes with it, Frances Heidensohn unearths three main images of female deviance which are often invoked to define, explain and label female crime and/or the non-conforming behaviour of women. These are:

- i) *the witch - evil woman,*
- ii) *the whore - sexual deviant,*
- iii) *the unfeminine/masculine woman - role deviant and social deviant.'*¹

Frances Heidensohn describes '*the range of distinctive images of deviance which depict women*'² as emphatically negative and defamatory in implication. She argues that '*there are no male equivalents for 'the witch' and 'the whore' as conventionally*

*portrayed nor for the notion of crime as doubly deviant.'*³ In addition, she states, that the bias against deviant women is strengthened by the fact that some types of male deviance *'either receive public approval - or are at least positively portrayed'*⁴ as, for example, was the case with the 'Jack the lad' juvenile delinquent so popular in the 1950s, especially in the movies of the period.

Stereotypes of criminal women that appear in the press would seem to have more in common with *archetypes*, than with stereotypes, in the sense that Heidensohn's concept of *'permanent typifications'* equates with the idea of archetypes. Yet Heidensohn is very careful in her writing to avoid using the word 'archetype' and she talks about *'permanent typifications'* only within the context of *'conventional portrayal'*, which implies a permanent stereotype. Stereotypes change with history and fashion and perhaps should be considered in relation to Roland Barthes's definition of mythologies⁵. A myth is a story or tale of primitive origin that may involve supernatural characters and ideas which metaphorically represent some natural or historical phenomenon. Yet, as James Watson and Ann Hill have observed, *'in everyday usage a myth is often regarded as something invented not true'*⁶, and it is here that Barthes's work is relevant, focusing as it does on the way that signs are made and read in history.

Of course, the notion of a stereotype itself in the first instance appeared to emerge with print.⁷ Stereotype was used to describe a mould making process familiar to printing. It later came to be used as a metaphor. As Kloppenborg and Hanegraaf have discussed, it means:

*'Something repeated or fixed or a general pattern lacking individual distinguishing marks or qualities; especially a standardised mental picture held in common by members of a group representing an oversimplified opinion, affective attribute or uncritical judgement.'*⁸

Steve Neale has offered a more complex analysis of stereotypes.⁹ For the purpose of this investigation though 'stereotype' is taken to mean a one dimensional, repetitive cliché that has something in common with the concept of an 'archetype', which is defined similarly as the original pattern, model or prototype.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the concept of archetype raises problems in connection with ideas about history because there is the explicit suggestion of universality contained within it and, unlike even the reductive concept of stereotype, the archetype it is believed never changes.

Heidensohn's 'permanent typifications' resolve the problem of the distinction between stereotypes and archetypes and are more helpful because they allow for the idea that, while some permanent typifications i.e. stereotypes, may remain with us, they may well be eclipsed by historical forces of change and new typifications. The concept of archetypes above doesn't quite allow or address change in this respect. However, Heidensohn's methodology is rather 'ahistorical' in focus and this is a weakness. Indeed, if we compare Heidensohn's arguments (1986) about 'the witch' with those made by Catherine Belsey (1986)¹¹, we find real differences of emphasis in terms of their approach to history. Both critics are writing about very different themes in very different academic arenas, although both cite Larner (1981)¹², the most respectable historical source on the sixteenth and seventeenth century English and Scottish witch-hunts.

Heidensohn's thesis about women and crime - that patriarchal societies seek to ensure stability through images and representations of deviant and non deviant women which confine and control female behaviour - is partly questioned by Catherine Belsey.

Catherine Belsey, writing about Renaissance Tragedy, does not see patriarchy held in place as steadfastly as does Heidensohn's account of the '*processes which subtly define and discipline female behaviour...*'¹³

Belsey writes of 'stereotypes', rather than 'typifications'. Even though both critics see the utilisation of these tropes as functioning '*to define what the social body endorses*

and what it wants to exclude'¹⁴, Belsey reaches a different conclusion about the overall effectiveness of stereotypes in terms of maintaining the status quo. Indeed, Belsey engages more vigorously with a concept of history as an active agent of change as well as possessing a sense of continuity. Conversely, in Heidensohn's work, she links a limited number of images of deviance with a set of '*permanent typifications*' which, she suggests, encourage conformity in women by implying that the price of deviance is too high for them. In contrast, Belsey argues that all stereotypes are historical constructs, '*which cannot ensure permanent stability, not only because the world always exceeds the stereotypical, but also in so far as the stereotypes themselves are inevitably subject to internal contradiction and so are perpetually precarious.*'¹⁵

This stress on historical change, in Belsey's writings, is important in terms of the concept of stereotypes: it explains how images come and go out of fashion and why stereotypes are not always compatible with lived identities. Some stereotypes, which may not always be the most fashionable or significant to the epoch in question, continue to linger. In contrast, Heidensohn's notions about '*permanent typifications*' try to side-step the issues raised by the concept of universal archetypes, particularly the idea of misogynist archetypes. This is not a good thing because Heidensohn's model, if read crudely, could appear to lend itself to less cautious critics (such as radical feminist accounts) as shall be demonstrated.

Questioning the Status of 'Misogynist' Archetypes

The vast number of hateful stereotypes of women that have existed across history (where there is no similar equivalent for the male of the species) has inspired Andrea Dworkin, in particular, to conceptualise the unchanging and determining effects of the male unconscious as causing misogyny. While such arguments are very strong and persuasive - in the context of historical phenomena like the witch craze - they do

collapse historical shifts and the resistance that led to social and political change for women. The focus on misogyny also creates fixed and inappropriate ideas about 'the patriarchy'. This obscures the contribution of men to the feminist movement. Some men have not only argued against women's oppression and misogyny, but their own political practice belies the essentialist idea that misogyny is an inherent part of the male psyche or masculinity. In order to avoid the inherent essentialism of radical feminism, many critics - Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, Judith Butler - have turned to the psychoanalytic framework to provide a cultural model of gender acquisition. But even the Lacanian model of the Symbolic order and the relationship to the unconscious¹⁶ that informs French feminism, equates with the idea that there is little agency for women. Judith Butler points out:

*'by instituting the Symbolic as invariably phantasmatic, the "invariably" wanders into an "inevitably", generating a description of sexuality in terms that promote cultural stasis as its result...This structure ... effectively undermines any strategy of cultural politics to configure an alternative imaginary for the play of desires.'*¹⁷

In order to acknowledge social process and cultural change as formative upon the unconscious, this investigation problematises the notion of archetypes in favour of Heidensohn's more cautious ideas about 'permanent typifications'. The narrow range of images of female deviance obviously have a history, one that is connected with 'patriarchy', but one that may change, as Catherine Belsey suggests, as patriarchal relations change. Stereotypes may be generated by unconscious desires, but as Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit point out even:

*'unconscious desire ... is socially mediated and this means that its significance is historical and not just psycho structural.'*¹⁸

Yet it is precisely because the representation of female criminality does not allow for diversity and ambiguity within the range of definitions available, that we are faced with

such a troublesome and narrow range of images of female deviance (Heidensohn's 'permanent typifications'). It must, therefore, be the job of feminist criticism to understand *why* ambiguity is not allowed and to argue to change this. Also, images of criminal women that do not easily fit into the typifications mentioned by Heidesohn, must be introduced into the popular arena.

Criminal women, particularly murderers and serial killers, pose a problem for representation: one which Helen Birch's discussion of Myra Hindley suggests, has adversely affected sentencing practice.¹⁹ The overall point made by Birch is that hysterical press coverage of Hindley, which continued to utilise the unremorseful, hard-faced, peroxide-blond photograph from the 1960s long after it was appropriate, meant that Myra Hindley's role in the Moors murders was sensationalised rather than fairly understood or evaluated. Thus, compared to other women who have been involved in serial killing or those who have murdered children, Myra Hindley has been the subject of 'a witch hunt'. This is a view which is also supported by Candice Skrapec, a forensic psychologist who works with the police. She has written about women serial killers in the same collection of essays from which Birch's discussion was drawn, suggesting that to isolate Myra Hindley as a lone exception in the tradition of sexual murder (as argued by D. Cameron and E. Frazer in *The Lust To Kill*)²⁰, '*does not appear to be adequately informed by empirical study of other comparable cases.*'²¹

Perception of female deviance therefore appears to be informed by reductive gender understandings. Ideas about 'respectable women' and 'good mothers' define the ideal norm of womanhood against which deviance is measured. In addition, when looking at contemporary media reportage, myths about criminal women which emerged in relationship to the nineteenth century discussion of kleptomania, reappear in the twentieth century. They reject any form of ambiguity, achieving an almost one dimensional discussion of shoplifting. This point will be demonstrated with reference to the review of newspaper reports of female shoplifters that follows. This is undertaken to see if there are images of female shoplifters buried in the archives that *do*

not conform to Heidensohn's typifications.

**(ii) Analysing Mythologies about Female Shoplifters in 20th Century Newspapers
(1985-1995)**

'Up until now it has been thought that the growth of the Christian Myths during the Roman Empire was possible only because printing was not yet invented. Precisely the contrary. The daily Press and the telegraphy, which in a moment spread inventions over the whole earth fabricate more myths ... in one day than could have formerly been done in a century.' Karl Marx²²

Codes and Conventions of Newspaper Reporting

This investigation starts from the premise that the news contributes to contemporary mythologies and proceeds in accordance with Cohen and Young's observations that, 'the news is manufactured.'²³ This is because, as John Hartley also identifies in

Understanding News:

'News comes to us as the pre existing discourse of an impersonal social institution which is also an industry. As we get used to its codes and conventions we will become "news literate" - not only able to follow the news and recognise its familiar cast of characters and events, but also spontaneously able to interpret the world at large in terms of the codes we have learned from the news. It must be said at once that the news, whether heard on radio, read in the newspapers or seen on the television, gains much of its 'shape' from the characteristics of the medium in which it appears....' News is a discourse which is structured by the larger discourses of television. These larger discourses themselves are dependent on the overall

*language system for their elements (signs) and their rules and conventions (codes).*²⁴

The above quotation explains the way the news is structured and how it has been informed by the larger discourses of television. All newspapers, 'broadsheets' and 'tabloids' alike function in this way. All types of newspapers are involved in featuring stories and images selected and slanted from the perspective of 'news value', which Galtung and Ruge (1973) define '*as a series of conditions which have to be fulfilled before an event is selected for attention.*'²⁵ The term 'news value' is understood through categories like 'human interest', 'women's page', etc., and often defines what can and cannot be included in news reports. It is around this concept of 'news value' that well documented issues about bias - unwitting and deliberate - connected with newspaper reporting arise and obviously impact on accounts of shoplifting found in the papers. Many incidents of shoplifting, using Galtung and Ruge's criteria of 'news value', would be considered unworthy of report. Despite this fact, it was felt that for the purpose of this investigation content analysis of newspaper reports of shoplifting would be relevant. In particular, content analysis can provide a source or body of material to use when trying to measure the accuracy of some of the claims made by Frances Heidensohn about the range of images of female deviance which actually exists in the media.²⁶

As there is no published survey or file of newspaper reports on shoplifting, this investigation was forced to compile its own survey of newspaper reports and articles on shoplifting over a period of ten years (submitted as Appendix Two). The aim in doing this was threefold:

- (1) to consider how far the idea of a cultural bias against deviant women could be seen in press coverage of shoplifting between 1986 and 1996. The resulting survey leads to some comparative discussion of the implications of gender specific and non-gender specific images of the shoplifter constructed by the press during this time.

(2) to ascertain to what extent images of female shoplifters in the press conform to any and/or all of the main typifications of female deviance put forward by Frances Heidensohn.

(3) to consider if there were other images of female shoplifters which did not conform to the three main typifications of female deviance Frances Heidensohn refers to. The point of such a focus was to consider what significance this has in respect of her claims regarding a cultural bias against women who are defined as deviant.

It was not practical to limit the investigation with regard to the particular newspapers because, if this approach had been adopted, it would have been impossible to gather much material at all. Shoplifting is not a crime that always has significant news value (although it is reported). Usually, it is considered to be such a commonplace crime, unless, that is, when a celebrity is involved, or when it is related to a newsworthy issue (Christmas, for example) or political concerns about general crime rates for theft (which have been raised by politicians). Unless the specificity is exceptional, reporting is very minimal or does not occur at all. This is the case with the majority of incidents of British shoplifting. The establishment is a favourite target and aristocratic figures like Lady Barnett, who killed herself after being reported as a [common] thief perhaps suffered unnecessarily as a consequence of being 'newsworthy.'²⁷ Often, for reports of shoplifting to appear at all, there might well have to be something unusual about the store or the situation or the shoplifter (as in the case of the French artist who only exhibited art he had shoplifted). Over the last ten years, shoplifting cases which have been reported over and over again in all the newspapers and so were the easiest to find, tended to present high profile shoplifting celebrities. For example, Stuart Hall the sports commentator or Richard Madeley (who co-presents the television programme Good Morning with his wife Judy Finnegan) were both celebrities the tabloids had a field day with. The broad-sheets were more extensive in their range, particularly in

respect of some of the longer reports and articles, which turned out to be a valuable source of textual evidence because of the detail they included. Such reports enabled this investigation to provide a fuller response to the stated objectives than might otherwise have been possible.

There are a few general points that should be made before the specific findings of the newspaper reports are discussed in terms of a debate about female deviance. The first concern is the typification of the average shoplifter (see full statistical discussion in Chapter Six). Many newspaper accounts acknowledge that it is not only women who are shoplifters. *'The majority of shoplifters'*, so one press report asserts *'are young men aged between 18-24.'*²⁸ Other reports and articles refer to *'highly organised gangs of professional shoplifters.'*²⁹ Shoplifting is *'organised crime'*,³⁰ these press reports told their readers. Apparently, even children can be involved, *'having been sent out to shoplift by older Fagins.'*³¹ Some shoplifters are *'anarchists'*³² too, according to some press findings. In the newspapers examined, shoplifters are also depicted as social outlaws or representatives of corrupt officialdom. Police officers and politicians are revealed as having engaged in a bit of shoplifting from time to time, and references are also made to the shop floor, or staff thieves who steal from the department stores they work in.³³ Shoplifting, many articles imply, is primarily motivated by greed.³⁴ There is also *'shoplifting for kicks'*³⁵, *'social shoplifting'*³⁶, *'anti social shoplifting'*³⁷ and stealing as the result of *'peer pressure'*³⁸ or as *'part of growing up.'*³⁹

What is initially striking about these representations of shoplifting is that none of them explicitly invoke the conventional equation between crime and poverty that we might expect in an era (1986-1996) that was marked, on the one hand, by an authoritarian political discourse about the return to Victorian values and, on the other, by a gradually emerging discourse about the need to address the poor and the homeless through a more caring society. Although Tony Blair spoke of *'hard pressed single mothers or pensioners pocketing treats'* suggesting that they *'were not a serious concern'*⁴⁰, he was tried by the press and found not to be in tune with new thinking about crime. Certainly,

in terms of newspaper reporting of the 80s and 90s, it became clear that 'poverty' was considered a rather passé explanation of crime, positively Dickensian, or worse still, part of the world view of the bleeding heart liberals and/or lefty idealists who have no understanding of crime. In the new political arena of crime of the last decade and the discourse of zero crime tolerance, which was emerging from both Left and Right of the political spectrum in Britain, poverty, as a causal mechanism of shoplifting, had little validity to the understanding of this type of theft, and was rarely addressed, although, as explained in Chapter Six, some criminologists such as Pat Carlin, take a very different view. Poverty may not have been sexy in the 80s (i.e. seen as having "news value") but shopping certainly was. Inevitably, where shoplifting was subjected to anything like critical analysis, comment appears to have focused on shopping.

In an era when the artist Barbara Kruger could ironically parody the moment (and Descartes dictum) with the telling phrase '*I shop, therefore I am*'⁴¹, it is not surprising that shopping is represented as the international pastime for those who could afford it: to 'consume even more' almost became a cultural imperative - a social virtue. Excess, however, is always troubling and the shopper and shoplifter are, therefore, often ideologically linked by the press through the concept of 'greed' which appears constructed as the motivation that inspires both acts. Thus the phrase '*stealing spree*'⁴² is constantly used in reports and articles, suggesting a relationship between 'shopping' (a word newspaper readers would more readily associate with 'spree') and the crime of shoplifting both of which are presented, through a slippage of meaning, as ways of acquiring/taking more than one needs.

All the social types of shoplifting referred to at the beginning of this introduction are connected with an ongoing debate in the press in the 80s and 90s between proponents of two opposing views. There are those such as The Association for the Prevention of Theft⁴³, for example, who argue that shoplifting is a crime committed for profit/greed. There are also their opponents, who are keen to establish the validity of the category of the non-criminal shoplifter (including feminist criminologists and groups like the Portia

Trust⁴⁴ and Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters)⁴⁵. Despite the acknowledgement on the part of various newspapers that a diverse range of social types engage in shoplifting, most of the press coverage of cases of shoplifting tend to involve women rather than men. Yet very few of the descriptions mentioned at the beginning of this introduction are applied to women who shoplift. Women, it would seem, in the newspaper context at least, rarely commit crime for profit or greed. An image of a woman is more likely to be used in support of the idea of the non-criminal shoplifter than would be the case using an image of a man. Indeed, many of the descriptions of female shoplifters appear to be distinctive and continue to suggest that there is some 'over' participation by women in this crime. This idea is contradicted elsewhere in the press by the image of shoplifters who belong to '*organised gangs*'⁴⁶, the semantic implication being that these 'gangs' are the traditional domain of men rather than women. Other descriptions of shoplifters suggest that the term is synonymous with female, even when the label is actually being applied to a man or gender is not mentioned. This is an important point, as this investigation would argue that men may become feminised by the crime of shoplifting, because it is viewed as a 'soft' crime. Certainly this appeared to happen in the case of television celebrity shoplifter Richard Madeley, a case which is discussed more fully later on in this chapter. The charge, which he denied at the time by saying that he had forgotten the alcohol was in his trolley, seems to have increased his popularity with the largely female audience who watch Good Morning.⁴⁷

Yet women who shoplift for 'kicks' are not easily masculinised by discourse, because of press support for the idea that shoplifting is a soft crime. In the newspapers examined, when women were depicted as 'social shoplifters', it usually started a moral panic about materialism and society or a society hell bent on 'kicks'. This moral panic⁴⁸ was also reflected in the way the press then dealt with other forms of crime such as the alleged increase in violent crime committed by young women. In these instances headlines such as '*Gentle sex indulges in thrill-seeking violence*'⁴⁹, invoked the image of masculine behaviour in a way that reaffirmed traditional norms about female

passivity and women's supposedly natural antipathy towards 'gangs' and collective action. Consequently, these women were cast in the role of social outlaws which impacts on understandings of deviance.

This investigation will now go on to look at reports of shoplifting within the context of the categories provided by Frances Heidensohn. Indeed, the survey which follows is divided into three main parts in accordance with Heidensohn's three main typifications of female deviance - 'witch', 'unfeminine or masculine woman' and 'the whore'.

While, as already noted, this investigation has revealed some problems with Heidensohn's notion of 'permanent typifications', what follows is intended to critically examine whether these categories stand up or whether there is shoplifting behaviour reported in the press that does not fit. However, there is also some reinterpretation and widening of Heidensohn's categories which are understood as tropes rather than as literal categories. For example, the review in the section 'the whore' does not look for reports of prostitutes who shoplift, but reinterprets the category as the sexualised shoplifter concerning women whose sexuality is linked to their shoplifting behaviour. This reinterpretation is intended to be in keeping with the spirit of Heidensohn's account. It allows a broader discussion of the significance of these images in terms of how they do and do not relate to the newspaper portrayals of the female shoplifter.

'Evil' Women Who Shoplift

(The Witch Extended)

In Women and Crime Frances Heidensohn refers to 'the witch' as an image primarily located in folklore, Pagan mythology and Judaeo-Christian theology. 'The witch' is an image associated with Eve and, according to Frances Heidensohn, it remains in the collective psyche through the art, literature, poetry and other cultural media and tends to represent women as especially depraved and monstrous with a natural capacity for extraordinary evil. It is an image which perpetuates the myth paraphrased by Kipling's

idiom that *'the female of the species is more deadly than the male'*.⁵⁰

Between 1986 and 1996, newspaper portrayals of female shoplifters which present deviant women as witches by stressing their natural dishonesty or their innate capacity for extraordinary evil, are rare. One of the exceptions is when shoplifting involves the offender in other usually more violent forms of crime. However, even in this context 'evil' tends to be linked to madness in a way that condemns the monstrous actions of individual women as somehow not their own.

One newspaper account describes *'a young woman shoplifter who stabbed a security guard in front of horrified shoppers.'*⁵¹

The phrase *'young woman'* as well as the word *'horrified'* signals the conventional reporting style used in this kind of violent crime report. However, these brief descriptions also have a historic specificity. The reported isolated actions of the *'young'* shoplifter together with the homogenous crowd reaction reflect a larger moral panic evident elsewhere in the press about the rising tide of juvenile female violence which appeared to be sweeping Britain between 1995 and 1996. Headlines such as *'It's Payback Time'*⁵² and *'Women on the Verge'*,⁵³ which accompany reports about girls on the rampage invest this particular account of female violence with an implicit allusion to female psychosis it might otherwise not have.

Women who allow their children either to go shoplifting with them, or to go out shoplifting for them, are those most likely to be constructed as evil or witch-like by the press of the period. This also occurs in the portrayal of the shoplifter Shirley Pitts's mother (Nelly Pitts nee Taylor) in the book *Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves.*⁵⁴ Similarly, the shoplifter Megan Brookes, who appeared on TV in 1995, told viewers how she made her living from shoplifting; this narrative was juxtaposed with a shoplifting couple who took their children with them. The young mother, condemned by the police (watching her and her family on video tape) and by

the press afterwards, was constructed as an *'inappropriate mother'*, not evil enough to be a witch, but going in that direction. There are rarely descriptions of "magical" abilities of female shoplifters in the press, none could be found for the period in question, although outside of press discourses there is a connection made between the witch and the shoplifter. The editor at Penguin who was responsible for sub editing *Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves*,⁵⁵ excluded some of the 'magical' thinking and discourse of Shirley Pitts from the book, arguing that it was inappropriate to reader's interest in the action being described.

'Sexy' Or 'Hormonal' Women Who Shoplift ('The Whore' Extended)

In *Women and Crime* Frances Heidensohn refers to 'the whore' as one of the most potent images of female deviance, in addition to those of 'the witch' and of 'masculine' or 'unfeminine' traits. She also states that the whore image has led to the *'sexualising' of many other, sometimes all, types of non-conforming behaviour*⁵⁶ and, as a way to elaborate this view, adds that *'offences which have apparently nothing to do with sexuality are, when committed by women, transformed into expressions of female sexuality or the lack of it.'*⁵⁷ (Hence the subtitle above which refers to 'sexy' or 'hormonal' women who shoplift.) Frances Heidensohn refers to the enduring image of *'the compulsive, menopausal woman shoplifter'*⁵⁸ in support of her claims. She goes on to suggest that this is an image that reinforces the larger stereotype of female deviance as the product of erratic hormones. Frances Heidensohn shares the view of other writers who see the hormonal woman stereotype as primarily a construct of the medical discourse of the nineteenth century. This discourse, she argues, retained the conventional equation that identified 'the whore' with 'a contaminating sexuality'⁵⁹ through the links it made between female deviance, sexuality and sickness. It is Heidensohn's contention that the nineteenth century medical portraits of the female deviant in the grip of mental, personality and/or behavioural disorders which have their

origin in her reproductive system and its generative cycles, emerge from and continue to give credence to that basic equation.

This investigation, as demonstrated in Chapter Three's discussion of Kleptomania, shares Heidensohn's view that traces of nineteenth century medical portraits and/or images of the female deviant which have long since slipped into popular currency. This has occurred, even though the supposed scientific evidence upon which they were based, has been largely discredited. This is true of our national press which contributes to the public perception of the shoplifter by more often than not invoking images of a female shoplifter who is sad or mad.

In the press reports studied between 1986 and 1996 it is clear that these images gain further credibility because they are constructed through the opinions of psychiatrists, police officers, and members of the judiciary. Even support groups and charitable organisations, who openly acknowledge their more sympathetic stance to the shoplifter, have unfortunately reinforced sexist and hormonal discourse. This investigation reviews how this occurs by looking at the following sub-categories: (i) hormonal woman, (ii) the stressed and/or psychotic shoplifter as well as the (iii) distracted shoplifter and linked to, or subsumed by, the category of whore.

(i) The Hormonal Woman

The views of Dr John Bonn, Consultant Psychiatrist at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, clearly express an unflinching allegiance to female images and stereotypes of the nineteenth century, undiminished by time, contemporary knowledge and/or conflicting definitions of femininity which may now exist. He is quoted in an article by Roger Todd which re-presents Victorian explanations of the motives of female shoplifters as if they were new. Accordingly, whilst Dr. Bonn acknowledges that in the world of the late 1980s female shoplifters can also be young as well as middle aged, he summons up the familiar stereotype of the hormonal woman by saying:

*'Some young women have a cyclical urge to steal - just when they are coming up for a period... Women who engage in crime are very much more likely to do so in the pre-menstrual phase... Many women suffering from depression, emptiness and loneliness will shoplift to fill themselves up in the psychological sense.'*⁶⁰

The idea of shoplifters as women possessed by pre-menstrual compulsions which make them behave irrationally is also reflected in the sensational headline: *'Women who can't stop stealing'*⁶¹, the title of the article Dr. Bonn is featured in. This is followed by the less than deferential subheading: *'The blues that make them turn to crime.'*⁶² Both headings make more prominent Dr. Bonn's views in an article which also includes non-gendered images of shoplifters depicted as *'members of professional gangs'*⁶³ or as *'rich, foreign visitors.'*⁶⁴

What is also telling is that Dr Bonn's view is juxtaposed with those of Baroness Phillips, but in a way that tends to discredit her rather than him. In 1989 she was Chairwoman of the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops, an association *'who harbour a tougher attitude to shoplifting.'*⁶⁵ Accordingly, she provides the following slightly churlish riposte to the claims of psychiatrists like Bonn:

*'In 20 years as a magistrate I never saw the menopausal lady who's supposed to do so much shoplifting...Most shoplifting is deliberate and premeditated.'*⁶⁶

She is given short shrift by Roger Todd, the journalist, whose voice ultimately guides the reader's response to the attitudes and opinions expressed in this article. He refers dismissively to Baroness Phillips's *'old fashioned attitude.'*⁶⁷

Contradictions in tone combined with the colloquial style of some of Roger Todd's own writing tend to sway the reader against the case of the hormonal woman who shoplifts. At the beginning of his article he refers to the *'tragic case of Felicity Wappler'*⁶⁸ but

this statement is followed by the stylistic declension of, '*she pinched and hoarded £15,000 worth of clothes*'⁶⁹, more akin to bathos than pathos in its effect. There is an element of mockery present in the colloquial style of Roger Todd. It is this which helps to convey how much he enjoys portraying female deviants as menstrual, mad women, as for example, when he refers to those members of the female sex whose '*hormones are so out of balance that their behaviour goes over the top.*'⁷⁰ Roger Todd expresses a fairly typical attitude on the part of the national press which, more often than not, tries to find ways of making the female criminal a humorous or satirical figure, rather than a subject for serious consideration.

The 'hormonal woman' can be subject to more sensitive consideration in the press when she is invoked by those who sincerely believe in the idea of the 'non criminal shoplifter'. One of the cases which helps to illustrate this point concerns two sisters, Ann Chastell and Frances Wharby both of whom were involved in a successful damages claim against Tesco, having been falsely accused in 1984 of changing the price tag on a toaster on sale in the store in order to save two pounds. The damages claim case received coverage in both the tabloids and the broadsheets, sparking off further debate about the way the law handles such '*borderline cases*' in which, according to a letter from Ken Norman, '*there is real doubt as to whether or not there was an intent to steal.*'⁷¹

As Organiser of the Portia Trust, '*which helps women in trouble with the law*'⁷², Ken Norman's sympathies naturally lay with the two women but, in a way, that suggests he perceives women as both mentally and physically frail and in need of the chivalrous protection of men. In his letter, he acknowledges the real basis upon which the two women were acquitted by referring to the forensic evidence which proved that the price tag on the toaster had not been changed. Without that evidence, he argues, '*no court*' would have given '*much credence to the words of suspected thieves*' and the two women would have ended up with convictions.⁷³ What makes Ken Norman's letter interesting, is that although he makes reference to the actual basis upon which Ann

Chastel and Frances Wharby were acquitted, he also insists on associating them with other '*borderline cases*' in which those accused of shoplifting are guilty of nothing more than an '*honest mistake*.'⁷⁴ That '*honest mistake*' appears to be forgetfulness or a lack of concentration, symptomatic of the end or aftermath of a generative cycle and/or other acutely 'female' problems. Accordingly, Ken Norman states:

*'In these "borderline cases" the shopper has usually been in a rush, or on tranquillisers, or suffering menopause or illness, or facing overwhelming problems, or is elderly or harassed.'*⁷⁵

Ken Norman believes in the reality of his image of the female shoplifter as primarily a '*borderline case*'⁷⁶ who is more often than not falsely accused and not in her right mind at the time of the offence. He writes of the two thousand cases he has on file, '*the majority of which have resulted in convictions.*'⁷⁷ However, he offers no proof, except circumstantial arguments, regarding the basis upon which these convictions are false, except to say, '*I'm practically certain they are untrue...*'⁷⁸

Ken Norman's quote about the '*borderline cases*' was reproduced in the Daily Mirror as part of a larger report on the outcome of the damages case Ann Chastell and Frances Wharby had recently won.⁷⁹ In this report, the quote is printed in close proximity to a picture of the two women who are both near enough to middle age to fit the image of the compulsive menopausal shoplifter. Despite the actual circumstances of their own cases, it seems they also continue to be the implied imaginary stand-ins for the perceived reality Ken Norman cannot otherwise conclusively substantiate.

Other reports on women who shoplift simply hint at a connection between their crimes and their wombs. They do so by resorting to a language which resembles that of Dr. Bonn in its references to loneliness, emptiness and the aching voids in women's lives which make them compulsive thieves.

Susie Orbach is one of the few columnists who considers the phenomenon of shoplifting. In an article entitled, *'From Shoplifter to Drug Addict'*⁸⁰ (18.3.95) she explores the issue of women who apparently *'enter prison as shoplifters and exit as heroin addicts.'*⁸¹ She is also in the minority because she considers shoplifting within the context of shopping, consumerism and the persuasive power of the marketplace, all of which urge us to acquire more. Although she uses the term 'shoplifter' repeatedly, her explanation of motive is based on the assumption that stealing from shops is only ever a female crime. Accordingly, she states:

'The shoplifter is driven to steal, both by a wish to ameliorate emptiness and to set herself in the middle of an emotional drama in which she actively confronts and attempts to transform her deprivation... but the goods cannot meet but only amplify her deprivation.' [My emphasis.]⁸²

Orbach's account of shoplifting here reads suspiciously like her accounts of eating disorders. Other writers too have made this connection. On the one hand there are those who use the phrase 'bulimic shopping' to describe the process whereby women continually buy things they do not need and then take them back to claim the refund. On the other hand, orthodox case studies of bulimics reveal food is stolen as part of the denial of bingeing. When writing of those female shoplifters who take up heroin in prison, Orbach uses a language which identifies their need to be fulfilled as the 'Monstrous O'⁸³ in themselves:

*'Heroin addiction is an attempt to make a life by encountering the threat of death. With the boundary of death as one possible implication of heroin use, the person can surrender to the consoling comforts of the narcotic. Soothing can be allowed, even embraced.'*⁸⁴

A vocabulary which hints at a connection between women's crimes and their wombs is also invoked in newspaper portrayals of elderly women who shoplift. One elderly

woman was *'let off with a warning over £60,000 wall to wall haul.'*⁸⁵ Dubbed as *'Grabber Granny'*⁸⁶ by the police and the Daily Express, her nickname poked fun at the idea of a female senior citizen being arrested. It also mocked what was perceived by both press and police as the absurd material acquisitiveness she demonstrated in one so old. Quite a few of the descriptions also associated *'Grabber Granny'* with death, absence, vacancy and loss. The Express characterised her as a *'grieving granny'* who *'embarked on an amazing 17 year shoplifting spree after her husband died.'*⁸⁷ Another paper referred to her as *'a 79 year old widow'* who hoarded 6,941 items...during a 17 year old shoplifting spree.⁸⁸ References to her exceptional capacity for 'hoarding', in both reports, including a detailed inventory of goods involved, were juxtaposed with other descriptions which suggested how alone she was. A policeman's portrait of her stressed, *'a medical problem caused by loneliness.'*⁸⁹ The suggestion that she was compensating for the barrenness associated with post-menopausal women who are also widowed and therefore doubly bereaved, was clearly implied.

Other descriptions of *'Grabber Granny'* characterised her as an *'eminently respectable'*⁹⁰, *'silver haired'*⁹¹ or a *'grey haired little old lady'*⁹², *'everybody's idea of a typical granny.'*⁹³ In her ordinariness, in her need to hoard, to store up for 'a rainy day' the unopened, unpaid-for items she acquired, it is tempting to see *Grabber Granny* as a perverse example of the thrifty shopper. The inscribed slippage from *'shopping'* to *'shoplifting spree'*⁹⁴ which occurred in both reports implied a relationship between shopping and *Grabber Granny's* crime which was diffused by other references which patronised or attempted to infantilise her. Readers were told that she *'didn't mean any harm'*⁹⁵ but needed looking after. There was the added suggestion that she should be put in a home.

In the press, the 'hormonal woman' stereotype plays a crucial part in the interpretation of the crime of shoplifting when committed by women. This results in the interpretation of shoplifting behaviour in women as an expression of madness to varying degrees. Thus Edward Walsh, who writes on shoplifting, states emphatically

that:

*'Although most of those convicted of shoplifting are men, the vast majority of shoppers who turn to stealing because of mental illness are women.'*⁹⁶

Edward Walsh's views are reinforced by several psychologically dysfunctional images of shoplifters which recur in the press. There are many newspaper reports, compiled as Appendix Two, which present the ultimate destiny of the hormonally-imbalanced shoplifter as linked to death by suicide.⁹⁷ Indeed, shoplifting suicides appear to have more news value than do cases of shoplifters who live with their crimes. All the psychologically dysfunctional images of shoplifters appear linked in their construction to the account of hormonal imbalance that originated in the nineteenth century. This survey goes on to show that when a woman is depicted as psychologically dysfunctional, such images tend to express a relationship to the 'hormonal woman' stereotype and therefore to the typification of 'the whore'. They continue to link deviant behaviour in women with female sexuality (in the biological sense) and illness. For this reason, as mentioned earlier, this investigation has stretched Frances Heidensohn's category of the Whore to include also (i) hormonal woman as just discussed plus (ii) the 'stressed' and/or 'psychotic' shoplifter as well as (iii) the distracted and (iv) exhilarated shoplifter.

(ii) The 'Stressed' and/or 'Psychotic' Shoplifter

The notion of the stressed and/or psychotic shoplifter may seem far removed from the concept of the whore, but as mentioned earlier, this investigation has interpreted the whore to mean all sexualised representations of shoplifters. In an article in the Independent about middle class shoplifting, entitled '*Why Steal a Pie You Don't Want?*'⁹⁸, the existence of 'stressed' and/or 'psychotic' shoplifters is taken at face value and treated sympathetically. Defined as '*having no intention to steal*'⁹⁹ these shoplifters

are said to be either suffering from '*short term stress*'¹⁰⁰ or '*under severe pressure*.'¹⁰¹ They are also prone to be '*absent minded*'¹⁰², '*have no idea what came over them*'¹⁰³ and often '*walk out of the shop in a daze*.'¹⁰⁴ They articulate their crimes in ways not dissimilar to those of the female kleptomaniacs chronicled in Chapter Two and in E. Abeson's (1989) study, When Women Go a Thieving.¹⁰⁵

The title, '*Why Steal a Pie You Don't Want?*', immediately implies that the 'stressed' shoplifter is more likely to be a woman than a man, referring as it does to the case of Barbara Taylor, a 65 year old partner in a firm of solicitors, the only specific case cited in the article. Barbara Taylor is perceived as a fitting illustration of the type, having stolen a meat pie worth £1. 80 from Marks & Spencer. No further reference is made to the work she does which it appears is only mentioned in order to establish a fitting idea of middle class respectability. Instead, the reader is given a catalogue of the distressing circumstances in her personal life. She is '*taking drugs for depression*'¹⁰⁶, has '*a husband with multiple sclerosis*'¹⁰⁷ and a daughter with an '*incurable brain tumour*.'¹⁰⁸ It would not be unreasonable, then, to think of her circumstances as revealing '*severe pressures*'¹⁰⁹, and it is therefore surprising that Mrs Taylor's offence is explained in terms of '*short term stress*'¹¹⁰, a phrase which seems to belittle the severity of her domestic plight. '*Severe pressures*' would have allowed Mrs Taylor to be constructed as a 'victim' of circumstance and would not have implied so strongly a psychological failure on this woman's part to cope with a challenging domestic situation. Indeed, the overall effect of the phrase '*severe pressures*' would have more likely been to exonerate Mrs Taylor from the sense of personal defeat she is otherwise associated with. Conversely, the phrase '*short term stress*', is perhaps more unintentionally damning in its suggestion of a temporary loss of concentration, which is endemic to the female mind, easily exhausted or over stimulated when called upon to deal with more than one thought or task at a time. Accordingly, references to Mrs Taylor's professional career and taxing homelife also carry the hidden significance that she has failed the 'superwoman' test popular at the time which women apparently impose on themselves.

The descriptions of the 'stressed' and/or 'psychotic' shoplifter are based on deeply rooted assumptions that shoplifting is predominantly a woman's crime: one that is strongly associated with middle class women, not least because of the effect of the medical and psychiatric discourses of the nineteenth century. The vocabulary of these descriptions tends to summon up images of the female sex as prone to erratic outbursts of 'dotty' or 'batty' behaviour and positions them as eccentric (often as a consequence of a deviant sexuality) rather than criminal. Hence the reference to the one item taken by Mrs Taylor, given to readers in the now familiar 'inventory' style. This repeatedly used convention tends to emphasise the irrational discrepancy between risk and monetary return or value associated with the alleged act of theft. It also appears in the press coverage of other cases such as that of Ann Chastell and Frances Wharby.

This investigation does accept that some cases of shoplifting may be inadvertent, occasionally linked to stress or other causal mechanisms that might effect the theft. But, it challenges the idea that all women who shoplift are stressed, psychotic or hormonal. Such explanations which refer back to the discourse of kleptomania, may be covertly informed by essentialist discourse which constructs women as the weaker sex.

Descriptions of the 'stressed' and/or 'psychotic' shoplifter tend to have a female implication and, when they are applied to men, can feminize them in a way that is equally stigmatising. The press reports and portrayals of Richard Madely and Stuart Hall help to illustrate this point, referring as they do to the only two cases of male middle class shoplifters that are reported in any detail during the period under consideration.

Richard Madely, who was accused of stealing wine, spirits and a packet of soap powder from a branch of Tesco, provides the perfect illustration of the 'stressed' shoplifter. He is quoted in court as saying: *'I simply forgot the bottles existed'¹¹¹ ...It just didn't register¹¹² ...If it had registered I would have taken them out'¹¹³*. Stuart Hall, who was

accused of stealing a packet of sausages and a jar of coffee worth £3.94 from Safeways, is also quoted by a policeman in court as saying: *'I got very confused.'*¹¹⁴ Although 'stressed', there is, on the surface, a more positive implication in both men's defences than was the case with the reports of the case of Mrs. Taylor. Readers are constantly reminded that they are TV presenters who, after all, are very busy people. Like royalty, they have many important things on their minds and may be 'above' the mundane reality of shopping efficiently. A photograph of Stuart Hall accompanying the press report about his case, implies he is old enough to be a convincing professional variation of the absent minded professor.¹¹⁵

Yet, in the case of Richard Madely, it is also clear that some newspapers regarded his defence as inadequate and unmanly and found ways of lampooning him for it. The taunting headlines of The Sun and The Daily Mirror portray him as a cry baby who *'doth protest too much'* his innocence to be convincing. Examples include *'TV Madely Sobs': I'm No Shoplifter'*¹¹⁶; and, *'I'm just forgetful sobs TV's Mr. Cool'*¹¹⁷, the latter headline suggesting that cool and tearful are incompatible so one or other image of Madely is false. Another report includes a picture of Richard Madely with his supportive wife, Judy Finnegan, and above it appears the equivocal headline: *'Off their Trolleys'*¹¹⁸. The effect of this is to simultaneously defy readers to believe them and to view them both as mad. Even more insidious are the newspaper references to Richard Madely's repeated use of the word 'register': *'It just didn't register'*¹¹⁹... *'If it had registered'*¹²⁰ and *'They just didn't register'*¹²¹...*simply didn't register.'*¹²² These quotes cannot fail to make an impression on the reader. The inference in the press about the cash till and Madely's feigned unawareness of it in respect of the extra goods in his trolley, illustrates this point. The implication for readers is that his guilt is made obvious through his own use of what newspapers perceive to be the Freudian slip/pun implicit in the word (cash) 'register'.

In other reports which deal with the Stuart Hall case, some of the descriptions which refer to his circumstances before and after he was accused of shoplifting create a

portrait which is not dissimilar to that of Barbara Taylor. He is portrayed as unable to cope with the demands of life. On the day after his arrest, readers are told, he was visited by a psychologist who described him *'as absolutely depressed, a little bit dishevelled, confused and troubled.'*¹²³ The phrase *'confused and troubled'*, tends to summon up an image of a senile old woman mistakenly accused of shoplifting when really she doesn't know what day of the week it is. Stuart Hall's reported objections to his temporary imprisonment also cast him in the role of an 'ageing female fuss pot' as well as that of the fastidious older man.¹²⁴ There is also much of the 'woman in peril' associated with melodrama about him, particularly when he is quoted as saying: *'I would have agreed to anything because I was totally distracted and consumed with anxiety.'*¹²⁵

(iii) The 'Distracted' Shoplifter

Distraction or absent mindedness, as a form of behaviour may appear to have little to do with sexuality. However, representations of the distracted shoplifters implicitly make that sexual link by suggesting that psychology has been disturbed by repressed sexual feelings that express themselves in, and are connected to, unhappiness. All 'unhappiness' is treated with suspicion.

Dr Neil Brener, a psychologist at Charing Cross Hospital, suggests that, *'such people shoplift either to communicate or to gain compensation for miserable lives at home.'*¹²⁶ In an article by Richard Pendry, John, now age 30, and *'a successful barrister'*¹²⁷, describes the shoplifting of his youth as *'self punishment, a hopeless attempt to cope with the stresses of an unhappy life.'*¹²⁸ Shari Barnes, defence counsel for the compulsive shoplifter Ann Hemmings describes her as, *'this inadequate and disorganised woman.'*¹²⁹ Although Dr. Brener speaks of 'people', part of his description strongly suggests that it has greater relevance when applied to women like Ann Hemmings. 'Miserable lives at home' implies an old fashioned distinction

between an absent workplace which is not the traditional province of women, and 'home' which is.

The 'distracted' shoplifter also has much in common with the compulsive shopper who is invariably depicted elsewhere in the press as a woman, in the form of famous figures like Sarah Ferguson, who is unable to '*stop spending money on herself*.'¹³⁰ Thus, whilst Dr. Brener connects 'matrimonial unhappiness' with a compulsion to steal from shops, other 'experts' like those who pontificated on the subject of kleptomania, inform readers that '*shopping is a great distraction...it gives respite from low self esteem and depression*.'¹³¹ It is a form of revenge '*against their partners who might be working late or not paying them enough attention*.'¹³² The representation of the case of Sarah Ferguson and Prince Andrew is typical in this respect, and is used to illustrate this point. Whilst a woman like Sarah Ferguson is constructed as selfish and childlike in her response to marital difficulties, she at least is perceived as engaging in a form of self-generated therapy. Clearly the greater inadequacy belongs to the female shoplifter, whose 'shopping without cash' mentality is less likely to be interpreted as a form of therapy, and more likely to be viewed as a cry for medical help, as the opinions of Dr Brener suggest.

(iv) The 'Exhilarated' Shoplifter

Susie Orbach explores a link between shoplifting and substance addiction in her article, already mentioned, entitled 'From Shoplifting to Heroin Addict'. Elsewhere in the press, between 1986 and 1996, there are explicit references to shoplifting and drug addiction and implicit analogies made between shoplifting and some sort of escalating alcohol or substance abuse. Often these references and analogies are invoked in an effort to defame or celebrate the existence of the shoplifter. Thus readers are given the following response to Tony Blair's comments about the 'hard pressed single mum or pensioner putting a treat in their pocket'¹³³, as follows:

*'People may start with pilfering but it can lead on to bigger things. He needs to ask where these gangs begin.'*¹³⁴

There is also a quote in an overtly sympathetic account about Shirley Pitts which makes one of the few links between crime and poverty encountered during this investigation:

*'She may well have started thieving to stave off hunger but ended up sometimes spending £2,000 a week on clothes and the same sort of sum on toys for her grandchildren.'*¹³⁵

Readers are also told that the 'exhilarated' shoplifter steals for kicks *'for the sheer exuberance of getting away with it'*¹³⁶, as John the barrister, already discussed in the previous section on the 'distracted shoplifter', puts it. According to the article by Richard Pendry, John was both 'distracted' and 'exhilarated' in his youth when in a shoplifting parallel to the non-inhaling marijuana smoking Bill Clinton, he was, *'one of a gang which would nick records, then put them back.'*¹³⁷ Guy Rafe, in an article headlined 'Counter rebellion', also writes about *'the thrill of thieving which made him believe he was invincible.'*¹³⁸ He makes another one of the few references to poverty as having caused him to start shoplifting, saying he initially stole *'because I had no income...'* but, *'from then on I was hooked.'*¹³⁹ He compares the 'buzz' of shoplifting to losing his virginity which, *'came nowhere near the endorphin rush I got from my first heist.'*¹⁴⁰

There is an implied sense of male bravado and a feeling that the actions of both men, when young, were expressing the natural youthful rebelliousness that Frances Heidensohn refers to when speaking of typifications of male deviance. This should be seen in striking contrast to the more 'downbeat' descriptions of the female shoplifter we have considered so far. Frances Heidensohn's other references to *'the celebration of criminal sub-cultures, the glorification of violence and villainy found in a range of works by or about male gangsters'*¹⁴¹, is also probably relevant here. John is

glamorised by Pendry, who refers to him in positive terms as a '*schoolboy celebrity, a rebel.*' Guy Rafe's also constructs himself positively by writing in a way that recalls the 'angry young men' created by writers of the fifties. At various point in his article, Guy comes across as a latter-day 'Smith', the cocksure, anti-establishment thief with attitude created by Alan Sillitoe in his short story The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, (1956).¹⁴²

At one point in Sillitoe's story, Smith refers to '*advert's on the telly which showed us how much more there was in the world to buy than we'd ever dreamed of when we'd looked into shop windows but hadn't seen all there was to see because we didn't have the money to buy it with anyway.*'¹⁴³ Smith, with his 'pal Mike', walks the town '*from one end to the other...our eyes swivelling around house windows and shop doors in case we saw something easy and worth nipping into.*'¹⁴⁴

Guy Rafe's, using a very similar colloquial idiom to that of Smith, tells his readers how he too would, '*walk around town gazing longingly, at the items I could not afford.*'¹⁴⁵

What gives Guy Rafe's and John's accounts tremendous credibility and authority, is that they are speaking about themselves, unlike the many female shoplifters this investigation has looked at, who were being spoken about. Both men are not described as typical persons. They define themselves.

Elaine, who is featured in the same article that John appears in, also speaks about herself as an 'exhilarated' shoplifter. However, her account is self-condemning in a way that the men's accounts are not. She says:

*'I got a real kick out of the danger...It's kind of sexual, like when you're just about to sleep with someone for the first time, and you've got this knot of fear in your stomach in case you're rejected. You're afraid, but once you've done it you obviously feel really happy.'*¹⁴⁶

Elaine's sexual analogy with the pleasure of shoplifting, because it hints at promiscuity, is liable to reinforce the link between female deviance and sexual deviance associated with Frances Heidensohn's overall sexual category ('Whore' extended). Furthermore, although John's individual acts of theft are referred to by the press as a '*nick*'¹⁴⁷, Elaine, '*used to swipe [my emphasis] designer clothes on the King's Road when she was at college.*'¹⁴⁸ 'Nick' makes light of John's crimes, whereas 'swipe' suggests a snatching, grabbing action, altogether less sympathetic in its connotations.

In a perhaps unintended slight against shoplifter Megan Brooke's illegal professionalism, Lisa Sowards tells us:

*'Megan would "work" from 8 am to 8pm and sometimes do a last foray into a motor way service centre as if she was on a high.'*¹⁴⁹

Of Julie Freestone, another professional thief, the press tell their readers that she, '*used to run her own escort agency and is a self confessed former crack addict.*'¹⁵⁰ Freestone is also discredited in another way. In the articles about John and Guy, they are allowed to indulge freely in their enthusiastic reminiscences about shoplifting, whereas Julie Freestone is not. Instead, she is described by two Sunday Times reporters in an unflattering way, as having '*boasted on a television documentary about the ease with which she made money from stealing.*'¹⁵¹ This behaviour of 'boasting on TV' implies the kind of negative censure which is not present in the articles, already mentioned, concerning John and Guy. In contrast to the two men, the various forms of exhilarated shoplifting done by women, are implicitly linked to the idea that the excessiveness is a response to some deep sexual lack. It is therefore sexualised behaviour. Because of this link the exhilarated female shoplifter is connected to the overall sexual category ('whore' extended). Maybe it can also be connected to a lack of positive feminine sexuality which can be understood in terms of Heidensohn's final typification.

'Un Feminine' Or Masculine Women Who Shoplift

Megan Brookes and Julie Freestone, discussed above as 'exhilarated shoplifters', may also fit into the category of masculine women. Although neither of these women are physically described as being manly or looking like men, they have in common with the male deviant an outsider status which is traditionally understood as a masculine phenomenon. This point will be returned to. First, however, we should review what Heidensohn means by the masculine woman.

It has already been pointed out that in her discussion of what constitutes the 'narrow range of typifications'¹⁵² of female deviance, Frances Heidensohn suggests that social deviance and female criminality are often associated with the image of a masculine or unfeminine woman in our culture. She who is defined either as sexually abnormal or as in a 'freakish' deviant role. She has also stated that:

*'Women involved in politically deviant activities, whether suffragettes, urban guerrillas or peace protesters have been particularly subject to this treatment.'*¹⁵³

Heidensohn's argument is supported by other writers who have dealt more extensively with the media coverage of the women's suffrage campaign and the political activities of the Greenham Common female peace protesters. Lisa Tickner, for example, has referred to the cultural representation of women suffragists in the 1870s which depicted these women as masculine or unfeminine. Accordingly, in The Spectacle of Women¹⁵⁴ she illustrates this point by referring to Punch's claim that: *'The women who want Women's rights/Want, mostly, Woman's charms.'*¹⁵⁵

In the same book, she also makes reference to the militant suffragist Mary Phillips who, in 1907, described the caricature of the female suffragist as *'a gaunt, unprepossessing female...with a raucous voice, and truculent demeanour.'*¹⁵⁶ According to Mary

Phillips, this caricature of the suffragist also depicted her as deeply unreasonable and intolerant. These characteristics were emphasised in the following way:

*'(The suffragist carried) a big { phallic} "gampy" umbrella she always brandished in an ill conceived attempt to either dominate an argument or harangue any unfortunate member of the opposite sex who...happened to displease her.'*¹⁵⁷

Likewise, Alison Young¹⁵⁸ has also referred to the way the press utilised the image of the 'wild woman' in its depiction of the women peace protesters who camped out on Greenham Common. Protesters were portrayed as unnatural 'she' men, or ill equipped Tarzan figures.

For the purposes of this investigation, Heidensohn's views gained further credibility when the few newspaper reports which chose to acknowledge the existence of the professional woman shoplifter were examined in more detail. Interestingly, these reports appeared in newspapers between 1994 and 1996. They belonged to the same era in which the press tried to impress upon their readers that violent behaviour in young women was on the increase. It soon became clear that the full implications of the limited press coverage about the professional female shoplifter would be better understood if viewed alongside other reports and articles which dealt with female violence and the alleged growth of girl gangs.

Between 1994 and 1996 '*Girls in the Hood*'¹⁵⁹ and '*Girls Get Tough*'¹⁶⁰ were just some of the headlines which suggested that adolescent girls were undergoing an alienating gender mutation. This appeared to happen during a stage in their sexual and physical development which should mark their natural transition from 'girl' to womanhood. In one report the *portmanteau*esque 'psychofemmes'¹⁶¹ was even used to imply a sensationalised link between female anarchy, gender confusion, sexual abnormality and mental instability. One broadsheet referred to the orchestrated, '*tabloid nightmare of rampaging girl criminals bringing terror to the streets of Britain.*'¹⁶² Others

maintained that readers needed to engage vigilantly with the apparent new reality of 'job woman'.¹⁶³

Quotes from judges and professionals were utilised to lend credibility to the reality about girl gangs; these helped create a moral panic. Thus, one judge in a case involving two girls who had murdered a pensioner, was reported to have said that they were the, '*evil products of a modern age.*'¹⁶⁴ His description associated the two eighteen year olds with witchcraft. However, in most of the reports and articles looked at, the idea of 'witchcraft' soon became submerged beneath that of a corrupting feminism, which was constantly invoked in a possible causal relationship with the alleged growth in female violence. Yvonne Roberts referred to this causal explanation of the alleged increase in violent female crime in 1996. She was writing about the renewed press interest in young violent female delinquents after the death of Louise Allen. In response to The Sun's headline, which had said that Louise Allen had been '*kicked to death by 30 schoolgirl yobs*'¹⁶⁵, Yvonne Roberts wrote:

*'Much of the press will now be pre-occupied, yet again, with apocalyptic visions of a "new" breed of female: violent, lawless, minus testosterone, but fuelled by something infinitely worse - feminism.'*¹⁶⁶

Yvonne Roberts's article was one of the few which ultimately questioned this claim about feminism. It retained a degree of sympathy for women's achievements in education and the job market. However, although Roberts could also be seen as having presented a scoffing attitude to nineteenth century explanations of female crime, the myth concerning the fragile equilibrium of the female mind was kept alive. Her own headline '*Women on the Verge*' which has already been referred to, made this connection.

Other articles, in pursuit of the idea of a corrupting feminism, cited Hollywood films such as Blue Steel (1989)¹⁶⁷, Thelma and Louise (1991)¹⁶⁸; Basic Instinct (1992)¹⁶⁹;

Single White Female (1992)¹⁷⁰; and The Last Seduction (1994)¹⁷¹; as having had a perverse effect on the behaviour of young women by not censoring female deviance or criminality in the appropriate way. Thus Michelle Eliot, director of Kidscape, was quoted in one article as having said:

*'A lot of girls think that to be emancipated one acts like a boy. There is a whole genre of films in which the heroine is violent... Combined with that, we don't explain the consequences of violence to girls in the same way that we do to boys, because we don't think we need to. They see someone get kicked in a film and get up. They don't understand the consequences.'*¹⁷²

Michelle Eliot's views represent a popular misunderstanding of debates that originated in film and media studies, about the media effects and spectatorship, and about whether or not spectatorship can masculinise women, or create specific effects. She may be correct in suggesting that girls as well as boys are affected by watching TV violence, but her argument contains some astonishing reversals of the usual behaviour of female and male subjects. She also fails to recognise that rarely do the films featuring strong women also feature gratuitous violence (in the way comparable male films starring male protagonists do), or acknowledge that when female violence occurs, the heroine usually pays the price. The film Thelma and Louise (1991)¹⁷³ is an obvious example of the point being made here; the two female protagonists pay the price for defying the law with their lives. Eliot misses this point. Violence may excite, but the ultimate price is paid for it and this is not without significance in the overall message generated by the film. She goes on to observe:

*'There is a tremendous role confusion for girls, but look at the role models we are giving them... We've gone from Doris Day to Drew Barrymore with a gun in Bad Girls.'*¹⁷⁴

The above quotes from Michelle Eliot are some of the best examples of a press stance

which implied a serious engagement with a phenomenon it also sought to sensationalise. Eliot's point about the lack of role models may be apt but it also makes intellectual leaps that cannot be substantiated. Here, then perhaps, her real views are actually lost in the sensationalism of the press. But it is hard to tell.

The derisory 'name calling' tactic which was also evident in the press use of the image of the masculine woman, was part of that sensationalism, but implied an alternative stance to the one already stated. It was a tactic which was used in articles about female violence and was suggestive of a lampooning reporting style which sought to construct a sensationalised image of the young female deviant, but only in order to pillory her. Phrases such as '*Girl gangs*'¹⁷⁵; '*female yobs*'¹⁷⁶; '*schoolgirl yobs*'¹⁷⁷; '*'mobs*'¹⁷⁸; the '*yob femme*'¹⁷⁹; '*yobette*'¹⁸⁰; '*yob fatale*'¹⁸¹; and '*lesbian lout*'¹⁸², ultimately, it would seem, also implied an unworthy comparison between violent young women and the young men they supposedly sought to emulate. As if girls could be anything other than boys' inferiors when they tried to act like them, these phrases would seem to be asking. These attitudes were compounded by the other implication the descriptions also carried. Unlike some depictions of her male counterpart, the violent female juvenile delinquent, as the embodiment of a warped feminism, was without just cause in her actions, devoid of glamour and only deserving of ridicule and contempt. Such discussion also contradicts criminological surveys which reveal that women who identify as 'feminist' are likely to be more responsible, and more law abiding, than other women.¹⁸³

Similar, problematic attitudes informed press portrayals of the professional female shoplifter between 1994 and 1996. Her image stood in unfavourable opposition to the more frequently invoked image of the ill or mentally unstable female shoplifter. In the reports and articles looked at, professional female shoplifters are identified as mannish, but in a way that renders them as objects of ridicule rather than of fear or transgression.

Thus, Megan Brookes and Julie Freestone are depicted as outlaw figures through a language which identifies them with the gangster films and westerns of Hollywood

cinema. Accordingly, Megan Brookes is referred to as an 'anti-social' shoplifter, '*who steals not from some sad compulsion, but for hard profit*'¹⁸⁴; 'hard', being the implied appropriate adjective which is also meant to describe her character. Julie Freestone is characterised as '*Britain's most notorious shoplifter*'¹⁸⁵, and reportedly '*branded*' as '*public enemy number one*'¹⁸⁶ by certain stores including Marks and Spencer, who went to court to seek an injunction banning her from '*trespassing in any of its stores*'¹⁸⁷. Similarly, '*every store in England*' became '*a no go area*'¹⁸⁸, for another shoplifter Kate Logan. The intended effect of these descriptions relies on the reader associating a word like 'notorious', or the phrase 'public enemy number one', with more serious crimes involving guns, murder and mayhem. Instead, this language is inappropriately used to describe 'shoplifting' despite its connotations with 'soft crime'. The effect is thus one of anti-climax which transforms (for the intelligent reader) the descriptions into humorous and satirical ones. It would appear that humour and satire are meant to work against the idea of a reader engaging seriously with any defiance or opposition to the status quo that these women might represent or reveal in their self declared commitment to a life of professional crime.

Lisa Tickner has used Freud's work on 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious' to write about the ideological effects of ridicule during the women's suffrage campaign. Accordingly, she suggests that, '*ridicule is a potent weapon in the maintenance of hegemony.*'¹⁸⁹ She also refers to Freud's discussion of tendentious jokes which '*turn the hearer into a co-hater or co-disposer and offer the comforts of collusion.*'¹⁹⁰ In agreement with Freud she argues that, '*the joke upsets critical judgement... [and]] operates as a kind of short-circuit to argument in the interest of preserving the status quo.*'¹⁹¹

When considering newspaper reports about the 'yobette' and the professional woman shoplifter, a distancing, mocking laughter would certainly seem to be one of the main effects newspapers strive for. Perhaps this was intended as a way of diffusing the social threat posed by the existence of girl gangs and/or the professional female thief.

Readers could seek refuge from troubling questions about the motivations which informed female criminality through the humour of the grotesque which images of masculine women inspired, or through moral superiority which the discourse facilitates, while simultaneously accommodating voyeurism.

Conclusion

Despite the efforts of this investigation to identify images of female shoplifters in press reports between 1986-1996 that did not conform to Heidensohn's 'typifications', there was little evidence to challenge her model. When the investigation extended the case studies (in the spirit she intends), there were very few representations that did not fit in to Heidensohn's categories. Few examples conformed to Belsey's ideas about 'unstable' categories. Where 'exceptions' to Heidensohn's typifications did exist, they appeared not in the shoplifting reports looked at but in the other press clippings found alongside them. Indeed, if there was any undermining of Heidensohn typifications of female deviance, it occurred outside the arena of crime reporting.

Strong women that 'break the mould' for example are often celebrated and juxtaposed with reports of criminal women who are the subject of moral censure. These appear in a social context, post - Thatcher (*'the only one man enough in the Cabinet to stand for the leadership'* according to Lord Pannell).¹⁹² Also, in a post feminist context, 'career women' and 'business amazons' are subject to widespread representation even though their demeanour certainly does not conform to stereotypical ideas about femininity.

Strong women and business women are familiar and commonplace social figures in the period in question. Their fictional equivalents, often constructed as 'superwomen', are present in everything from soap opera (Alexis Colby) to mythologies carried by newspaper reports about the business successes of Anita Roddick, and other 'exceptional' contemporaries. Since the late 1980s, powerful women, as normal subjects of narration, investigation and representation appear in fictional and non-

fictional media alongside images of deviant women. This juxtaposition of different types of deviant women is obviously contradictory. For example, girl gangs who are negatively portrayed through moral panics about women becoming violent, appear alongside businesswomen who are positively portrayed, often with surprise and celebration. Their aggressive approach to success is the subject of unstated ideological contradiction. These images of female deviance work together in a fragile balance in the context of promiscuous newspaper consumer logic which will use whatever it needs, including feminism and ideas about women's independence, in order to sell more newspapers. In today's quality newspapers, the female consumer must be flatteringly acknowledged and addressed because of her buying power. Even patriarchal authority is overtly challenged when it appears be expedient to do so, in order to harness or address that buying power. (Although the internal structure of such newspapers, as Suzanne Moore and others have pointed out, continues to be a boy's club run by men which allows no real challenge to patriarchal authority.)¹⁹³

Censure directed at criminal or deviant women in newspapers, allows a moral discourse about appropriate femininity in through the back door, a discourse that perhaps can no longer be freely, or unquestionably, articulated elsewhere. It is through analysing this explicit and implicit censure of criminal women juxtaposed alongside celebratory images of deviant women (like those of 'career' women and 'new' women), that Catherine Belsey's ideas about contradiction and instability can be understood, rather than in the images of formal female criminal deviance that this investigation has explicitly examined. Yet the overall significance of this instability and contradiction through juxtaposition, as well as the significance of the reports of shoplifting and female shoplifters that appear to keep Heidensohn's typifications in place, is hard to quantify. It may well be that this is because official discourses, such as newspaper reports, reveal contradictions by simply reproducing the same narrow range of typifications in crime reporting, while in newer contexts where female consumers are overtly addressed (i.e. usually in the 'cultural' sections) there is challenge occurring precisely to this type of thinking and typification. Beyond counting the shifts via

content analysis (concerning who writes about what, where and with what intention and with what effect) the final interpretation to be made from these female images is certainly not cut and dried. The whole debate about how images, words and other forms of text are seen, read and made sense of, is a long and complex one. In a media-accelerated culture it has become commonplace for advertisers to use deviance simply as 'added value' in the sales pitch for new products e.g. the novelty of punks using cashpoint cards to advertise rather staid financial and banking institutions. Indeed, 'changed', 'new', 'contradictory', 'ambiguous', 'deviant' as well as 'disconnected' images of women are used to sell us everything from jeans to junk food. These arguments, particularly those about 'ambiguity', 'contradiction' and 'disconnection', are complex and have produced a variety of responses from critics about their meaning for the last twenty years. Some critics are very positive about the representations of female deviance, arguing that they facilitate the acceptability of 'dirty realism'¹⁹⁴; 'plurality of understandings and cultures'¹⁹⁵ or even 'queer viewing.'¹⁹⁶ Other critics have been more pessimistic, arguing that such contradiction and incoherence across the entire post modern narrative space of viewing will lead to 'schizophrenia' and 'social breakdown.'¹⁹⁷

The final conclusion of this chapter is that context is everything and that to truly understand the significance of deviance, and Heidensohn's typifications of female deviance in particular, it is necessary to look at the history, specificity and context of the discourse articulating it. Perhaps it is significant that in order to read 'resistance' to the stereotype of the witch, in the voices of those labelled 'witches', that Catherine Belsey turns to 'unofficial discourse' i.e. the scaffold speeches of women just about to be burned. It may well be that most 'official' sources of information about criminal women are not helpful in identifying images of female shoplifters which might trouble Heidensohn's typifications. This is because they reproduce the same ideological constructions; unlike the alternative or unofficial historical sources of material addressed in Section One of this investigation, which may prove a more fruitful source.¹⁹⁸

ENDNOTES

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- 1 HEIDENSOHN, F., Women and Crime, London, Macmillan, 1985, p 90 - 98.
- 2 *ibid*, p 98.
- 3 *ibid*, p 98.
- 4 *ibid*, p 98.
- 5 BARTHES, R, Mythologies, selected and translated from the French by Lavers, A, London, Cape, 1972.
- 6 WATSON, J, HILL, A, A Dictionary of Communication & Media, London, 1993.
- 7 KLOPPENBORG, R, HANEGRAAFF, W J Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions, London and New York, E J Brill, 1995, p. IV.
- 8 *Ibid*.
- 9 NEALE, S, 'The Same Old Story: Stereotypes and Differences', Screen Education, Autumn Winter, 1979/8, vol, 32/33.
- 10 BENGT, H, Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore In European Perspective, Helsinki, Snomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987.
- 11 BELSEY, C, The Subject of Tragedy, London, Methuen, 1985.
- 12 LARNER, C, Enemies of God, London, Chatto & Windus, 1981.
- 13 HEIDENSOHN F, Women and Crime London, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1985, p 109.
- 14 BELSEY, C, The Subject of Tragedy, London, Methuen, p 165.
- 15 The differences in thinking is illustrated clearly by looking at the ways in which Heidensohn and Belsey discuss the witch or evil woman as a cultural image. The way both critics consider the relationship of the image of witch to the actual social phenomenon of the witch-hunts (which began to occur when witchcraft first became a statutory offence in 1542) is very telling. If we accept that the 'witch' is a fictionalised construct that people believe to be real, we can see how this fiction has had a damaging effect on the lived experience of women. Heidensohn argues that the witch-hunts in Scotland and England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made fiction reality. They expressed most acutely the damning effects on women's lives of permanent typifications which stressed their innate capacity for extraordinary evil. For Heidensohn these damaging effects are evident in the much larger number of women, compared with men, who were accused of, and subsequently executed for, witchcraft during this time. In support of her claim she cites Lerner who states that, although 20% of those who were suspected of witchcraft were male, women, who were closer to the ideological construction of the witch, were more likely to be persecuted for witchcraft. For Heidensohn patriarchy achieved stability via the witch craze by exercising an excessive form of social control. Belsey lends credibility to Heidensohn's arguments by referring to some of the attitudes expressed by prominent historical figures of the period. These include James I, who was able to justify the fact that 93% of the witches executed in England were women by alluding to their moral frailty which, for him, began with Eve and was linked to female moral inferiority. Belsey also comments that: '*John Stearne, an associate of Matthew Hopkins, the witchfinder of the 1640s, also pointed out that women are more 'impatient, and being injured, more malicious in seeking revenge' ... But [in other sources] witches were also women who failed to conform to the patriarchal idea of femininity ... 'They might have beards' ... They were often 'ugly'. Elizabeth Sawyer in The Witch of Edmonton who conforms closely to the stereotype of the witch as it appears in the pamphlets... describes herself as 'like a bow buckl'd and bent together.* Despite these stereotypical descriptions, Belsey is also able to interpret the witch/evil woman as a more unstable figure in its implications and effects. She focuses more specifically on the particular behaviour that identified women as doubly deviant in those accusations of witchcraft which involved them. She too cites Lerner's work in support of her claim that witches were women who were perceived as, '*voluble, unwomanly and possessed of an unauthorised power*'. She points out that such 'witch' behaviour appears to have conformed to the way evil women were constructed by dramas of the same period. For example, in the portrayal of characters such as Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Joan of Arc. Dramatic representations of famous historical figures were depicted as demonic (witch like) but also heroic. They imitated

masculine virtue in the eloquence of their speech which endowed them with a power (appearing supernatural). But Belsey claims, it was precisely the project of patriarchy to deny this power. Overall, Belsey's point is that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked by a crisis concerning the definition of women (in the family) which was coterminous with the witch craze and with the image of woman in plays of the period. Subsequently, Belsey finds contradictions in the English witch-craze. She implies that the witch/evil woman stereotype cannot just be regarded as simply a tool of patriarchy to use against women. Nor can it be seen as an aggressive warning of the dire consequences of non-conformity. She cites women's scaffold confessions as the 'supreme opportunity' for women to speak in public. She says that, at this moment, women had an unimagined cultural authority (if not real power) which was not diminished by the fact that death was imminent and the woman concerned was regarded as demonic. Her main point is that, if the witch crazes were about condemnation of women's rights or the silencing of women, then witchcraft offered historically specific forms of resistance to women who refused the position of silent subjection allocated to them. Belsey suggests we should not be anxious to label sixteenth and seventeenth century 'witches' as 'feminist'. She argues that, *'witches were women who broke silence and found an unauthorised voice but the social body required they paid a high price for the privilege of being heard'*. Belsey therefore sees the stereotype of the witch as carrying a form of resistance (through speech) that cannot be denied by patriarchal forms of representation. This is an important point because, by giving negative images of female deviance a level of agency, Belsey is able to explain some of the ways in which cultural change emerges.

¹⁶ LACAN, J., Ecrits, A., Shelston (Ed.), London, Routledge, 1977. See also Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne, MITCHELL, J., & ROSE, J., (Eds), London, Macmillan, 1982, p.42.

¹⁷ BUTLER, J, Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990.

¹⁸ CROWLEY, H, HIMMELWEIT, S, (Ed.), Knowing Women, Feminism and Knowledge, Cambridge, Cambridge Polity in association with the Open University, 1992. P.235-236

¹⁹ BIRCH, H, 'If looks could kill: Myra Hindley and the Iconography of Evil' Moving Targets, Women, Murder and Representation, London, Virago, 1993. P.32-61

²⁰ CAMERON, D, FRAZER, E, The Lust to Kill, a Feminist Investigation of Sexual Murder, Cambridge, Cambridge Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1987.

²¹ SKRAPEC, C, 'The Female Serial Killer: An Evolving Criminality', in BIRCH, H, Moving Targets, Women, Murder and Representation, London, Virago, 1993.p.241-268

²² MARX, K, writing on atrocity stories in the British press during the Paris commune in a letter to Kugelmann, 27 July 1981, COHEN, S, YOUNG, J, in The Manufacture of News, Deviance, Social Problems & the Mass Media, London, Constable and Co Ltd, 1973, front page.

²³ COHEN, S, YOUNG J, The Manufacture of News, Deviance, Social Problems & the Mass Media, London, Constable and Co. Ltd, 1973.

²⁴ HARTLEY, J, Understanding News, London, Methuen, 1982.p.5

²⁵ GALTANG, J., & RUGE, M., 'Structuring and Selecting News', in COHEN, S., & YOUNG, J., The Manufacture of News, Deviance, Social Problems & the Mass Media, London, Constable and Co. Ltd, 1973.

²⁶ Media researchers such as the Glasgow Media Group have made it clear that there is no such thing as real 'balance' within the news. The editing process which selects, slants and combines what is featured in the news is obviously a space where deliberate and unwitting bias is introduced into news reporting. Curran et al (1977) suggest that the issues of direct censorship may be less significant to newspaper reporting than the issue of self censorship by media professionals. Narratives are compiled and constructed in a particular way to create specific emphases although the significance of this process is the subject of contradictory findings by media effects researchers. Nevertheless, as Stuart Hall has pointed out, the use of visual images in newspapers, as well as the use of language in the reports, certainly does influence meaning and often operates to construct a 'preferred reading.' Since the publication of Barthes's book Mythologies most critics assume that visual signs are 'polysemic'. However, while there can be no simple determination of how signs are made sense of by individuals, often texts are codified in order to achieve some objectives over others in terms of narrative direction; it is here that the idea of 'preferred reading' can be understood. Let us look at the way hard news is reported. It presents itself as informative and balanced but obviously gives explicit and implicit political direction in terms of the way facts are comprehended. Gender understanding is often implicitly encoded in such representations. Suzanne Moore, and other

journalists have reinforced this view suggesting that political issues which are significant to women are reported less often because political reporting and 'hard news' is still a boys' club with specific gender emphases. This emphasis continues despite the existence of some exceptional, high profile female reporters and editors who make the news. Nevertheless, there is an illusion of balance, one that this investigation does not accept but wishes specifically to deconstruct and question, particularly in relation to the way shoplifting is represented.

²⁷ Although Lady Barnett died in 1981, some newspaper reports continued to refer to her suicide between 1986 and 1996. See for example press-cutting dated 26 April 1987, where her suicide is mentioned in an article by Edward Walsh. He reports on the setting up of self help groups for 'shoppers who fall foul of the law through forgetfulness, mental illness or just bad luck'. In this article the allusion to Lady Barnett is intended to arouse sympathy for the sort of 'shoppers' Walsh mentions. However, by referring to her case and including her photograph, the report also suggests that it is women, rather, than men who are more likely to fit Walsh's descriptions of the non-criminal shoplifter.

²⁸ Daily Mirror, 26 October 1989, App.2, p.9.

²⁹ Daily Telegraph, 13 January 1986, App.2, p.1

³⁰ Daily Mail, 15 February 1996 and 'Shoplifters poised for £1b snatch', Daily Express, 24 November, 1987, App.2, p.11.

³¹ 'Operation Theftbuster', The Mail on Sunday, 27 May 1990, App.2, p.41.

³² 'Shoplifting fun and really pays says DIY handbook', Daily Telegraph, 24 November, 1987, App.2, p.11

³³ Professional shoplifters such as Kate Logan are depicted as social outlaws and this is implied through the use of the word 'barred' or 'banned' in some of the more sensational headlines, for example, 'Shoplifter barred from every store in England', Daily Mail, 7 April 1995, App.2, p.89. Examples of corrupt officialdom include references to members of the police force. This is made explicit in headlines such as 'Tec Hit out after theft of 79p Aero', The Sun 9 July 1991; App.2, p.60, 'Ex Met Chief stole food from M&S', The Guardian, 11 April 1995; App.2, p.91, 'Ex police chief denies shoplifting', The Guardian, 11 April 1995, App.2, p.91. For references to staff thieves see 'Countering the cause and cost of shoplifting', The Guardian, 20 December 1988, App.2, p.16. 'Taking stock on the mystery of the missing widgets', The Guardian, 20 May 1989, App.2, p.29, 'Retail shrinkage and the law of diminishing returns', The Guardian, 18 April 1992 and 'Staff steal almost as much as shoplifters, survey finds', The Guardian, 19 January, 1995, App.2, p.87.

³⁴ See 'Shoplifters poised for £1b snatch', Daily Express, 24 November 1987. In this article 'organised groups' are portrayed as greedy through a language which implies excessive covetousness. 'Snatch' is one example, and there is also another description in the same article which refers to 'groups of thugs' who 'stream through stores pinching everything in sight'.

³⁵ PENDRY, R., 'Shoppin' around for kicks', The Independent, 22 March 1991, App.2, p.45.

³⁶ 'I was a teenage shoplifter', The Guardian, 23 May 1995, App.2, p.98.

³⁷ Articles or reports which deal with the rights and wrongs of department stores banning known shoplifters tend to include quotes or comments which imply that the action taken by stores is precipitated by what the stores perceive as the shoplifters potentially lawless and disruptive behaviour. See, for example, 'Stores ban shoppers with a guilty past', Daily Mail, 10 April 1991, App.2, p.46.

³⁸ 'I was a teenage shoplifter', The Guardian, 23 May, 1995, App.2, p.93.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ HUGHES, D., 'Blair Blunder on Shoplifting', Daily Mail, 15 February, 1996, App.2, p.101-102.

⁴¹ KRUGER, B, Love for Sale, the Words and Pictures of Barbara Kruger, text by LINKER, K, New York, H.N. Abrams, 1990.

⁴² See, for example, Daily Mirror, 16 May 1989; Mail on Sunday, 27 May 1990; 21 August, 1991. Other newspapers refer to 'shoplifting' as opposed to 'stealing spree'. See, for example, 13 October 1987; Daily Express, 21 January, 1993; Daily Telegraph, 21 January 1993.

⁴³ See, for example, Daily Express, 24 November, 1987; Daily Telegraph, 24 November, 1987; 'Women Who can't stop stealing', Daily Mirror, 16 May 1989; 'Operation Theftbuster', The Mail on Sunday, 27 May, 1990, App.2, p.41.

⁴⁴ References to the PORTIA TRUST can be found in articles dated Daily Mirror, 8 March 1989; 26 October 1989; 11 July 1991.

⁴⁵ See, for example, 'Watching the Detectives', The Guardian, 16 March, 1989 and The Guardian, 9 Feb, 1990, App.2, p.22-24.

- ⁴⁶ WILENIUS, P., 'Shoplifters poised for £1b snatch', Daily Express, 24 November, 1987.
- ⁴⁷ See Daily Mirror, 4 July 1991, which refers to the television presenter as 'Housewives favourite Madeley', App.2, p.52.
- ⁴⁸ COHEN, S., & YOUNG, J., The Manufacture of News, Deviance, Social Problems Y The Mass Media, London, Constable and Co. Ltd., 1973. When Stanley Cohen developed the concept of "moral panic" he suggested such panics occurred in certain conditions when: 'A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests: its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people: socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions: ways of coping are evolved or...resorted to: the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the subject of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory. At other r times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.'
- ⁴⁹ MILLS, E., 'Gentle sex indulges in thrill seeking violence', The Guardian, 24 September 1995.
- ⁵⁰ Quoted in SMITH, J., 'Unnatural Born Killers', Different for Girls, London, Chatto & Windus, 1997, p 147
- ⁵¹ The Guardian, 26 March 1995, App.2, p.87.
- ⁵² The Guardian, 7 September 1995, App.2, p.89.
- ⁵³ The Guardian, 2 May 1996, App.2, p.87.
- ⁵⁴ GAMMAN, L., Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts. Queen of Thieves, London, Signet, 1996.
- ⁵⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ HEIDENSOHN, F., Women and Crime, London, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1981, p.93.
- ⁵⁷ *ibid*, p 94.
- ⁵⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ TODD, R., 'Keep out of Stores', Daily Mirror, 16 May 1989, App.2, p.25.
- ⁶¹ *ibid.*
- ⁶² *ibid.*
- ⁶³ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.*
- ⁷¹ NORMAN, K., 'Shoplifting case could cost Tesco dear', The Guardian, 8 March 1989, App.2, p.20.
- ⁷² DISLEY, J., 'Shoplifting...the stigma that will never go away', Daily Mirror, 26 October 1989, App.2, p.32.
- ⁷³ NORMAN, K., 'Shoplifting case could cost Tesco dear', The Guardian, 8 March 1989, App.2, p.20.
- ⁷⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ Daily Mirror, 26 October, 1989.
- ⁸⁰ ORBACH, S., 'From shoplifter to drug addict', The Independent, 18. March 1995, App.2, p.90.
- ⁸¹ *ibid*
- ⁸² *ibid*
- ⁸³ MUIR, K, (Ed), The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. King Lear (1605), London, Penguin, 1987.
- ⁸⁴ ORBACH, S., 'From shoplifter to drug addict', The Independent, 18 March 1995, App.2,

- p.90.
⁸⁵ McGOWAN, R., '17-year shoplifting spree by Grabber Granny', Daily Express, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.73.
⁸⁶ Ibid.
⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ KEELING, J., 'Widow's hoard piled to ceiling', Daily Telegraph, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.74.
⁸⁹ Ibid.
⁹⁰ Ibid.
⁹¹ McGOWAN, R., '17-year shoplifting spree by Grabber Granny', Daily Express, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.73.
⁹² KEELING, J., 'Widow's hoard piled to ceiling', Daily Telegraph, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.74.
⁹³ Ibid.
⁹⁴ McGOWAN, R., '17-year shoplifting spree by Grabber Granny', Daily Express, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.73.
⁹⁵ McGOWAN, R., '17-year shoplifting spree by Grabber Granny', Daily Express, 21 January 1993, App.2, p.73.
⁹⁶ WALSH, E., 'Shoplifters to get self help', Sunday Times, 26 April 1987, App.2, p.9.
⁹⁷ See 'Suicide of vicar's wife accused of shoplifting', Daily Mail, 23 May 1986, App.2, p.4, Daily Telegraph, 24 May 1986; 'Mum kills herself over bag of crisps', Daily Mirror, 26 November 1994; The Guardian, 26 November 1994, App.2, p.86.
⁹⁸ DENISON, S., 'Why steel a pie you don't want', The Independent, 15 November 1991, App.2, p.62-63.
⁹⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Ibid.
¹⁰³ Ibid.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
¹¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹¹ Richard Madeley quoted in an article by YATES, C., 'TV Madeley sobs "I'm no shoplifter"', The Sun, 4 July 1991, App.2, p.50.
¹¹² Richard Madeley quoted in MULCHRONE, P., 'Off their trolley', Daily Mirror, 5 July 1991, App.2, p.53-54.
¹¹³ Richard Madeley quoted in MULCHRONE, P., 'I'm just forgetful sobs TV's Mr. Cool', Daily Mirror, 4 July 1991, App.2, p.56.
¹¹⁴ STUART HALL quoted in 'TV Man denies sausage theft', The Guardian, 11 April 1991, App.2, p.47.
¹¹⁵ Richard Madeley quoted in an article by YATES, C., 'TV Madeley sobs "I'm no shoplifter"', The Sun, 4 July 1991, App.2, p.50.
¹¹⁶ Ibid, The Sun, 4 July 1991.
¹¹⁷ Richard Madeley, quoted in MULCHRONE, P., 'I'm just forgetful sobs TV's Mr. Cool', Daily Mirror, 4 July 1991, App.2, p.56.
¹¹⁸ Richard Madeley quoted in MULCHRONE, P., 'Off their trolley', Daily Mirror, 5 July 1991, App.2, p.53-54.
¹¹⁹ Richard Madeley quoted in MULCHRONE, P., 'I'm just forgetful sobs TV's Mr., Cool', Daily Mirror, 4 July 1991, App.2, p.56.
¹²⁰ Ibid.
¹²¹ Daily Mirror, 5 July 1991, App.2, p.53-54
¹²² 'TV presenter cleared of theft from supermarket', The Guardian, 5 July 1991.
¹²³ Prof., CARY COOPER quoted in "Cell Fear" forced theft admission', The Express, 12 April 1991, App.2, p.47.
¹²⁴ Ibid. He is quoted as having referred to the 'hell hole' which was his cell and 'the noise which was incessant' because he was near to an overflow of prisoners from Strangeways prison.

- 125 *ibid.*
- 126 Dr. Neil Brener quoted in DENISON, S., 'Why steel a pie you don't want', The Independent, 15 November 1991, App.2, p.62-63.
- 127 PENDRY, R., 'Shopping around for kicks', The Independent, 22 March 1991, App.2, p.45.
- 128 *ibid.*
- 129 GIBB, F., 'Court is criticised for day curfew order', The Telegraph, 7 September 1990, App.2, p.42.
- 130 'Duchess may not be able to stop spending money on herself', The Guardian, 15 November 1996, App.2, p.111.
- 131 *ibid.*
- 132 *ibid.*
- 133 Tony Blair quoted in HUGHES, D., 'Blair blunder on shoplifting', Daily Mail, 15 February 1996, App.2, p.100-102.
- 134 *ibid.*
- 135 CAMPBELL, D., 'The luck of the drawers', The Guardian, 21 March 1996, App.2, p.102.
- 136 PENDRY, R., 'Shopping around for kicks', The Independent, 22 March 1991, App.2, p.45.
- 137 *ibid.*
- 138 RAFES, G., 'Counter Rebellion', The Guardian, 30 October 1996, App.2, p.113.
- 139 *ibid.*
- 140 *ibid.*
- 141 HEIDENSOHN, F, Women and Crime, London, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1985, p 107.
- 142 SILLITOE, A, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, Bath, Withway Press, 1977.
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- 144 *ibid.*
- 145 RAFES, G., 'Counter Rebellion', The Guardian, 30 October 1996, App.2, p.113.
- 146 PENDRY, R., 'Shopping around for kicks', The Independent, 22 March 1991, App.2, p.45.
- 147 *ibid.*
- 148 *ibid.*
- 149 SEWARDS, L., 'Megan has no shame. To her shoplifting's just a job', Daily Express, 16 February 1994, AApp.2, p.77.
- 150 ALDERSON, A., & BYRNE, C., 'Uproar as Queen of Shoplifters beats theft case', The Times, 22 January 1995, App.2, p.88.
- 151 *ibid.*
- 152 HEIDENSOHN, F, Women and Crime, London, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1985, p 90.
- 153 *ibid.*, p 97.
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- 155 Quote from 'Essence of Parliament', Punch, 3 May 1871 in *ibid.*, p 164.
- 156 Quote from 'A Typical Suffragist', Votes for Women, December 1907, in *ibid.*, p 161.
- 157 Quote taken from 'A Typical Suffragist', Votes for Women, December 1907, in *ibid.*, p 160 -161.
- 158 YOUNG, A, Femininity in Dissent, London, Routledge, 1990.
- 159 WHEALE, S., 'Girls in the Hood', The Independent, 4 June, 1996, App.2, p.108.
- 160 FOWLER, R., 'Girls Get Tough', The Independent, 2 May 1996, App.2, p.104-105.
- 161 *ibid.*
- 162 WHEALE, S., 'Girls in the Hood', The Independent, 4 June, 1996, App.2, p.108.
- 163 CHAUDHUR, A., 'Deadlier than the Male', The Guardian, 13 October 1994, App.2, p.81.
- 164 FOWLER, R., 'Girls Get Tough', The Independent, 2 May 1996, App.2, p.104-105.
- 165 *ibid.*
- 166 *ibid.*
- 167 BIGELOW, K, Blue Steel, USA, Lonestar, 1989.
- 168 SCOTT, R, Thelma and Louise, USA, UIP/Pathé Entertainment, 1991.
- 169 VERHOEVEN, P, Basic Instinct, USA, Carolco/Le Studio Canal Plus/Basic Inst. Inc.1992.
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- 177 FOWLER, R., 'Girls Get Tough', The Independent, 2 May 1996, App.2, p.104-105.
- 178 LAVILLE, S., 'Town halts as 200 screaming schoolgirls slug it out on the streets', Evening Standard, 15 November 1996, App.2, p.110.
- 179 CHAUDHUR, A., 'Deadlier than the Male', The Guardian, 13 October 1994, App.2, p.81.
- 180 *ibid.*
- 181 *ibid.*
- 182 *ibid.*
- 183 See, for example, HEIDENSOHN, F., Women and Crime, London, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1985.
- 184 SEWARDS, L., 'Megan has no shame. To her shoplifting's just a job', Daily Express, 16 February 1994, App.2, p.77.
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SECTION TWO**CHAPTER SIX****The Statistical Picture****Reviewing Myths About The Excessive Participation Of Women In****The Crime Of Shoplifting**

This chapter looks at twentieth century criminological statistics in an attempt to find out what the statistical evidence can tell us about women and shoplifting today. Whilst the methodological problems inherent in using statistics are identified within the discussion, at the outset of the chapter it seems pertinent to acknowledge the important contribution statistics have made to twentieth century criminology, particularly in challenging notions about 'born criminals' discussed in Chapter Four of this section. The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904), together with a diverse coalition of lawyers and anthropologists challenged what became known as 'Lombrosianism' in several ways, one of which was through mobilising statistical evidence about crime rates.¹

The point of this review of statistical evidence is to outline the 'facts' about contemporary shoplifting, and to locate the exceptional status of Shirley Pitts as a professional thief. The chapter also intends to deconstruct the nineteenth century myths, quoted in twentieth century reports, such as the Home Office Report on Theft of 1986 which stated:

*'The archetypal shoplifter is generally thought to be either a middle class housewife or a young man in his twenties.'*²

Shop Theft in England and Wales

Theft is a significant crime problem in Britain. The category of offence called 'Theft and Handling Stolen Goods' often accounts for over 50% of all notifiable crimes recorded by the police, who compile and therefore continue to provide the most influential discourse about shoplifting in contemporary culture.

Whilst between 1950 and the present day in England and Wales 'shoplifting' accounts for less than 10% per cent of all offences recorded under the category of theft and handling stolen goods (See Table 1, p.151-156), the crime itself does seem to have become more common since the 1950s. Two examples illustrate the significance of this point. In 1982, for example, incidence of shoplifting rose to an all time high and accounted for nearly fourteen per cent of offences under the 'Theft and handling stolen goods' category.³ In 1985 there were 281,557 recorded offences of 'theft from shops' (Home Office Category 46). The total value of property recorded as stolen and attributable to shoplifting in 1985 amounted to £9.5. million.⁴ Such figures are less significant than the much higher annual estimates of shrinkage losses discussed later. In 1995 there were 275,802 recorded offences of theft from shops, with a total value of property stolen in 1994, amounting to £1.95 billion.⁵

Shoplifting as a percentage of indictable offences has increased significantly since the 1960s. Yet we have to be careful when trying to make sense of these expanding statistics. New counting rules introduced to improve the consistency of police recording of multiple offences, have meant that when looking back across the records, we are not comparing like for like.

There are three main reasons for the lack of comparability:

1. Until 1968, many acts we now describe as shoplifting were accounted for in terms of the phrase 'larceny from shops and stalls'.

2. From 1977, acts we now describe as shoplifting excluded all offences of criminal damage less than £20.
3. Changes in counting rules from 1980 onwards meant figures are not directly comparable because of different compilation methods employed by the police force.

More significantly, Farrington and Burrows's 'Did Shoplifting Decrease?' (1993) drew attention to the fact that Home Office directives in the 1970s and 1980s encouraged the police force to use the procedure of 'caution',⁶ rather than to criminalise first offenders. This change clearly influenced the statistics on shoplifting, which nevertheless show a significant rise at the two high points of consumerism in the 1950s and 1980s, and then a fall (which may be artificial) in the 1990s. Whilst it is important to draw attention to the less than perfect accuracy of the above statistics, and generally the problems of using crime statistics, it would be foolish to discount their use, or their value in providing a clear picture of offences of shoplifting in England and Wales. Whilst figures may not be absolutely precise, they give a good general picture of the slowly rising levels of shoplifting as a total proportion of all crimes of theft, for which individuals have been *caught* by the police. Obviously, many incidences of shoplifting remain either unprosecuted or undetected by stores, except in terms of general shrinkage figures that this investigation will discuss later. Meanwhile, Table 1 provides an annual picture of how shoplifting as an incident started on a high in the 1950s, maintaining its peak in the mid 1950s and the mid 1980s, reducing slightly in the 1990s (perhaps because the police were now cautioning offenders) as a percentage of the total proportion of all crimes of theft.

Table 1, originally compiled by D.J.I. Murphy (1986) in his book Customers & Thieves,⁷ and updated by this investigation from 1982 onwards, gives a good idea of the relationship of shoplifting proportionate to total offences. Yet, as such, the evidence available from police statistics and official sources of crime information, is criticised by academics such as Stuart Hall et al (1978) because of the following limitations:

1. Crime statistics refer only to reported crimes: they can not quantify what are called the 'dark figures' (i.e. evidence gained from other sources, such as anonymous surveys.)
2. Different geographical areas collate their crime statistics differently.
3. The way police deal with selected 'targeted' crimes increases both the number of police that turn up at the scene of the crime, and the number of public reports.
4. Public anxiety about particular 'highlighted' offences also leads to 'over reporting' by the media.
5. Crime statistics are based on legal (not sociological) categories and are thus arbitrary. This remains the case despite the deliberations of the official Perks Committee and the efforts of Cambridge Institute of Criminology to provide more meaningful indicators.
6. Changes in the law (e.g. the 1968 Theft Act) make strict comparisons over time difficult.⁸

TABLE 1

Shoplifting As a Percentage Of Indictable/Notifiable Offences.							
Year	'Theft from Shops'	Indictable /Notifiable Offences (thousands)	%	Year	'Theft from Shops'	Indictable /Notifiable Offences (thousands)	%
1950	23,013	479.4	4.8	1974	164,063	1,963.4	8.4
1951	24,652	549.7	4.5	1975	175,552	2,105.6	8.3
1952	24,128	536.2	4.5	1976	180,993	2,135.7	8.5
1953	21,736	495.3	4.4	1977	217,276	2,463.0	8.8
1954	21,941	456.1	4.8	1978	203,643	2,395.8	8.5
1955	23,308	462.3	5.0	1979	203,122	2,376.7	8.5
1956	25,756	508.1	5.1	1980	206,175	2,520.6	8.2
1957	29,690	578.7	5.1	1981	225,342	2,794.2	8.1
1958	34,194	668.8	5.1	1982	242,304	3,088.3	7.8
1959	35,123	722.5	4.9	1983	235,512	3,247.1	7.2

1960	41,535	800.3	5.2	1984	248,792	3,499.1	7.1
1961	48,466	870.9	5.6	1985	281,557	3,611.9	7.8
1962	52,954	965.7	5.5	1986	not available	3,847.4	
1963	55,906	1,060.1	5.3	1987	247,064	3,892.2	6.3
1964	60,139	1,171.2	5.1	1988	216,242	3,715.8	5.8
1965	66,427	1,243.5	5.3	1989	222,974	3,870.8	5.7
1966	68,288	1,315.7	5.2	1990	250,301	4,543.6	5.5
1967	70,971	1,316.8	5.4	1991	281,276	5,276.2	5.3
1968	78,490	1,407.8	5.6	1992	288,672	5,591.7	5.2
1969	91,169	1,498.7	6.1	1993	275,607	5,526.6	5.0
1970	101,822	1,568.4	6.5	1994	269,683	5,258.1	5.1
1971	119,281	1,665.7	7.2	1995	275,802	5,100.2	5.4
1972	126,844	1,690.2	7.5	1996	282,052	5,036.6	5.6
1973	130,161	1,657.7	7.9				

Yet what does become apparent from the criminal statistics in Table 1, even noting the limitations of accuracy already mentioned, is that the crime of shoplifting itself does seem to have levelled out between 1950 and 1995. In fact, although incidents of shoplifting have gone up as a percentage of all crimes by the 1990s, shoplifting had in fact decreased in statistical terms, if not in reality. When looking at such figures critics have been persuaded that the increase in shoplifting as a particular type of crime in the 1950s and 1980s is linked to the expansion of the consumer society itself and to the changing ways we shop. Self service shops, which now seem such an inevitable part of daily life, were rare in the 1950s, and only became common comparatively recently, i.e. over the last thirty years. Murphy argues that:

'By 1960 there were 6,500 self-service shops in England, where ten years before there had only been 500. Since 1960 the number of offences has more than doubled every ten years. It is also clear that the total of indictable/notifiable offences has risen dramatically in the last thirty years. What is apparent, however, is that the number of shoplifting offences as a percentage of total indictable offences has

*increased at a faster rate. In the fifties shoplifting represented between four and five per cent of total indictable offences, only rising to six per cent by the end of the sixties. During the seventies and eighties, however, the percentage rose to about eight per cent, and, on occasions, to almost nine per cent. It is clear that shoplifting is a significant offence which has been rising dramatically over the decades. In addition, the number of total indictable offences is also increasing.'*⁹

Since Murphy wrote the above, shoplifting incidents have increased but, as an actual percentage of all crime, shoplifting is slightly less today than it was in the 1950s (although the change to the use of the law of 'caution' may explain this). The rise of the self service store, which triumphed in Britain in the late 1960s, was a measure of the expanding consumer society and brought with it the availability of cheap finance via Hire Purchase.¹⁰ Also, the introduction of self service to all areas of shopping, was linked to the drive to achieve the maximisation of profits and to limitation of expenses like the cost of paying a large number of staff to serve the public. Of course, such layout of self service shops inevitably attracted more shoplifters and more outlay on the surveillance and the security staff. Criminologists such as Gibbens and Prince, (1962) writing at the beginning of the trend, identified that self service organisations which displayed goods in such a way so as to 'tempt' the shopper to buy more, were clearly instrumental in the increase in shoplifting. In fact, Gibbens & Prince's research (1962) into shoplifting revealed that food thefts in particular increased with a change to self service organisation.¹¹ Their work could be mobilised to reinforce the case made in this thesis which suggests that visual provocation informs some acts of shoplifting. Despite an increase in the losses from shoplifting, the overall point to be noted is that the profits were increased so massively by the introduction of the self service store, that the losses from shoplifting were not a sufficient deterrent to financial investors to make this type of shop layout a bad risk.

Certainly in the early 1980s, when Murphy appears to have compiled his research about self service organisation, he was not in a position to look at the emergence of shopping

malls as a British rather than American phenomenon, or the effects of changing store organisation on shoplifting. Since that time, the shopping malls have become a significant feature of British cultural life, although the crime statistics do not specify exactly which, shops or mall sites, are more likely to see increases in shoplifting. However, as Ken Worpole has identified, such figures are often distorted in the media as a consequence of 'moral panics' about shoplifting.¹²

Shrinkage Statistics: What are they and why are they important in understanding the significance of shoplifting?

As well as providing us with large estimates of the millions of pounds that have been lost through customers who shoplift each year, shrinkage statistics are a very useful reference point when considering 'staff involvement' in shoplifting. The Institute of Grocery Distribution Working Party defined shrinkage as:

*'The difference between the value at selling price of the stock supplied to the shop, and the cash or stock revealed at stock taking, allowance being made for price changes.'*¹³

Often the inventory 'shrinkage' figures do not reveal with great accuracy losses due to theft. Such published figures, provided by the retail industry, often offer little more than the estimates of losses by retail outlets. Such estimates obviously include losses other than those generated by shoplifting either by the customers or the staff.

Unlike the UK, in the USA shrinkage is often viewed as a percentage of the *selling price*, whereas in some other countries it is fixed in relation to the *cost price*. A fuller definition of the variables is offered by Cameron (1964) who attempted to explain the considerable variance in the figures of shoplifting losses provided by the stores.¹⁴ For example, if a store has an annual income of say, £10 million, either in cash or goods,

and an inventory shortage of £100,000, then that store had a shrinkage rate of 1 per cent. In practice, however, there is often no clear explanation of accountancy procedures to ensure this ratio is always used, and that we are comparing like for like. To explain and assess how all losses have occurred Cameron suggests:

'Losses due to theft become part of a general, undifferentiated figure composed of several factors and known as 'inventory shrinkage' or 'inventory shortage'.

*Inventory shrinkage is calculated by taking the difference between the retail price for merchandise, as assigned by store management, and the actual amount realised on the sale of the merchandise. It is usually reported as a percentage of gross sales volume.'*¹⁵

Obviously, not all inventory shrinkage is caused by theft. Other causes of inventory shrinkage, listed by Cameron, include:

1. - Lost or damaged goods.
2. - Goods which have had their prices reduced because of shop soiling.
3. - Simple administrative errors.¹⁶

The Home Office Report on the Working Group on Shop Theft (1986) also includes:

4. - 'Fraudulent accounting' which they observe may need to be considered. However, the report went on to confess in relation to their own research methodology that such terms, *'fell outside our own framework of reference.'*¹⁷

It is probably impossible for store management, or anyone else, to specify the proportion of loss resulting from one particular component of the shrinkage figures. Nevertheless, researchers have tried to estimate the proportion of inventory shrinkage that is caused by employee theft. Four main sources of information about shop theft by staff can be drawn upon:

First is located by Cameron (1964) who cites the generally accepted ratio of employee theft costing three times as much as shoplifting by customers. He makes clear,

however, that he believes it is impossible to delineate such percentages with any degree of accuracy.¹⁸

Second, a special report for the Economist Intelligence Unit (1971) suggested employee theft was responsible for sixty per cent of shoplifting. Their estimates also suggested that breaking and entering (i.e. robbery) accounted for fifteen per cent of total shrinkage loss and customer theft caused about twenty-five per cent of losses.¹⁹

Third, an Australian study by Bleakley (1977) estimated that seventy-five per cent of loss was attributable to dishonest staff.²⁰

Fourth, the Home Office Working Party (1986) suggested 89% of losses remain unaccounted for because of, *'the surprisingly large number of retailers who held very little accurate information about their losses through theft'*. In the survey they conducted in 1985, it was revealed that 18,321 occurrences of shop theft were by employees, compared to 281,557 offences by customers. Yet, the average goods stolen by staff in 1985 averaged £974 per theft, much higher than the £39 figure set as an average theft by individual customers.²¹

All these figures are approximate because, as The Institute of Grocers revealed when they asked one chain of retailers to assess the distribution of losses caused by shoplifting and employee theft:

*'Our experience in this area is not quantified in any precise way and in fact we are doubtful whether it could be. Our views therefore are really intelligent estimates based on our familiarity with day to day management in stores which have to face this problem all the time.'*²²

Whether mobilising criminal statistics that may only reflect information about the number of people actually *caught* shoplifting, or even shrinkage statistics which involve

estimates of the amount of *projected* consumer losses, both sets of figures tend to under-emphasise theft by shop staff. They perhaps place too much emphasis on theft by customers as can be seen from Tables 2 and 3 below, compiled by the Home Office in 1986.²³

TABLE 2

Theft by Staff		
Year	Number of Offences	Average Value of Goods Stolen
1981	23,577	£ 517
1982	21,918	£ 799
1983	21,138	£ 625
1984	19,163	£ 974

TABLE 3

Theft by Customers		
Year	Number of Offences	Average Value of Goods Stolen
1981	225,342	£ 31
1982	242,304	£ 32
1983	235,512	£ 36
1984	248,792	£ 39

The comparison of tables 2 and 3 reveals that, while it is clear that the customers are greater in number and more frequent thieves, the crimes attributed to shop staff often involve items of greater value.

TABLE 4.²⁴

<p>Customers Apprehended for Theft: by Age and Action Taken from statistics provided by 80 Respondent Outlets</p>

	Referred to police	Warned/Cautioned
Child (under 10)	758 (26%)	2,110 (74%)
Juvenile (aged 11-17)	133,274 (78%)	3,828 (22%)
Young Adult (aged 18-24)	17,336 (87%)	2,477 (13%)
Mature Adult (aged 25-59)	16,985 (81%)	4,105 (33%)
Over 60's	3,225 (67%)	1,581 (33%)

The above statistics also reveal that, overall, shoplifting offences were broadly distributed across all ages between 11 and 59.²⁵ Table 5 below, has been included simply to emphasise the involvement of shop staff - particularly the sales staff who spend a huge part of their time actually looking at the goods in question - in losses attributed to shop theft.

TABLE 5²⁶

Staff Apprehended for Theft by Post Held		
Taken from statistics provided by 101 Respondent Outlets		
	Number	Percentage %
Manager	17	38
Supervisor	215	11
Sales	1136	55
Non Sales	545	26

Theft by Shop Staff-A Case of Visual Provocation?

The above statistics, without further contextualisation, are probably meaningless. The point of including them in this investigation is to draw attention to the high number of staff involved in shop theft, and to further try and substantiate one of the claims of this investigation, that there is a visual component to the crime of shoplifting. Indeed, the high number of staff involved in shop theft may be linked to the issues about opportunity and easy access to the crime, but the investigation would also suggest that the fact that staff have to look at the merchandise all day, without always being able to afford the things they see, is probably relevant in motivating shop theft. Some staff, like shopping addicts, admit to acquiring things they did not really want or need to alleviate boredom. How to assess such motivation or the true significance of staff theft is probably impossible. As already mentioned, figures compiled are not always accurate. Yet whether all shrinkage estimates are accurate or not, they do give some indication of the millions of pounds lost each year to shoplifting and reveal a considerable proportion of losses attributable to the staff, as well as the customers. Reports like the 1972 'Home Office Working Party on Shoplifting and Thefts by Shop Staff', compiled in 1973, revealed that the annual cost of shoplifting ranged from £56 million to £300 million. More recent figures suggest that this figure has risen to £2.4 billion.

All numbers become quite meaningless, however big they are, without reference to understanding who exactly is involved in shoplifting. Yet neither criminal nor shrinkage statistics offer enough information to profile the average shoplifter, so it makes sense to look at other forms of evidence.

Self-Report Studies

As mentioned above, the estimated nature of shrinkage figures and the limitation of criminal statistics which focus mainly on offenders who have been caught (and so show

a high conviction rate), perhaps explain why there has been some interest in the 'self-report studies' of shoplifters. For example, the Home Office in their 1986 report, cite reference to an '*observational study of shoppers in a South East England department store.*'²⁷ Self-report studies have the advantage of giving anonymity to participants who may be observed without their knowledge, or who can tell the 'truth' via surveys or questionnaires without fear of legal reprisal. Such work often enables researchers to profile a clearer picture than police reports or store reports could allow about who exactly is shoplifting. Obviously, there are methodological problems with such empirical work; this is discussed at length at the end of the chapter.

Despite the methodological problems, the academic endeavours of criminological self-report studies have a use-value above other forms of criminal research. They provide fuller profiles of those involved in theft. Such work can often offer attitudinal or behavioural analysis, and thus is more help in fleshing out the picture of who exactly is shoplifting.

There are, of course, far too many self-report studies on shoplifting to offer a comprehensive survey in this chapter. Instead, this investigation will briefly summarise some of the details of the most significant criminological self-report studies on shoplifting under five headings:

1. - female shoplifters:
2. - male shoplifters
3. - teenage shoplifters :
4. - questions about race in relation to shoplifting:
5. - questions about class in relation to shoplifting:

1. Female Shoplifters

There appears to be a real discrepancy between the figures about apprehended or convicted female shoplifters and the understanding of shoplifting by the retail trade or in self-report studies. Indeed, criminal statistics of shoplifting offences listed by tables showing gender differentials reveal that while there are some age group differences (e.g. teenage boys are convicted of shoplifting more often than teenage girls), overall more women than men are convicted of shoplifting.

TABLE 6

Shoplifting Convictions : Population				
Year	Number of Persons found guilty of shoplifting		Persons found guilty of shoplifting per 100,000 population	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1969	17,051	20,833	72	83
1970	18,853	21,739	80	87
1972	21,181	23,070	89	92
1973	22,405	23,513	94	93
1974	28,636	28,019	120	111

Given the fact that many women are prosecuted for shoplifting, it must be acknowledged that Shirley Pitts who experienced few criminal convictions for theft was quite unusual .

Many criminological studies can be brought forward to refute evidence that women are more likely to steal than men. A study by Walsh (1978) based on reports from 1980s shops/stores in the Exeter area, revealed that only 8% of shop-keepers/store managers considered women to be the most active shoplifters and sixteen per cent believed that both sexes were equally responsible. Feminist criminologists like Carol Smart tend to agree with the idea that, '*male and female shoplifters do not vary greatly in terms of their statistical significance.*'²⁸ But her point is that female shoplifters are significant to criminologists because, '*relatively fewer numbers of women engage in what is legally defined as crime.*'²⁹

The point of the discussion so far is to reveal that official discourses about shoplifting, particularly shoplifting statistics, when examined closely present conflicting and contradictory evidence. The illusion of objectivity, as described by Evelyn Fox Keller

in Feminism and Science, (1983), is maintained by the production of such statistics. This investigation has tried to demonstrate by reviewing different sources of information, that statistics may collude in presenting a false picture of what is happening. In order to offer a more useful account of the involvement of individuals in shoplifting, it makes sense to move away from studies which focus on statistics, particularly those relating to women and crime. Instead, it makes sense to look at studies which focus on women and shopping. This research on shopping involves a researcher 'following' shoppers. This investigation will look at two studies of this type by Astor (1969)³⁰ and also more recent work presented by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology (1983)³¹, because such research suggests that many more people are involved in what appears to be shoplifting than are caught by store detectives or the police. Indeed, women, not only professional thieves but also the so-called amateurs who shoplift, appear to be better at escaping detection when apparently stealing, than men.

Astor (1969) instructed his staff to go to a certain pre-arranged store and stand with their backs to the street and face the inside of the shop. They were then instructed to follow the first person who entered the store on their left, regardless of age, sex, race, or any other characteristics, whether the person be a nun, an invalid, a punk or an 'average' housewife. They were instructed to stay with that particular customer, selected at random, until the customer left the store. If the customer entered the fitting room, the surveillance was discontinued and the test was not counted. Two variables are at once evident from this limited methodology: (a) a shoplifter might well know that she or he is being followed, and (b) merchandise stolen in the fitting room was excluded from the results.

Astor's research, nevertheless, produced some significant findings. Of the hundred and sixty-nine customers who were followed, twenty of them took something (1 in 8.5). Three customers, who were in the process of stealing, noticed they were being watched and discontinued their activities. Women appeared to steal twice as frequently as men,

since out of forty-nine males followed only three stole (1 in 16), out of a hundred and twenty women, seventeen stole (1 in 7). Each theft averaged approximately \$8.00 worth of goods. There did not appear to be a race or age factor that predominated. Significantly, none of these shoplifters was spotted by a store detective. In an additional study by Astor (1971), of the two hundred and sixty-three customers who were followed, twenty-seven were observed stealing, giving an approximate figure of one in ten people shoplifting: again, the average value of the items stolen was relatively low at \$8.57.³²

The Cambridge study (1983) featured similar findings. The study, based on a small department store in South East England selling a wide range of goods, found that 1 in 100 customers took things without paying for them and that 500 items were being stolen each week! As the Home Office 1986 report observed:

*'This figure is over ten times the estimated number of shop thefts recorded by police in the entire city and surrounding rural area in which the research was conducted. Assuming that the total number of shop thefts actually committed by customers in the whole area would be between 10 and 100 times the number in this particular store alone, it follows that the police are only recording between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 incidents of customer theft.'*³³

In the above quote, as well as in the studies by Astor, the phrase '*customer thefts*' as well as words like '*steal*' and '*shoplifter/shoplifting*' has been used to analyse the behaviour observed. There are of course, methodological problems in utilising terms in this way. In legal terms, theft requires *intent*, as discussed earlier in regard to the Theft Act of 1968. Whilst there is no dispute over the number of people found to take things as presented in studies by Astor and the Cambridge Group, researchers cannot guarantee, only *assume*, via their methodology, that those people are intending to 'steal' those articles. They tell us little or nothing about shoplifting, but instead how 'takers' are, through discourse, transformed into 'thieves'.

It is of course unlikely, but nevertheless important, to accept in theory, that all of those people observed taking goods could be absent minded, insane, under the influence of drugs, etc., and may have not known what they were doing. The point is that they have not displayed a clear premeditated intention to steal and therefore cannot accurately be called thieves. Only the courts can decide on intent and only the law can determine who is, or is not, a thief. This legal point is significant because, if people are not presumed innocent before being proven guilty, then it can lead to very disturbing developments. Such developments have been monitored and recorded in Britain by the pressure group 'Crisis Counselling for Alleged Shoplifters'³⁴, and have culminated in cases like those of the Tesco Sisters, whose case is summarised in Chapter Five in regard to media reportage

2. Male Shoplifters

Again studies on male shoplifters in the criminological archives are too numerous to list and are often based on random samples of university students. Kraut's (1976) study is one of the most significant and worth mentioning..³⁵

Kraut found that men shoplifted slightly more than women, and his research suggested that many of his respondents who admitted to regularly shoplifting claimed that they shoplifted because they did not want to pay for the merchandise: they wanted the goods and they saw little risk of apprehension. Non-shoplifters, on the other hand, would only steal if they were in straightened circumstances or by accident. Students who had shoplifted saw least risk in their actions in terms of both official apprehension and possible prosecution, and informal sanctions from family and peers..³⁶

3. Teenage Shoplifters.

Studies on teenage shoplifters are too numerous to list but the most significant include Belson's (1975).³⁷ El Dirghami's (1974).³⁸ Wisner's (1968).³⁹ The results from the studies produce fairly mixed data but two broad conclusions can be drawn for the three case studies. Firstly, that teenagers are as likely to steal from shops as any of the other age groups surveyed; secondly, that boys are more likely to be more active shoplifters than girls.

4. Questions About Race/Ethnicity In Relation To Shoplifting

When our prisons are full of a disproportionate number of black to white inmates, and when so many critics have effectively shown the effects of racism on both the policing of, and the reporting of, crime, the 'labelling' and conflict notion, associated with theories of deviance, that 'deviance is in the eye of the beholder'⁴⁰ would seem to be relevant when considering whether or not issues about race are influential in the detection of shoplifters.

The Case For and Against Racial Bias

Gibbins & Prince's study (1962) looked at 532 women convicted by three courts in Greater London in 1960. One of their findings was that 29% of the women they looked at were immigrants (mainly from Europe), although they had very little to say about racism. It is not until Robin's (1963) research that we see discussion of whether or not store detectives or shop personnel, who are deciding whether to call the police, include race as a significant component of the decision making process. Robin did find that blacks were highly represented - disproportionately - in the apprehension figures for the stores.⁴¹ This racial bias was also discovered by Cameron (1964) who found that the proportion of blacks among the women referred to the police was about four times the

proportion found in the total of all women apprehended.⁴² Forty-two per cent of black women were prosecuted, whereas only nine per cent of white women were similarly dealt with.⁴³

In a statistical study of 371 shoplifters who were apprehended in a large city department store in California, Cohen and Stark (1974) found that their results disproved the thesis of racial bias produced in the earlier works.⁴⁴ They argued that Cameron and Robin used primitive statistical analysis and did not hold constant all the factors which influenced the decision on disposition. Surprisingly, many more of the self-report studies looked at shoplifting and argued that racial bias was not a factor in suspecting individuals in stores of shop theft.

The results of Hindelang's⁴⁵ and Lundman's⁴⁶ studies are almost identical, except for the effect of race on the decision to call the police in Lundman's study. The value of the goods stolen is the significant factor in both studies, followed by the age of the suspect. Lundman advances Hindelang's hypothesis that there may be differences in the operating practices of store detectives and shop staff and consequently that this could explain the race effect in Lundman's research, relying as it did on security officers:

*'it may be that private police officers share stereotypes with public ones and that the managers etc., are unorganised, responding to individuals.'*⁴⁷

Whilst research based on self-report studies of shoplifting do not conclusively reveal racism as affecting either referrals or prosecutions by the police, some media effects research and other sociological studies particularly on convicted offenders, have drawn quite different conclusions. Stuart Hall et al have gone further, and when looking at people suspected of crime (most of the study was on mugging) suggested that race is a significant factor in crime. They argue race informs whether or not people are criminalised, rather than cautioned, for insignificant offences and concerning more

significant offences like mugging, whether or not they are picked up as suspects in the first instance.⁴⁸

5. Questions About Class In Relationship To Shoplifting

Walsh's (1978) research suggests that the geographical and seasonal location of any study on shoplifting will affect the results. Indeed, Walsh argues that the Christmas period attracts more shoplifting in all locations.⁴⁹ He goes on to argue that the main determinants of the level of shoplifting experienced by any shop are affected by the economic status of the area and the shop, listing the variables that influence shoplifting as⁵⁰: (a) the type of merchandise on offer (b) sales policy (c) number of staff working in the shop (d) location and layout of the shop (e) display feature and (f) the use of security. Again, however, those who are caught in stores compared to the entire number of those who actually steal things from those stores, may not offer a representative profile of the typical shoplifter. Professionals, compared to amateur shoplifters, appear to get away with much more shoplifting than their convictions reveal.

Won and Yamamoto (1968) did try to analyse whether or not there is an identifiable relationship between shoplifting and class (as opposed to shoplifting and poverty).⁵¹ They examined the records of those who were caught shoplifting in major supermarket chains in Honolulu, Hawaii. Their sample group contained 493 shoplifters, approximately 33% were nineteen or under and over 60% were found to be women. Geographical and sociological data about location and income groups were located in terms of the sample. Even though only a third of Hawaiian society belong in middle income categories, Won and Yamamoto found that these middle income categories were over-represented in their shoplifting sample: 78% of their sample were found to be in this middle income bracket. A later study by Davidson (1975) concentrating on the Hull area in Britain, provided quite different information. Indeed, of the 514

samples of convicted shoplifters looked at by Davidson, only 18 of them, 3.5% of the total sample, lived in high status or middle income areas.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from these contradictory studies. We know fewer middle class people end up in prison for shoplifting and that fewer middle class people have repeat convictions for shoplifting which may indicate that the impact of 'caution' and criminal ramifications are more significant to them than to working class shoplifters. Certainly, middle-class people have more to lose in terms of social status, than do those on the breadline who think they have nothing to lose and engage with what Carlen called the 'sod-it' syndrome when looking at shoplifting. Perhaps middle class individuals are opportunistic shoplifters and, as Kraut (1976) suggests, will take some risks to gain the maximum goods at the minimum cost, until that risk becomes too high to be viable. Indeed, because criminological studies like Won and Yamamoto's raise more questions than they resolve, it seems more appropriate to study shopping rather than shoplifting, in order to comprehend what is actually going on in regard to who takes what, and why.

The point in making reference to self-report studies (and thus not making more detailed reference to studies of convicted shoplifting offenders) is simply to investigate all statistical data available about why contemporary shoplifting is seen as a significant form of crime by 'ordinary' women. Also any statistical review should help understand the unique position Shirley Pitts held as a professional thief and also to implode the myth that archetypal shoplifters are usually middle-aged menopausal housewives. TV representations like Dot Cotton, a character in the TV soap opera Eastenders who was accused of shoplifting, or the low life shoplifting persona of drag queen Lily Savage, perpetuate the myth that middle-aged housewives are still the biggest shop thieves.

The criminological work on shoplifting discussed in this chapter was rather depressing to review. So many variables of behaviour appeared, none seeming more significant than others, that it made the investigation very suspicious of the discourse of

criminology. Each study appeared to be contradicted by the next, suggesting that some element of progress was at work in the notion of critique within the research looked at. Most of the studies went on to say very little, which made this review of shoplifting statistics very hard going. The studies were laborious: so many of those looked at contained little new, or more significant, data than the report before, that the total number of studies taken together raised (1) methodological questions about the usefulness of empiricism, and (2) questions about the links between publication record and research funding.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has tried to mobilise a range of statistics linked to empirical data in order to reveal precisely who is involved in shoplifting. Of course, there are always problems when using statistics to make or defend a case. As Stuart Hall et al commented in 1978:

*'Statistics - whether crime rates or opinion polls - have an ideological function.'*⁵²

There are also obvious problems in terms of the comparative use of statistical evidence, not least when comparing percentages across the studies. As already mentioned, different geographical locations raise different socio-cultural issues about shoplifting. Indeed, in many parts of country, as well as in different parts of the world, consumerism is at different stages of intensification. Regional, national and international differences in shoplifting may well be influenced by different economic modes of organisation, as well as by cultural differences. Moreover, the statistics, often quoted alongside each other, are not necessarily compiled in the same way. Certainly self-report studies, as has been outlined at length by D. I. Murphy (1986), are inherently problematic. Whilst statistics available from self-report studies can be scrutinised by criminologists and other researchers to identify variables often not available elsewhere,

there are a number of inherent problems associated with them. In addition to the limitations of accuracy already mentioned, 'self-report' studies are regarded by critics as having several other weaknesses, which perhaps should be emphasised. One of the most fundamental criticisms of the self-report studies is of their reliance on youth and student samples. Certainly, many studies have been criticised for their methodologies as well as their 'naiveté and low response rate'.⁵³ Whatever questions are raised about the methodological rigour of the self-report studies, it should be acknowledged that they do lead towards consideration of two important variables.

The first is that they indicate that shoplifting may be a common occurrence for many adolescents and young adult shoppers. Intrinsicly, then, such studies lead towards the conclusion that the study of social shopping by teenage groups, rather than the study of crime, may be a more appropriate object of study when trying to look at shoplifting. Second, they suggest that their attitudinal research reveals that shoplifting is not necessarily thought of as 'deviant' behaviour, but behaviour that is engaged with, at times, by the majority of people who shop for a bargain.

The work of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, on discourse, already discussed in earlier chapters, should be mentioned in this review of statistical evidence. This is not only because Foucault's work on discourse suggests that the methodologies of criminology (as well as the attributes of the individuals observed) are significant to what is found out, but also because Foucault's work on subjectivity makes it clear why empirical evidence is unable to identify a 'type' of shoplifting behaviour. Indeed, Foucault's formulations about subjectivity suggests consciousness is not fixed or linear but fragmented and contradictory. According to this model of subjectivity it would be inappropriate to try and make comments or create categories about subjectivity of individuals who shoplift, not least because all individuals take up different subject positions in different contexts, and this complex phenomenon cannot be fully understood by looking for a single psychology or social type who is likely to shoplift. Moreover, many of the discourses and methodologies associated with criminology, that

emerge to label crime, may have no investment in acknowledging that shoplifting is not one type of behaviour but many types of behaviour. Criminology, itself, may not have much investment in acknowledging that some criminal behaviour is irrational, spur-of-the-moment and/or defies rigid classification. As Arboleda Florez et al (1977) commented in their study of the 'ordinariness' of shoplifting:

*'The problem may stem from the paradox involved in the very 'ordinariness' of shoplifting. It is such a common offence and it is committed by so many people that no specific characteristic or pattern arises to make a typology of an all encompassing classification of the offenders.'*⁵⁴

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SECTION TWO**CHAPTER SEVEN****CONCLUSION****Visual Provocation?****Reviewing Shoplifting As a System of Signs**

This investigation has looked at a number of discourses that inform the understanding of the meaning of shoplifting. These include literary, historical, legal, statistical, criminological, psychoanalytic and psychiatric discourses. In addition, cultural, sociological and anthropological information as well as newspaper accounts have been examined. It appears that no single discourse on the subject of shoplifting is able to adequately explain its cause. Nevertheless, such discourses have been drawn upon, where it seemed appropriate to do so, to explain shoplifting as a form and process of social and cultural life in the late twentieth century and to examine women's relationship to it. This cross-disciplinary approach is very demanding and the investigation has tried to connect shoplifting to the history of shopping, as well as to the history of crime. For centuries, shopping has been regarded as 'women's work' and therefore not worthy of serious investigation. Indeed, there are few historical sources on shopping, spanning the centuries, that are directly helpful to understanding shoplifting as linked to shopping rather than criminal behaviour, or even deviance. This situation may have arisen because, until recently, consumer choice itself has been considered separate from political issues and shopping has largely been regarded as a trivial, female pursuit to be distinguished, perhaps, from the more serious matter of men and politics.

Another problem this investigation has encountered is that the research material on shopping is often theoretical or speculative rather than grounded by contextual or

ethnographic details. As Danny Miller has pointed out, shopping has been studied largely in relationship to theories of consumerism rather than ethnographic research concerning what people do in the shops. This, admittedly, is a real weakness of some of the material which has been drawn on to discuss shoplifting. In fact, Miller has gone as far as to condemn the continued influence of theoretical work where, *'issues posed by theorists such as Baudrillard, Benjamin and Bauman, have been transferred to the most spectacular malls'*¹. In regard to the theoretical work of Walter Benjamin, Miller has suggested that the influence of his analysis has detracted from the need for ethnographic research and *'has been little short of disastrous'*², a position that seems *overstated* to say the least.

Conversely, information published on the subject of *shoplifting* has attracted little theorising. Instead there are many more empirical as well as ethnographic studies (compared to the subject of shopping), which tend to produce fragments of information. The problem also with this ethnographic and empirical material on the subject of shoplifting, as mentioned in the Introduction and in subsequent chapters of Section Two, is that many of the studies cited originate from a criminological, rather than consumer, focus and for that reason are perhaps rather limited in the questions they ask. For example, questions raised by criminologists obsessed with empirical data such as: who takes what? where? how much? and with what effect?, are perhaps less significant. The way shoplifting as a social process, informs understanding of the meaning of objects and object exchange in daily lives is not considered in depth. In fact, it would appear that the criminological studies reviewed in the PhD only appear able to address the former quantitative questions. It would probably require broader anthropological study and significant research funding in order to answer the more qualitative questions. Indeed, having analysed the discourses that inform the understanding of shoplifting, this investigation has been able to suggest that the meaning of goods shoplifted is diverse. Some stolen objects for example, may be linked to erotic fixation; others may become involved in alternative systems of exchange, and so warrant review. In fact, the oral history approach, undertaken in the Section One, is inspired by the need to address

precisely these questions about meaning. In order to bring this final section to a conclusion, some observations about the material gathered together in it need to be made: particularly concerning the issue of a visual component or visual provocation in shoplifting. Ralph Halpern, Chair of the Burton Group, has noted this visual component to shoplifting when he observed:

*'the ever increasing attractiveness of shop displays and layouts does make it much easier for people to pick up goods without paying for them...'*³

Robert Adley, the former Conservative MP for Christchurch, who carried out an independent study on shoplifting (with three magistrates), has gone even further than Halpern and suggested that:

*'Self service shops act as a trap to elderly, people with children, and the forgetful... if you encourage people to help themselves, they will...'*⁴

Social life, and the general context of shopping, are rarely cited as motivations for the act of shoplifting. Yet, shopping is an essential part of consumerism and shoplifting may simply be the flip side of a system and process which has been described by Judith Williamson in Consuming Passions:

'the chosen meaning in most peoples lives comes more from what they consume rather than from what they produce... Consuming seems to offer a certain scope for creativity, rather like a toy where all the parts are pre-chosen, but the combinations are multiple. Consumerism is often represented as a supremely individualistic act - yet, it is also very social: shopping is socially endorsed event, a form of social cement. It makes you feel normal. Most people find it cheers them up - even window shopping. The extent to which shoplifting is done where there is no material need, (most items stolen are incredibly trivial), reveals the extent to which peoples wants and needs are translated into the form of consumption'.⁵

New shopping spaces, retail displays, HP or credit card services, undoubtedly produce increased shoplifting as well as increased profits. As Carl Gardner and Julie Sheppard point out, the new shopping spaces also:

*'protect the consumer by screening out negative features and social conflicts in favour of a sanitised fantasy.'*⁶

This disavowal of reality, as mentioned in Chapter Two, is achieved not only by the construction of department stores and malls themselves as leisure centres but also by the mobilisation of accelerated and sophisticated communications. These fantasy shopping worlds complete with music, dining and other forms of entertainment, are aimed at inspiring acquisition and increasing profits whilst at the same time denying: (a) that shopping is connected to work and production and (b) that it costs the consumer a significant proportion of their income or (c) that there is a price to pay for goods purchased and that real money is really being spent. Consumerism uses narratives of pleasure and entertainment to disavow reality through discursive means, transforming and reducing all our desires simply into desire for new products. The logic of planned obsolescence, articulated subtly through consumer language connected with profit logic, is that people are inspired to want the new, the most up to date product, even though they may already have a similar product that functions and works. As Judith Williamson ironically observes:

*'the need for change, the sense that there must be something else, something different from the way things are, becomes the need for a new purchase, a new hairstyle, a new coat of paint...'*⁷

Today, when so many crimes of theft are occurring in such a consumer led context, it seems inappropriate to 'medicalise' the explanation of such behaviour. Shoplifting may be explained simply by a direct link to ideologies associated with consumer

materialism. Such materialistic ideologies could be seen as more perverse, and perhaps more criminal, than the human actors who have been inspired to shoplift the things they think they need. Psychiatrists and criminologists, who have often failed to look at the wider material cultural context of such thefts, seem to miss this point.

Few criminological theories address the consumer base. In fact, most studies tend to associate theft with criminal intention rather than with consumer messages to over-indulge. Of course, some people never shoplift, even though they are subjected to the same messages and the same social stimuli as others who do. As this investigation has mentioned, there are few clear explanations as to what causes crime. While sociological and criminological studies can never quite explain what causes criminal motivation, it is clear the gap between shopper and shoplifter may not be as wide as imagined. Three studies were been considered to substantiate this point: Astor (1969)⁸ and (1971)⁹, as well as a study presented by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology (1983)¹⁰, all of which followed shoppers. Astor's (1969) original findings suggested that of the 169 customers who were followed, 20 stole something, producing a ratio of 1 in 8.5 who stole without being formally detected. The later (1971) study, which repeated the methodology, found 1 in 10 stole something. The Cambridge Study (1983) also produced findings, that suggested that many more people than those officially 'caught' stole things. The Cambridge statistical evidence suggested a much lower ratio than Astor's studies. Only 1 in 100 people, who were followed by Cambridge researchers on one day, were found to have stolen something without being detected. When this methodology was repeated on subsequent days - establishing 500 items stolen without being spotted by store detectives - it again produced a ratio of 100-1.

As outlined in Chapter Three, studies on shoplifting which take a psychiatric approach to the subject, do not appear to have compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between consumer thinking and desire for a bargain or an impulse buy and the so-called shoplifter mentality. Such studies rarely look at consumer discourse in relationship to the 'motivation' of crime. Yet, some types of shoplifting may in fact

involve a shoplifter who uses inappropriate means to achieve socially acceptable consumer goals. In this sense some acts of shoplifting may fit into two of Merton's five typologies of crime (innovation and rebellion), typologies that he argued often use illegitimate means to achieve socially acceptable goals.¹¹ The point of mentioning Merton's typifications so very briefly here is to suggest that no simple correlation between crime and poverty, and crime and insanity, should be assumed when looking at all acts of shoplifting. It may be statistically conclusive that more poor women, as Pat Carlen¹² has identified, are likely to shoplift and be punished for it than others. Yet, as Merton points out the pressure to succeed operates at all points in the class structure. Innovation and rebellion, through acts of crime, such as the shoplifting of high status items which make individuals feel high status through ownership (when they are not perceived elsewhere in that way), may be undertaken by individuals who have been improperly socialised but nevertheless, wish to succeed.¹³ Merton's work together with the questions the model throws up about the logic of consumer culture, need to be acknowledged if all the social and personal incentives to shoplift are to be fully addressed and understood.

Obviously shoplifting IS theft and, although it is not perceived as a hard or serious crime, it does subvert one aspect of the exchange process central to capitalism. It certainly negates profit and it is seen as threatening by retailers, because it disregards the rules (including those of co-operation) implicitly and explicitly encoded in exchange and in all trade. Therefore a soft but very subversive act occurs through shoplifting. It undermines the symbolic order without directly attacking it; this occurs almost by excessively responding to some of its imperatives (messages already mentioned such as: 'Have now; Pay later'). Excessive consumption to the point of over-spending leading to bankruptcy (as exhibited in shopping addiction); unauthorised consumption to the extent of shoplifting the things desired (as in the case of professional shoplifting 'to order'), may both represent different responses to the same consumer messages aimed at promoting shopping. Perhaps, for that reason, shoplifting raises different issues compared to other more direct acts of theft. Shops are filled with goods that do not

appear to belong to anyone in particular and this situation of excess may create feelings of anxiety and relative deprivation deliberately to inspire people to shop. The shoplifter, by getting these messages wrong, but also acquiring things anyway, also gets the logic of materialism quite right. Of course, such extreme behaviour is disastrous for community life, because it makes the idea of exchange and co-operation impossible and unfair. It subverts the exchange process by taking consumer logic one step too far, and yet, at the time, it may appear to the perpetrator as a 'victimless' crime. That is why virtually every Christmas season, the retail association reminds customers that shoplifting puts the prices up, and that shoplifting affects the customers as well as the retailers. Yet, most people are aware that huge profit margins are the main reasons why prices in stores are so high and they do not usually see it as their duty, or in their interest, to draw attention to people they see shoplifting.

In a political context, where community values are disregarded in favour of individual values and goals, or where materialism is so overemphasised that greed is seen as 'good' (to paraphrase the character of Gordon Gekko from the film Wall Street (1987)¹⁴, shoplifting may be seen as a legitimate form of behaviour by some individuals. In this sense, shoplifting to acquire items that individuals use to carve out high status identities for themselves, effects a sort of pseudo conformity: it may even constitute a form of shopping as super-rational behaviour, but its effect is definitely subversive. Shoplifting may be consistent with anarchist political strategies and the sentiment expressed by Yippie Abbie Hofmann's Steal This Book¹⁵ title. Such strategies utilised by the Situationists, for example, and perceived as disruptive or criminal - depending on who is measuring the behaviour, could be construed by dogmatic Marxist critics as embodying the conservatism of shopping lust. In order to explain such ideas in more detail, this investigation will address theories that are broadly known as 'post-modern', drawing largely upon the work of the post-Marxist French writer, Jean Baudrillard.

Understanding Shoplifting - As A System of Signs?

It is important to locate Jean Baudrillard's work in this conclusion, as a critique of Marxism and as a response to Marxist accounts, rather than simply a break from them. It should also be explained that the writing by Baudrillard this investigation draws upon - in particular his books The Mirror of Production (1975)¹⁶ and For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign (1981)¹⁷, - predate his later, and rather more fantastic accounts of specularities, for example, in regard to the Gulf War that appeared in The Guardian newspaper in 1991. This journalism, and later theoretical writing by Baudrillard has been heavily criticised by Norris¹⁸ (among others), for being quite '*ludicrous*' and for presenting philosophical muddles about the end of history.

Baudrillard's early thinking is greatly indebted to the work of Situationists like Guy Debord, who as T. Richards has pointed out¹⁹, was key in defining the 'society of the spectacle'²⁰, and whose work Baudrillard has since tried to address and revise. The idea that spectacle keeps us from recognising the free floating aimlessness of capitalism, was posited by Guy Debord, before Baudrillard made such a connection, as follows:

*'The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible it is all one sees. The world one sees is its world.'*²¹

In Debord's writings he states that forms of conditioning are created by the spectacle of shopping malls, night-clubs, adverts, and all forms of cultural life which manipulate experiences, desires, attitudes and behaviour. Such thinking has received critical acceptance. It raises issues about specularities that Baudrillard takes up too.

Baudrillard's ideas are further drawn upon in this conclusion in order to elaborate and develop the argument that visual provocation and a scopophilic component to shopping may be involved in shoplifting.

To understand shoplifting, one must understand shopping which, from an anthropological point of view, nearly always involves a system of exchange. Bartering systems still exist in some parts of the world (such as Bolivia), but the exchange of money for goods is now the predominant experience all over the world.²² As outlined in Section Two, Chapter Three: to steal is to refuse such a system of exchange: to cheat it and to defy it. Baudrillard's Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign (1981) takes concepts developed by Marxism but, instead of using 'exchange value' to discuss material value, he writes about the exchange of signs and signifiers. His account describes a world over-populated as a consequence of the explosion of signs utilised by the culture of consumption, as it were. Signifiers and meanings, now an integral part of consumer discourse, may have lost their original significance and no longer have any reference in the real world. This is Baudrillard's territory. He interprets consumer culture and moves beyond the fact that value is created by the social labour of production, and beyond ideas about the disavowal of labour from exchange (which Marx originally explained in his account of commodity fetishism²³). Later critics have taken up Marx's ideas about commodity fetishism and have suggested that marketing and advertising attribute qualities and auras to objects that are not 'intrinsically' part of the commodity. These qualities and auras increase the gap between what the thing is and does, and what it means. Baudrillard suggests that contemporary consumer culture contributes to this gap too. Its visual emphasis promotes a relay of signifiers that disavow ideas about the real because simulation, not production, has become the structuring principle of social organisation. He states:

*'We are at the end of production...Production is the dominant scheme of the industrial era...Simulation is the dominant scheme of the present phase of history governed by the code.'*²⁴

Instead of keeping a Marxist model of resistance and human agency (as even Foucault has done), Baudrillard uses the theory of seduction to invoke and explain the individuals relationship to visual arenas created by late twentieth century capitalism.

Unlike Debord, he posits no final 'radical gesture' that might defy the 'co-option' of capitalism. The prime difference between their models is that some Situationists, like Debord, accept that some situations and behaviour (instances of shoplifting for example) could be regarded as a radical gesture; but the Baudrillardian model would not accept the relevance of 'radical' strategies.²⁵ Baudrillard argues that he is not a strategist and also that there can be no resistance to consumer logic. Instead, he suggests, one must simply over-consume, consume more and more, in order to defy the messages of the culture of consumption that have become increasingly fetishistic. For Baudrillard then, the shopaholic who shops until bankruptcy, is probably a more subversive figure than critics and artists who attempt to create a critique of consumerism; this is why his work is often so controversial. Feminists, who in the 1970s argued against female commodification, suggested a key strategy for women should be to reject objectification in order to liberate themselves. Yet such radical ideologies - where relevant today - could be cited as part of the failure of critiques of consumerism. This is because today's advertisements have to some extent co-opted the language of feminism. The wonder bra is alleged to 'liberate' the wearer. Perhaps it offers an example of why Baudrillard and his followers are so sceptical of radical movements and gestures. In Section Two, Chapter Three this investigation located the concept of 'perverse compliance', outlined by Estelle Weldon²⁶ in order to offer a possible explanation not articulated elsewhere about the fact that some conformist behaviour may not be as conservative as it seems at first sight. Shoplifting, simply to acquire more things, may also be seen as conservative. But the behaviour of shoplifters who may have taken the logic of shopping too far, and thus through hyper-conformity subverted the exchange process, has some radical logic too. These shoppers who shoplift are regularly bombarded by messages that help them comprehend the logic of capitalism only too well. They have internalised the desire to consume until it feels and becomes almost instinctive. Through the internalisation of this logic of consumerism, some though by no means all shoppers may shoplift - responding to an over-abundance of signs and goods - because they feel compelled to be part of the system, but through shoplifting undermine the system.

Those who sell adjust their own profit margins with an implicit understanding that some of what they sell will be stolen. They are prepared to suffer store and mall losses in return for the greater profits to be garnered by self-service, which means a greatly reduced work force. The investment in surveillance techniques acts as a warning rather than a deterrent or a prevention, as a certain amount of shoplifting will still go on. In addition, many people feel that stealing from a huge store is not the same as stealing from an individual. They do not see that the goods taken are ever 'owned' by anyone in the first place. The goods appear. They simply seem to exist in vast abundance, in fact, only to be consumed. In this light some acts of shoplifting, though certainly not all, may be seen as the kind of over-consumption that Baudrillard refers to. Seduced by consumer signs, the literal sign objects are taken rather than exchanged. There is a slippage between actual sign value (the thing) and its symbolic value (what it means in specific contexts). It is a slippage resolved by a pastime of shoplifting (of items which may have no important function) which, for some women, may be both exciting and rewarding in terms of the material experience and goods provided. The experience of exhilaration however, as discussed in Chapter Five in regard to compulsive behaviour is followed by the surveillance of those caught. Such surveillance has social effects. Some containment is achieved through the labelling of shoplifting as criminal and psychological deviance, and the social consequences thereof . Despite the fact shoplifting is committed by a large and diverse groups of, nevertheless such behaviour is primarily defined in the visual media through a very narrow range of stereotypical images, thus continuing to mystify the significance of the social implications of the behaviour.

As discussed in ChapterSix, empirical studies reveal that, despite the excessive signs of surveillance all around them, many people steal things that are insignificant in value or appear meaningless to them. This behaviour provides some evidence that the internalisation of the logic of consumerism can have unintended social effects, because it is not motivated by clear intentions. Some shoppers may be so overwhelmed by the

display of signs on offer that they take things they don't need. Others may not be in a financial position to join the system. They may be propelled by poverty, by excessive needs and wants, by constantly stimulated desire, to the extent that they continually misread the signs and steal to join in. Yet the symbolic price of such behaviour means that, when discovered, the shoplifter can never really belong, without contradiction, in the system. So-called 'shopping addiction' as well as shoplifting may come about as a response to the same stimuli, and may be activated by subjective internalisation of some messages rather than others. In the case of shoplifting, the extent to which acquisition is achieved as a consequence of a deliberate misreading of signs - taking the logic of 'have now pay later' too far - is hard to gauge precisely. When caught, some shoplifters constantly refer to the discourse of shopping addiction or kleptomania (as already discussed in Chapter Three) with quotes such as: *'I don't know what came over me'* or *'I don't know why I did it.'*²⁷

There may be occasions, in certain shopping contexts, where consumer signs may literally be read by some individuals, at certain moments in shopping 'reality', as really offering 'something for nothing'. The promise of the bargain - the ultimate thrill offered to the sensible shopper, may be taken at face value, despite the fact that such shoppers also have access to cultural knowledge and understand that rarely do consumers *really* get something for nothing. Shoplifting may raise questions about psychological motivation, questions that go deeper than the individual cases looked at. Any psychoanalytic interpretation of shoplifting may inevitably involve a questioning of the relationship of women to signs. Simone de Beauvoir pointed out that women are always 'other' i.e. not men. Based on this logic, the psychoanalyst Lacan, developed arguments which suggest such 'otherness' means that women have a different relationship than men to what he describes as 'the Symbolic Order' and the 'Law of the Father.'²⁸

Hysteria, perversion, kleptomania are all, argues Lacan, ways of speaking through another kind of sign language. This investigation has tried to urge suspicion of any

discourse that positions women as 'inferior' in any way. Indeed, it argues that, even the psychoanalytic accounts should not be accepted without question and caution. The construction of women shoplifters as irrational is probably more problematic than the actual behaviour of women shoplifting which, as the criminologist Kraut has identified, may be about the acquisition of maximum goods at minimum cost. Shopping as well as shoplifting is linked to culturally created compulsions and desires directed at women and men, although there is still no clear evidence, from any of the official discourses looked at, to explain why some women and men rather than others take the logic of shopping too far and commit credit card fraud or shoplift items that they may or may not need. Most of the official discourses reveal that 'context is everything' and that it is impossible to generalise about what motivates shoplifting. It is clear, therefore, from such studies surveyed in the first six chapters, that shoplifting is not one form of behaviour but a label that describes many different types of behaviour, including some which may be unconsciously motivated but also many conscious acts of theft.

All the psychoanalytic accounts posit shoplifting as problematic to the central relationship of women to the law (law, in the symbolic sense of patriarchal power, as defined by Lacanian analysts), as the passage through which women must go in order to be mature as individuals. They must internalise the 'law of the father', and the ultimate representation of that socially is the legal system which, as this investigation has demonstrated, has real difficulty in classifying deviant women. Shoplifting has been viewed by some accounts, summarised in this investigation, as a passive rather than active crime. The discourse of feminist criminology which this thesis has addressed, is concerned to see how women also act as active agents of crime. Understanding the activities of women, in the culture of consumption where perverse compliance (through anorexia or shoplifting) may now be an everyday event, reminds us that some activities of women are not easily dismissed as passive or invisible to those who don't have similar experience, or who don't recognise the radical gesture in some forms of hyper-conformity. It also identifies why some activities of women may require some complex theorisation. In order to comprehend compliant behaviour that is perverse, it is

necessary to understand how women internalise consumer logic; what Frances Heidensohn describes as, the messages that lead to the '*production of conformity in women*'²⁹. Indeed, if we re-read the signs of shoplifting in terms of activity, rather than passivity, we may find that there is no 'cure' for this form of soft deviance. The solution to the problem of shoplifting lies therefore not in the creation of better shoplifting tags, harsher sentencing practice, or in recognising and healing traumas within individual pathologies. Instead, the answer may reside in understanding visual provocation and the socially designed experience of consumerism which is itself perverse, immoral and out of control. This is an argument about shoplifting that may offend so-called 'realist criminologists', such as Jock Young (1986), who criticises any account of crime that suggests changing the social order as 'idealistic'.³⁰ Nevertheless, in order to develop pre-emptive strategies that will deter crimes like shoplifting, as advocated by this 'realist' school of criminology, it really is necessary to propose that the organisation of shopping warrants review (connected with the idea that self service promotes shoplifting), rather than to simply propose more humane ways of dealing with shoplifting 'offenders'.

Visual Provocation - Arguments in Mitigation of Shoplifting

The post modern reading of the meaning and influence of signs is an important part of analysing a subject like shoplifting at the end of the twentieth century. It suggests that multinational capitalism has a vested interest in mobilising signs simply to sell us things. In everyday life, our exposure to advertising and media hype involves us in experiencing an over production of signs that causes us to do two things at the same time: to look at signs knowing that superficial things won't change our lives whilst simultaneously finding ourselves drawn into engaging with signs and wanting the things anyway. Baudrillard has suggested that the over-production of images, the saturation of mass communications, has intensified the experience of fetishism within consumer culture.

Baudrillard argues that we live in a situation in which there, *'is generation of meaning by models of the real without origin or reality, a hyper-real'*³¹. Baudrillard's model is persuasive, but problematic. He appears to have lost sight of the way real people live their real lives, even though his writing very clearly describes the world of the shopping mall where hyper reality is the order of the day. In such a world, in which an over abundance of signs and visual provocation are an essential part of the world of simulation, it is not surprising that shoplifting occurs: *in fact what is surprising that it does not occur more often*. Indeed, this is where this investigation parts company with Baudrillard's logic. For evidence about shoplifting reviewed in the chapters of Section Two, suggests that despite the fictional aspects of some discourses which operate to regulate shoplifting; despite the construction of permanent typifications about 'deviant' shoplifters; and despite hyper-real scenarios of late twentieth century life including shopping malls, many people are not passive in regard to objects they see in the shops, yet they do not shoplift either. Instead, they appear to have a very real understanding of the law and the boundaries between reality and hyper-reality. This may be because despite the enormous opportunities, very few people shoplift enough to undermine their own liberty or the profit logic of self service or even capitalism, which is why random shoplifting can be regarded as a conservative activity. Indeed, the cultural epidemic of kleptomania that occurred in the nineteenth century where visual provocation informed not only the styling of three dimensional objects sold in the shops, but also the spectacle of the objects arranged in the shops, created a different sort of logic and desire. At the end of the twentieth century, at a time when the logic of spectacle and consumerism are more familiar to the average person, shoplifting can be seen as an unlikely general response to the overproduction of signs in the space designated hyper-reality. Yet 'lived experience', represented in the voices of the significant percentage of those who do shoplift (found in so many official surveys and accounts as well as unofficial testimony of Shirley Pitts) should make us uncomfortable about dismissing too quickly arguments about the significance of visual provocation and visual stimulation to consume, as Danny Miller has perhaps done. The intense feelings provoked by visual stimulation of objects and signs - the desire that comes over people to take things they

don't really want - needs to be adequately investigated. Dick Hebdige has suggested the passage from being the ideal consumer to the psychotic consumer (completely decentred, unanchored, irresponsible)³², is certainly one that is part of the ordinary shopping experience.

Conclusion

The argument that there is a visual component to some cases of shoplifting has been made by this investigation. The investigation has also suggested, through the review of official discourses about shoplifting, that this visual component to shopping, and how it impacts on shoplifting, is a variable worthy of further analysis and research. Indeed, the idea that there is a visual component to shoplifting has permeated some of the discourses about shoplifting that have been created in the last 150 years. These connections are not overt, or self evident, and perhaps can only be identified through analysis of various historical discourses. They are certainly located in the 'overwhelmed' and 'out of control' voices of the nineteenth century kleptomaniac, many of whom argued that something, *'simply came over them'* in department stores. This discourse, originally associated with the kleptomaniac may continue in the twentieth century not only in the voices of 'shopping addicts', but also in the voices of psychiatric patients, primarily women who appear to have stolen things because it seems a girl simply can't help acting on impulse. The arguments about mitigating factors concerning shoplifting, may stem from biological factors to overwhelmed senses, making it extremely difficult to differentiate between criminal and non-criminal intentions concerning acts of shoplifting, as the review of official discourses in this first section has tried to make clear. Indeed, many discourses utilised to explain women's criminality are often imbued with a form of biological essentialism that mystifies the behaviour of women, which makes it difficult to assess the significance of many official discourses about women and shoplifting. Nevertheless, by locating shoplifting back in the social context of shopping, this investigation has tried to show how the logic of

shoplifting is not inseparable from the logic of shopping and to suggest that, in many cases, the behaviour of the shoplifter is not necessarily deviant, but in fact offers a form of perverse compliance with consumer logic, which finally brings me back to the oral transcript and my analysis of the life of Shirley Pitts. The heroic reading of Shirley Pitts story would perhaps argue that in her life shoplifting represented heroic female resistance to not only poverty but to the sort of domestic passivity expected of many working class women of her generation. Certainly there can be no doubt that Shirley Pitts's oral testimony is the account of a survivor - yet the way she achieved her survival was not always straightforwardly subversive and involved perverse and conservative elements that should not be left unscrutinised. Shirley Pitts constantly changed her opinions and her identity to fit the scenarios she found herself in. Indeed, her many feminine personas enabled her to masquerade in the shops mobilising perversely compliant strategies concerning female identity that she appeared unable not to continue even when she went home alone and there was apparently no one there to notice. In this sense I would suggest Shirley Pitts's story of shopping, shoplifting and survival perhaps demands a more imaginative readings of hyperconformity and perverse compliance and their relationship to law breaking and criminal 'deviance' than is currently available.

Endnotes:

- ¹ MILLER, D., et al (Ed.) Shopping, Place and Identity, London, Routledge, 1998. p.ix of Preface.
- ² MILLER, D., 'Could Shopping Ever Really Matter?', in FALK, P. & CAMPBELL, C., (Ed.) The Shopping Experience, Sage, London, 1997 p.35.
- ³ HALPERN, RALPH, 'Theft Made Easy by Store Chief', Sunday Telegraph, 6 July 1986, App.2, p.6
- ⁴ ADLEY, R., 'Shopaholics', Sunday Times, 26 April 1987, App.2, p.6
- ⁵ WILLIAMSON, J., Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture, London, Marion Boyars, 1986, p.30.
- ⁶ GARDNER, C., & SHEPPARD, J., Consuming Passions. The Rise of Retail Culture, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.121.
- ⁷ WILLIAMSON, J., Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture, London, Marion Boyars, 1986, p.12.
- ⁸ ASTOR, .S.D., Shoplifting: Far Greater Than We Know ?, Security World, Vol.6, 1969.
- ⁹ ASTOR, S.D., 'Shoplifting Survey', Security World, Vol.8, part 3, 1971, p.34-35.
- ¹⁰ CAMBRIDGE INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY (1983), quoted in the office report 1989
- ¹¹ MERTON, R.K., 'Social Structure and Anomie' in Delinquency, Crime and Social Process, CRESSEY, D. & WARD, D., (Eds), New York, Harper Row, 1938 & 1969, p254-84.

Table A Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptation

<u>Modes of adaptation</u>	<u>Culture goals*</u>	<u>Institutionalized means*</u>
I Conformity	+	+
II Innovation	+	-
III Ritualism	-	+
IV Retreatism	-	-
V Rebellion	+/-	+/-

* + signifies acceptance, - Signifies rejection, +/- signifies rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values. Source: Merton, Robert (1938: 263).

- ¹² CARLEN, P., Women, Crime and Poverty, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988.
- ¹³ MERTON, R.K., 'Social Structure and Anomie' in Delinquency, Crime and Social Process, CRESSEY, D., & WARD, D., (Eds), New York, Harper Row, 1938 & 1969, p.254-284.
- ¹⁴ Wall Street, director Oliver Stone, USA, American Entertainment, 1987.
- ¹⁵ HOFFMAN, A., Steal This Book, New York, Private Editions, 1971.
- ¹⁶ BAUDRILLARD, J., The Mirror of Production, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1975, translated with an Introduction by Mark Poster.
- ¹⁷ BAUDRILLARD, J., For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1981.
- ¹⁸ NORRIS, C., Critical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1992, p.17.
- ¹⁹ RICHARDS, T., The Commodity Culture of Victorian England, London, Verso, 1991.
- ²⁰ DEBORD, GUY, Society of the Spectacle, Detroit, Black and Red, 1983
- ²¹ DEBORD, GUY, Society of the Spectacle, Detroit, Black and Red, 1983, clause 42.
- ²² WILLIAMS, R., Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1982, refer to Chapter 3 on the way trade has changed.
- ²³ MARX, K., Capital Volume One, London, Pelican, 1986.
- ²⁴ BAUDRILLARD, J., Selected Writings, Mark Poster, (Ed), Stamford, University Press, Stamford Collection, 1988, p.98-118.
- ²⁵ WILLIAMSON, J., 'Lost in the Hyper market', City Limits, 15 Dec, 1988, p.13.
- ²⁶ WELDON, E., British Journal of Psychotherapy, 1996, 12(4) p.486.
- ²⁷ ABELSON, E., When Ladies Go A Thieving - Middle Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.168.
- ²⁸ LACAN, J., As mentioned in earlier chapters, the Lacanian model of psychoanalysis which developed in France now permeates academic departments as well as consulting rooms around the world. Lacan, returning to Freud via structuralist and post-structuralist concepts of

signification, develops the theory of the castration complex in relation to the baby's subjection into language. Initially the baby exists in the Imaginary (pre-Oedipal) perceiving itself as part of the mother. Between six and eighteen months, the baby enters the Mirror Stage, identifying with the image of itself reflected to it by others (a mirror, its mother, an Imaginary) there is no difference and no absence, only identity and presence, [MOL, T., Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory, London, Methuen, 1985] the Imaginary to form the unconscious. In Lacan's model it is the phallus that ruptures the baby's dyadic relationship of plenitude, and wounds its precarious narcissistic image of self, when it realises that the mother desires something 'other'. As such, the phallus exists as a symbol of what the mother desires, rather than as an actual penis. With the rupture of the Imaginary, the baby begins to take up its 'identity' within the symbolic order, within language, and also with reference to the phallus: *'Sexual difference is then assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not possess the phallus, which means...that anatomical difference comes to figure sexual difference, that is becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be.'* [JACQUELINE, ROSE, 'Introduction II' in Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne, Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (Ed), Macmillan, London, 1982, p.42.]

The little boy's final separation from the mother arises because of her 'lack' and he aligns himself instead with the paternal metaphor, the phallus. Lacan returns to the concept of castration as central to the construction of sexuality, and for all that the phallus is a symbol (the ultimate signifier of unity and authority within the patriarchal code), the woman is still defined by the absence of any such signifier. Girls, being figured as lacking, have nothing to lose.

²⁹ HEIDENSOHN, F., Women and Crime, London, Macmillan, 1986.

³⁰ YOUNG, J., 'The Failure of Criminology: The need for a Radical Realism, In MATHEWS, R. & YOUNG, J., (Ed.), Confronting Crime, Beverley Hills, Sage, 1986.

³¹ POSTER, M., defined hyper-reality, in Baudrillard's usage, as the new linguistic condition of society, rendering impotent theories that still rely on materialist reductionism or rationalist referentiality ... the strange mixture of desire and fantasy that is unique to late twentieth century culture. POSTER, M., (Ed.), Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1988.

³² HEBDIGE, Dick, quoted in MOORE, S., Looking For Trouble, London, Serpent's Tail, 1988, p.291.

AFTERWORD: REFLECTIONS ON WRITING THIS PHD

'In pursuit of a moral adventure I sacrificed dispersion and ornament. The reason for my choice, whose meaning is revealed to me only today perhaps because I have to write about it, were not clearly apparent. I think that I had to hollow out, to drill through, a mass of language in which my mind would be at ease...' ¹ Jean Genet, The Thief's Journal, 1967.

I was sent to Raphael Samuel's house in 1985 by Greg Eliot, a friend at the publisher Verso Books, who explained that one of his authors needed a typist to help him produce a manuscript (which had been revised by hand too often) into respectable order for editing. With a portable typewriter and Tippex in hand, I arrived at 19 Elder Street in Spitalfields to meet the author. I vaguely knew who he was because his article from the book People's History and Socialist Theory² was one of the set readings on the course I completed the previous year at Middlesex Polytechnic (BA Hons in Cultural Studies).

When Raphael Samuel opened the door after somewhat frenzied knocking and ringing on my part, (evidently he'd been at the top of the house), it was clear that the dishevelled apparition in front of me had no memory of my intended visit. My first impression of Samuel's lack of sartorial style and rather unfashionable 'early Arthur Scargill hairdo' served to confirm to me that the man was of an outdated, Old Left school of fashion and dress. Yet, after only one hour in his company my first impression of a dishevelled eccentric, an individual lost in the past, was absolutely changed by the intensity of a mind that missed absolutely nothing and by an extraordinary warmth of personality. It took a very short time indeed for me to decide that the person before me was 'Very Special'. In retrospect, I am glad I made that judgement without any help from others who knew him, and from (the now rather embarrassing) ignorance of the fact that the 'author' before me was a distinguished and respected historian.

Although I was at Raphael Samuel's house to work for him as an 'intelligent typist' he insisted on treating me as an equal. He checked my opinion on every subject under the sun; I was saluted as 'comrade', a word of greeting I later realised he used all the time, even when leaving answerphone messages. At first I found this habit rather charming, - 'Hello Comrade' - 'Goodnight Comrade'; but, in the end, it drove me mad.

I did little typing that first day because Raphael Samuel stopped work at least three times on his endless 'corrections' to make us both 'a pot of tea'. It seemed to take ages just getting set up. He seemed to have difficulty, all afternoon, in finding a table and a chair he considered suitable for me. He sat me upstairs on the first floor of his shabby, book-lined house and, for the first half hour, he kept reappearing from his ground floor study with another chair even worse than the one before. Politely I tried and then rejected them all (the first was the best of a bad lot to sit on). I was desperate to be left alone to get on with the typing even though he still hadn't got round to giving me the full whack of it. When, at last, more pages did arrive upstairs, he'd linger at the door, somehow finding questions to ask me about East London where I grew up (it was the Cockney accent that did it I think). I found it hard to get anything done.

As the daylight faded into night and a few typed pages were completed, I thoughtlessly requested a desk lamp (as the pages were increasingly rendered illegible by his dimly-lit living room). This request sparked off the final crisis. He didn't have a spare lamp in the house and Raphael concluded, in a roundabout way 'comrade', that he really couldn't do any more work, and that we should settle up. With so little typed I didn't have the heart to discuss money, especially with someone who seemed to me to be on the bread-line anyway. This embarrassed him and he suggested that we should go down to his basement kitchen and at least eat some 'supper'. (Actually we ate some rather cold quiche leftovers from the night before accompanied by brandy.) As we talked, I plucked up the courage to ask him why he was probably the only person left in East London with an outside toilet and no central heating. I got the full labour history of 19

Elder Street, and gathered that even though he worked in Oxford, where at Ruskin College he had a job he loved, he would never willingly leave London or Elder Street. This didn't explain why he had chosen not to install central heating and live so frugally. When I mentioned all the local people I had known since childhood who now had bathrooms and central heating in their council flats, he remained unimpressed.

I offered to return to the typing the following week but we never did get round to it. After that I gave up any pretence of typing his work as expected by his long-suffering editor. When I turned up, he prepared lunch and we talked all afternoon. I decided I was far more interested in talking with him than in the typing. He had so much to say about East London and about a woman of my age, he had just met, who lived in Brighton. Her name was Alison Light and I gathered he had fallen madly in love with her. We talked about his worries about the age difference between them. I encouraged him to follow his heart and was pleased to see him beaming with happiness as the weeks went on. (I was even more delighted to learn that she shared my views about indoor plumbing and central heating which she eventually persuaded him to improve.)

Our regular conversations about East London's criminal 'subculture'³ and about contemporary feminism resulted in lively arguments. My memories of growing up in Hoxton - some of which Raphael insisted on recording - allowed him to interrupt me at random, testing out his ideas about criminal families and values, ideas that I suspected he had been formulating ever since he completed the Arthur Harding book⁴, which someone in prison sent out for me to read (a fact which pleased him enormously). It was later, long after these initial discussions, that I decided I wanted to write a PhD on the way women (rather than men) involved in crime were problematically represented and mythologised. I'd just finished my MA in Women's Studies at the University of Kent (with a dissertation on *The Female Gaze*) and was now ready to develop my arguments further.

I came up with the theme of shoplifting because I had grown up in the company of

many women who had earned their living from the criminal trade, 'oysting' (from the verb 'to hoist'). An oyster and a shoplifter are the same thing, except that the adjective oyster - straight from the mouth of criminal London's past - implies a level of professionalism and criminal intention that the word shoplifter simply does not.

Raphael's fascination with this discussion made me realise that, because of my family connections, I had access to quite unique information. Raphael Samuel was obviously the person to help me think through what to do with this information.

Twelve years later I learned of Raphael Samuel's death from the newspaper obituaries. I cried as I read the tributes to him. I had been pregnant with my daughter Ruby when Raphael Samuel was so very ill. I felt guilty that I had left so much unfinished business relating to my PhD, especially given that he had always been so generous with his time. Later I learnt that many Ruskin students had similar stories to tell, stories of Raphael's unique attention and interest which, to use Stuart Hall's words, '*gave them a historical sense of themselves and made them into social historians of their own lives and cultures and the custodians of their own popular memories*'⁵. Actually, he was *so* good at making you feel special that it was only after his death that I realised that I too had unwittingly been through what I can now see was the "Raphael Samuel Experience".

My choice of PhD subject was informed not just by Raphael Samuel's interest in my memories and background but more significantly by my part time job at The Women's Press where I read (and mainly rejected) new feminist manuscripts three days a week between 1984-1990. While doing this job, I soon realised that, with a few notable exceptions, there were few first hand accounts of criminal lives written by, or about women who worked as professional thieves. This fact, together with Raphael's desire to do a follow up to his fabulous East End Underworld: The Life and Times of Arthur Harding in the form of a more contemporary sequel, probably had a lot to do with the direction our chats took. In 1986 and 1987 I even taped a number of local criminals (mainly men) for him, but he never seemed to have time to work on his promised sequel to the Harding book. This was much to the disappointment of his editor at Routledge

and the old timers I had taped who drove me round the bend asking when their stories were to appear in print every time I saw from them. Bert Murray and Bill Penn, two of the chaps I taped for Raphael's "next" crime book, have since died.

Meanwhile, I registered the PhD on shoplifting at Middlesex Polytechnic. I returned there to be amongst friends who regularly gathered to hear speakers at the 'Ideas In Progress' seminars that ran (and still run) on Tuesday nights for postgraduate students. I was glad Judith Williamson agreed to be my in-house supervisor, with Raphael Samuel as the external assessor. What was most important to me about Judith Williamson's involvement was not simply that she had a great gift of cutting through the waffle and getting to the heart of the matter, but that I knew she'd just let me get on with it. During the rare 'joint' tutorial moments when the three of us got together, I remember Raphael Samuel kept referring me to obscure historical tomes that spanned four centuries and often had only the most tenuous links with work I was doing. Occasionally, Judith Williamson managed to bring Raphael Samuel back to the twentieth century, and to the discussion of contemporary consumer culture in relationship to shoplifting (which, in retrospect, I can see was a big achievement). These joint sessions cemented the difficult relationship between an irreverent (but nevertheless serious) trio; consequently both supervisors stuck with me in the years that followed when no-one else really believed I was going to finish this PhD.

As a consequence of a series of bereavements which included the death of my sister Boo Penn, 39, in 1990 and Shirley Pitts 57, in 1992 (both deaths occurring as a result of breast cancer) I had 'a personal crisis. I felt unable to continue with researching the subject of shoplifting. To understand this development I perhaps need to explain that academic work was perhaps a way of rebelling or going somewhere far away from my background without actually having to leave London (which infuriated my family and had amused Raphael). This shoplifting project intentionally built a bridge between the two worlds I inhabited. This is why it became a problem. I was so distressed after Shirley died - during the taping of the book we really were very close - and found the

subject of 'shoplifting' too close to home. This meant that I needed to remove myself far away in order to function. (I went back into therapy and became fascinated with the subject of perversion and the related issues of deviance and queer politics.) In 1994 I wrote a book with Merja Makinen called Female Fetishism: A New Look⁶. This was a book that I had been working on when I should have been finishing this PhD. Instead of being furious with my explanations about my lack of progress on the PhD, Raphael Samuel, Judith Williamson and Barry Curtis at the now renamed Middlesex 'University' were supportive, encouraging me to defer on the subject of shoplifting. In fact, they were helpful in preventing me messing up completely and arranged for me to formally 'defer' so as to have a chance to get back to the PhD later. Indeed, Judith Williamson read some drafts of the fetish book (as did other Middlesex colleagues such as Francis Mulhern) and periodically reminded me of how some of the consumer issues about fetishism really did connect to my work on shoplifting. Judith Williamson also reminded me of the integrity of the questions I was trying to raise about shoplifting and consumerism at times when I had forgotten why I ever chose the subject in the first place. Barry Curtis, who was also very supportive to me, genuinely tried to guide without tyranny. Such generosity over a ten year period in which the political climate encouraged academics to become careerist and neglect their students, is absolutely characteristic of the cultural studies culture I found myself working within at Middlesex. It was no accident that most of my supervisors and colleagues had a connection with 'socialism', a concept now in danger of becoming a signifier without a signified. Even when at war with each other, most of the Middlesex crowd managed to create a framework where students, from all walks of life, were respected and treated as equals. This education gave me more than an intellectual framework, it gave me many values that I have tried to incorporate into my own teaching practices.

I still paid the occasional visit to Raphael Samuel in 1993-4, although very little work occurred on the PhD front. After that time the visits became less and less frequent due to my full time job at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, a college, which at that time, had no research culture, allowed for little research time and rarely

commented on or praised staff publications. Raphael and I kept in touch by phone. He would ring, usually in order to aid his own penchant for writing, what has been referred to as his 'thick description'. He would question me about strange things: 'What did I think of clothes made of latex', and 'Comrade, do you remember when latex first became popular?', for example. Just the sort of stuff he describes so well in his book Theatres of Memory ⁷.

Raphael Samuel seemed rather unfazed that I wasn't working on the shoplifting material even though I had made so many tapes of Shirley Pitts's recollections until her death in 1992. He understood that I needed to grieve before I could return to her story. I was so moved in 1996 when, having finished writing up the Shirley Pitts tapes and created a ghosted, journalistic crime book based around them, Raphael Samuel appeared (not well at all) at my book launch for Gone Shopping: the Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves.⁸ On this occasion, despite the fact that I was continually watching the door of the bookshop for the first sign of trouble - I had received some horrible threats from one of Shirley Pitts's brothers - I managed to talk to Raphael for a while. I reminded him that, in part, he was responsible for my finishing the book, which he said he very much enjoyed, 'It was *so Dickensian comrade, and read like a novel*'.

Raphael's contribution to my book was complex: his story of Arthur Harding had inspired me and set an example of how to write about criminality. But, more importantly, he gave me another way of thinking. At a time when I was alienated from reading structuralism and criminology (which often seemed more about methodology and theory than about people) his guidance was timely. In fact it was Raphael who encouraged me to go and find Shirley Pitts. I had spoken about her to him and in a very roundabout way he explained that material about the lived experience of shoplifting by a woman might offer a significant reverse discourse⁹, one that might challenge the essentialist assumptions of the criminologists that infuriated me. Indeed, throughout this PhD Raphael Samuel encouraged me to incorporate into it oral history material and

not to give up on ideas about memory. This was significant because, at the time, I hadn't quite let go of the Althusserian framework or basic psychological formulations. I still believed that memory was simply 'contaminated' by ideology, a crude account of memory which Raphael, of course, rejected. Whilst I didn't agree with everything he said, we did agree that all narratives were ideological in construction and that memory too could be analysed in terms of ideological shifts. Much later, when I came to read Foucault, I found a way to discuss memory as yet another discourse. To some extent Raphael Samuel inspired me to adopt what Bill Schwarz has defined as a 'nostalgia for the present'¹⁰, perhaps by looking for traces of the way the past is remembered, dramatised and argued about in the present.

Section One of this PhD, taken together with my book Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, both derive a great deal from Raphael Samuel's obsessions, in particular, his fascination with East London, criminal families and the memories and stories people tell themselves to keep the past alive and to make sense of the present. These obsessions helped to inform the way I constructed Gone Shopping and my understanding of the function of my own memory in writing it up.

When discussing the life of Arthur Harding and the subsequent book, Raphael Samuel regretted adding the many historical footnotes to the text. On reflection, he said to me that he wished he had had the courage to let Harding's story speak for itself without so many historical sources. This observation really influenced me when writing up the oral history of Shirley Pitts, a woman I had known for many years prior to starting this PhD and whom, unlike Harding, was a joy to talk to.

In the book Gone Shopping: The Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves

I refused to judge Shirley Pitts, perhaps because her story of crime was not so different from my father's, or my mother's accounts of their lives. Indeed, in this book, I was reluctant to offer independent comments, except those implicit views that influenced the ordering of her testimony which I ghosted, and which covertly contains my analysis.

Shirley Pitts's transcript, which appears as Appendix I of this PhD, is original and previously unpublished material on the subject of shopping, shoplifting and gender issues. Furthermore, as demanded by the conventions of oral history, it is a raw and unghosted version, straight from the mouth of the woman. The material is subsequently discussed and analysed by me in terms of ideas about subjectivity and discourse. I must add though, that even though I have analysed Shirley Pitts's lifestory for the PhD, I do agree with Raphael Samuel that oral material such as this should be located in its own context, without the need of an academic to guide the gaze, or to critically evaluate everything. Shirley Pitts's story from 'below' speaks for itself in the way it offers a reverse discourse on crime, written from a woman's point of view (perhaps in the way Ed Sutherland intended when in 1937 he published the recollections of Broadway Jones, alias 'Chic Conwell', in his book The Professional Thief)¹¹. Indeed, Shirley Pitts's story when compared with many other accounts of shoplifting that exist in the popular arena and the criminological canon, is unique. Few factual books or accounts of professional thieving by women have ever been published (excluding those about prostitution).

In Section Two of this PhD I adopt a Foucaultian approach by looking at, and critically investigating, many of the discourses which have informed our knowledge of shoplifting. This approach allowed me to address my suspicions about those who label (and pontificate about) criminals and to push such 'official' accounts into the margins of the investigation, (in fact literally into Section Two). Better still, it gave me space to reassess all my favourite academic obsessions including issues about specularly and looking as well as those concerning consumerism and visual culture, which are subsequently discussed in the PhD in connection with my big idea that there is a visual component in the motivation of some acts of shoplifting (perhaps to all shoplifting).

To have got to the point of completion, ten years after I started this project is something I never thought would happen. There are many people I wish to thank, who helped me when I stumbled along the way: Raphael Samuel, Judith Williamson and Barry Curtis

are top of my list. Judith Williamson, in particular, made crucial comments about the intellectual framework of the beast. There are other friends too who gave me courage when I most needed it: Suzanne Moore and Jane Gibb were Top Girls in this respect. Suzanne Moore's contribution was considerable in helping me think through ideas about visual provocation. She also felt that someone should remind me of the importance of the law and suggested that I develop more respect for the Symbolic Order. I found these comments helpful but deeply ironic given the anarchic spirit for change we share in common. Similarly, Jane Gibb made me explain my thinking: she also put in so much work reading the material over and over again to the point of exhaustion, that I never think I will be able to thank her enough. Martin King deserves praise and has my great appreciation for inscribing some chronology into gaps of my imagination. Chris Hawkins (Shirley Pitts's son) and my partner Sid Wragg, who really did have to hold the baby while I went to work on the computer, were also supportive. Thanks are also due to Sally Townsend, who offered to sort out my Cockney grammar. I am also grateful to the ERSC who funded my PhD for two years between 1986 and 1987, as well as to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design who reluctantly, on Malcolm Johnston's recommendation, gave me three months "official sabbatical" leave in 1996. Piotr Kozak and Brent Richards of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, should also be mentioned. They gave me some unofficial weeks off in Summer Term 1998 so that I could finally complete. Caroline Evans, virtually the only person I know at Central Saint Martins who shares my theoretical and intellectual obsessions, has my deep thanks for not talking to me about matters not concerning administration and for allowing me to try and test new ideas out against the rigour of her first rate intellect. Also, Claire Barratt and Eve Waring whose computer skills helped me produce this document should be thanked, plus Andy Leaper for his computer support and help over the last ten years. The British Library of course deserves praise. Despite moving scholars out of the Round Reading Room to the modern desks at Kings Cross, it remains the best library in town. Last but not least of course, Shirley Pitts should be thanked for trusting me with her story as should my mother, Joyce Gamman, who made sure that all the criminal connections I became reacquainted with (when writing Gone

Shopping) did not mess with me.

Shirley Pitts really did think it was the funniest thing in the world that I should want to be a '*doctor of shoplifting*', especially when she saw '*there was no money in it*' and she absolutely '*knew*' I could have earned a much better living '*shopping*' or '*scamming*' with her. It was these sort of contradictions between my home life and study that produced the humour that kept me going when I lost sight of the point of carrying on. Raphael Samuel was never entirely convinced that the pomp and ceremony of a PhD (compared to other ways of doing research) was really worth it, but I talked him into supervising me with the argument that, with my accent, the title '*Doctor*' could do me no harm. I think he really would have been pleased had he learned that during the same week when I finally completed my own research on the subject, Jeffrey Archer, the Conservative candidate for Lord Mayor of London, was to be considered for investigation by the Ethical Committee of his own party because of accusations regarding insider trading on shares as well as *shoplifting*.¹² Of course, Raphael Samuel would have enjoyed the irony implicit in the fact that a prominent member of the Conservative Party also appeared to be suffering from consuming obsessions and/or other forms of confusion about shopping.

Finally, I should also conclude by saying that whilst I have now finished the PhD, I do not feel that I have completed my research on shoplifting, or visual seduction. Raphael never did think any real historical research was ever finished. I think he was right. I will probably spend the next few years revising and rewriting the material until I am finally satisfied with it, if this is ever possible. So it is with this irreverent spirit that I deliver this PhD, dedicated to the memory of Raphael Samuel (even the bits that differ from the intellectual approach I know he might have taken) as well as to all those much missed ghosts in the machine who remain alive and with me in memory.

ENDNOTES

¹ GENET, J., The Thief's Journal, translated by Frechman, B., Harmondsworth, Penguin Modern Classics, 1967 (Ed), p. 94.

² SAMUEL, R. (Ed), People's History and Socialist Theory, London, Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1981.

³ 'What is a 'subculture'? What distinguishes it from a 'community'? What differentiates these two social formations from the 'masses', 'the public', 'society', 'cultural'? These are obstinate questions to which there is no agreed answer, but rather a debate...'. THORNTON, S., in GELDER, K., and THORNTON, S., The Subcultures Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 1.

⁴ SAMUEL, R. (Ed), People's History and Socialist Theory, London, Routledge Kegan & Paul, London, Boston and Henley, 1981.

⁵ HALL, S., 'Obituary of Raphael Samuel', New Left Review, January/February, 1997, reprinted in Raphael Samuel 1934 - 1996 Tributes and Appreciations, p. 61

⁶ GAMMAN, L. and MAKINEN, M., Female Fetishism: A New Look, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1994.

⁷ SAMUEL, R., Theatres of Memory, London, Verso, 1994.

⁸ GAMMAN, L., Gone Shopping: the Story of Shirley Pitts, Queen of Thieves, London, Signet Penguin, 1996.

⁹ See discussion and definition in Foucault M., The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976 p. 101-102.

¹⁰ SCHWARZ, B., 'Obituary - Raphael Samuel', The Guardian, Jan 1996, reprinted in Raphael Samuel 1934 - 1996: Tributes and Appreciations, p. 7. No publisher is listed but the book was given to those attending the Spring 1997 memorial for Raphael Samuel held in Community Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

¹¹ SUTHERLAND, E., The Professional Thief: By a Professional Thief, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1937.

¹² The account of Jeffrey Archer is found in CRICK, M., Jeffrey Archer, Stranger Than Fiction, London, Penguin 1996, p. 198, as follows: *'The policeman had with him one of George Wool's business cards. It had been produced, he said, by an Englishman who claimed to be in Toronto giving evidence in a major fraud case. The man had said he was a former British Member of Parliament, the officer explained, and that his name was Jeffrey Archer. The ex-MP, now at the police station, had been arrested at a department store on suspicion of stealing three suits to the value of 540 Canadian dollars. Wool confirmed that he did indeed have such a witness, and that he had given evidence in a fraud case. The incident had occurred earlier that morning at Simpson's, then one of Toronto's biggest shops. After having been stopped by two store detectives while waking out of the shop, Archer had been handed over to the local police, Craig Carle, the officer who came to the store to arrest him, recollects the incident very clearly, particularly since it was strange for anybody to be accused of stealing something so conspicuous. 'I remember the three suits; I remember him saying he was a very important witness in a case,' Carle says. 'I remember him being in a hurry to catch a plane'.*

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