The Shoplifter's Clothes: Technologies for a Feminist Practice at the turn of the 20th Century

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my dad, Paolo Bombardini. I also dedicate it to my mum, Ambra Bedetti, for her endless love and support, through the big challenges and the small challenges.

Abstract

This thesis considers whether women's shoplifting from department stores, at the turn of the 20th century, may be understood as a feminist act of citizenship – and examines the role that the clothes that shoplifters wore or might have worn, played or might have played in their thefts. Throughout, I engage with three sets of literatures. The first is Shoplifting Literature, which includes different interpretations, at the time and since, of the phenomenon which came to be known as a 'kleptomania epidemic'. The second is Feminist Citizenship Studies, and the third is what I refer to as the interdisciplinary object turn, which comprises of texts influenced mostly by STS, but published across different academic fields. The methods I use are archival research, and the making and wearing of selected sartorial technologies. First, in anglophone newspaper archives, I collect reports from the turn of the 20th century, that describe in detail the sartorial technologies that the shoplifters who got caught had been wearing to steal. Next, in patent archives, specifically the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset of clothing inventions, I collect patents from the turn of the 20th century, that bear remarkable similarities with the shoplifters' clothes described in newspaper reports. For example, a patented petticoat in which the wearer's skirt can be inserted when it rains, recalls in its description that of a shoplifter's skirt that is double lined to become a pocket. These patents allow me to speculate about the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn, which are missing from newspaper reports. It is in this respect that, finally, the making and wearing of selected inventions provides a more comprehensive understanding of what these or similar technologies could do, beyond what their patents prescribe that they are for. Certainly, partiality is inevitable in making and wearing. But rather than producing objective knowledge, with this thesis I hope to open up the history that archives tell, to the unseen and untold stories, the feminist acts of citizenship that may undermine it.

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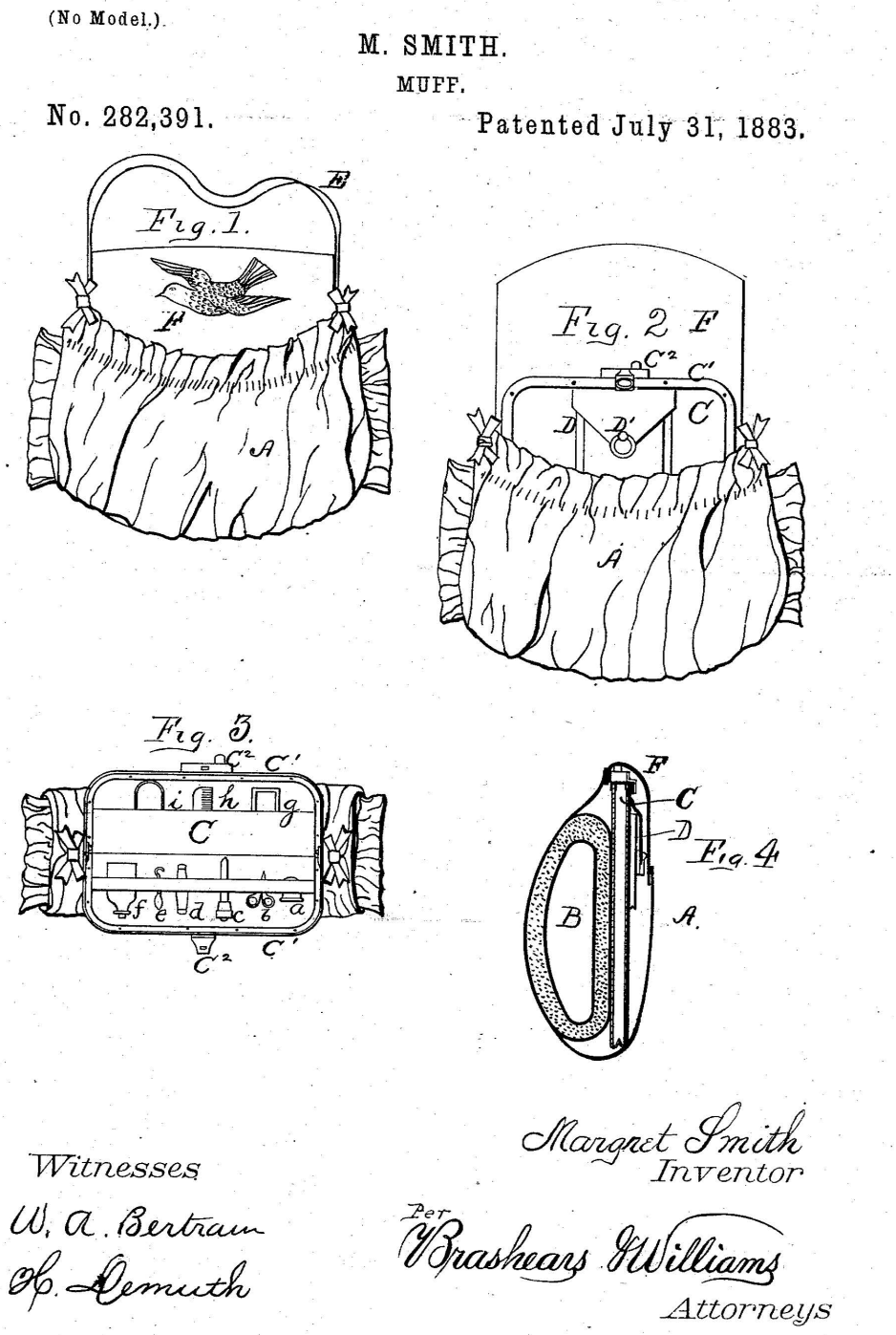
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a tale of two muffs. The year is 1883: one is patented by a woman in the United States, as an invention furnished with a number of compartments allowing the wearer to carry a variety of objects with her when out of the house, while the other is described in a text published by a male author in France, as a signifier of traditional ideals of femininity which can bring the wearer closer to those ideals, by proximity. A comparison between these two perceptions of the same fashion accessory and of its potential, introduces the reader to a fundamental friction in the emerging consumer societies of the late 19th century, which had to do with the role that women were coming to play in the world beyond the domestic realm. A role that their wardrobes would first have to adapt to, and would eventually come to reflect. I go on to discuss how the opening of department stores targeting specifically female consumers, in major cities throughout the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, was often blamed for women's foray into public life, by those who would have preferred them to stay at home. It was in these department stores and shopping districts more broadly, that the middle-class women who could afford to spend were recognised for the first time as consumer citizens. But it was in the same department stores and shopping districts, at the same time, that the phenomenon that came to be known as a "kleptomania epidemic" (*The Evening World* 1900, p.11) was also said to have developed and prospered. I proceed to outline my two research questions, that consider, first, the relation between women's consumer citizenship and their shoplifting in this particular context, and second, the role that the shoplifter's clothes, as sartorial technologies, might have played in her thefts. Inseparable from my research questions are the literatures at the intersection of which they emerge, that I will examine in more detail in the next chapter, but that I already introduce here: the Shoplifting Literature that, mostly in the 1990s, interprets this phenomenon as a form of protest; the Feminist Citizenship Studies that challenge traditional definitions of citizenship, and provide a timeline in which the recognition of middle-class women as consumer citizens in department stores at the turn of the 20th century, for all of its limitations, constitutes a key turning point; and what I refer to as the interdisciplinary Object Turn, which is rooted in, but not limited to, Science and Technology Studies (STS), and which concerns the role that nonhuman objects, such as sartorial technologies, might play in material networks, political actions, and more specifically in acts of citizenship. Next, I introduce the research methods which I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter Three, that I use throughout this thesis: archival research in both newspaper and patent archives, and the making and wearing of performative replicas of selected clothing inventions patented in the late 19th and early 20th century. I clarify how these methods relate to one another, and what they can, and

cannot, help me to find out. Finally, I consider the political motivations of my research, and provide a brief outline of future chapters.

1.1 A True Feminist's Muff


(No Model.)

M. SMITH.

MUFF.

No. 282,391. Patented July 31, 1883.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4

Witnesses

W. A. Bertram

H. Demuth

Margret Smith

Inventor

Per Brashears & Williams

Attorneys

Fig. 1.1: Margret Smith's 'Muff', 1883, US282391A.

On February 23, 1883, Margret Smith of Little Rock, Arkansas, files the application for a patent that will be approved in July of the same year. Her invention concerns 'Ladies' Muffs': essential accessories at a time when fashionable women would not have had pockets to warm their hands in during the colder season (Carlson 2023), muffs were usually made out of fur, feathers, or padded fabric, and intended to be worn outdoors. Dating back to the 1500s, they were still very common in the 1880s, and would remain popular for half a century longer. Smith's improved design "approaches in appearance a shell," and features, adjacent to:

> the muff proper, in which the hands of the wearer are placed … a satchel-shaped pocket containing compartments for various articles [and] a purse-pocket attached to the front of the satchel

The patent's technical drawings (Fig. 1.1) show examples of the items one may wish to carry in these compartments:

> a thimble, *a*, a pair of scissors, *b*, pencil *c*, knife and buttoner *d*, glove hook and nail scraper *e*, perfume-bottle *f*, pocket-mirror *g*, comb *h*, and needle-case and memorandum *i*

These help to support Smith's argument, that the "lady having one of my muffs will be fully equipped for business or pleasure" (Smith 1883). Some of the items on this list clearly belong to the pleasure category – the nail scraper, perfume-bottle, pocket-mirror, comb. And if for business we understand sewing, the quintessential expression of women's work in the 19th century, in the United States (Helvenston and Bubolz 1999) as much as in the United Kingdom (Burman 1999; Breward 1999), it is obvious why items such as the thimble, scissors, or buttoner may be considered business equipment. Admittedly, Smith's design is not altogether a revolutionary invention: sure, it has compartments for them, but muffs had long been used by women without pockets to carry objects (De Monvel 1916). What is different is that Smith, a female inventor in the early 1880s, acknowledges this expediency of muffs, which wearers had been taking advantage of only in practice, already during the design process, and promotes its multiple compartments as a selling point of her invention. As a result, whether intentionally or not, Smith's invention challenges the picture which one imagines the most traditional wearers of muffs might have sought to project. Because whether or not it was actually being used as a receptacle, if only by virtue of the fact that the hands placed inside a muff had to be idle, muffs appear to belong to that category of women's accessories, of which there have been many over the course of history, whose elegance is to be understood in inverse proportion to their practicality.

In fact, at the very same time as Smith's patent was approved in the States, French writer Octave Uzanne was still singing the praise of muffs in more conventional terms. "The Muff (*manchon*)! The very name has something about it delicate, downy, and voluptuous" he writes in the

monograph *The Sunshade, Muff, and Glove*, also published in 1883. As soon as the season is cold enough for its return, Uzanne claims that:

> the Muff … causes … a sensation, intimate and delicious, to all true *feminists*, to the Dilettanti of woman – to all those who perceive in their most delicate shades the graces of which a naive or coquettish woman can avail herself … and pushes forward her coquettish equipage. (2014 [1883])

Uzanne also recognises the muff's usefulness as a substitute for pockets. A key difference from Smith's patent, however, is the reason why Uzanne imagines its wearer might want to carry objects in her muff. "From that little warm satin nest" he writes "a thousand trifles spring up to please us" (2014 [1883]). The 'us' here stands for men, women's expected chaperons in public places, and the ones whose pleasure Uzanne implies that 'all true *feminists*' dress toward. Their 'trifles' are not just harmless but pleasing, their 'equipage' is flirtatious. Whereas the 'fully equipped' women who Smith hopes will wear her invention might well be out on their own, and for their own 'business or pleasure' – as she herself is, on the way to the patent office.

The items that Smith's patent lists as examples give the reader a chance to interpret these terms through the lens of their familiarity: 'business' might stand for home sewing; 'pleasure' might stand for feminine adornment, perhaps of the kind which would also please men. While not trifles, these items are not necessarily any more harmful than the items in the muff which Uzanne praises: "a lace handkerchief, a box of lozenges, a bouquet of Parma violets, or a tender loving *billet-doux*" (2014 [1883]). Still, Smith's patent allows that the items in the pocket's compartments "may be varied to suit the taste or fancy of the individual," and the examples it provides might intentionally play down the range of possibilities, the amount of freedom which the wearer of this muff would gain from it (1883). They might want to reassure the reader, patent officer or potential customer, that although this muff might challenge, with its emphasis on functionality, the image of a muff-wearing lady as idle and delicate, it is not designed, for example, to hold and hide the stones that a suffragette may want to throw at the windows of a post office, or of Winston Churchill's car. Yet neither were Kitty Marion's and Annie Rhoda Walker's muffs designed for the purpose that they lent themselves to (Atkinson 2018, p.173, 289). Just like them, while the wearer of this muff is not described as a woman carrying stones, a patent application, nor money to spend on business or pleasure, it is not as if she could not be carrying those things in the very same muff. In fact, the wearer of the muff which Uzanne praises could also have been carrying those things in it. But of course, the 'naive or coquettish' wearer of Uzanne's muff would not have been – because the true feminist in Uzanne's interpretation dresses to please men, not to threaten their privileges.

Smith's muff may not be revolutionary per se, but it renounces idleness as a desirable look, and openly acknowledges that muffs can warm women's hands while also allowing them to carry

chosen objects with them when outside the house. Its patent, moreover, allows that the reasons why women might want to carry chosen objects with them when outside the house – or more in general, the reasons why women might want to wear particular clothes or particular clothing inventions, might have to do with their own business or pleasure, rather than with the pleasure of men. As such Smith's muff, no less than the fact that she could, and would, patent it at all, is testament to a change that not just the United States, but France and the United Kingdom too, were going through in the late 19th and early 20th century, which concerns women's role in society beyond the domestic realm, and which Uzanne's jab at the feminist movement, seemingly so out of context, also implicitly refers to. Over the course of this thesis, I will consider various factors that contributed to women's increased public presence, which was reflected in their choice of clothes. Women's struggle for equality, of course, was one of these factors, but so were new working opportunities for middle-class women, as well as the approval of laws that allowed married women to profit from their own inventions, and stimulated their patenting activity. But perhaps the factor that contributed to it the most, and that was most often blamed for it by those who did not appreciate women's foray into the public sphere, was the widespread diffusion of department stores: magnets and catalysts of women's business and pleasure, and key contributors to the evolution of womenswear.

1.2 Setting The Scene: The Store

The acts or practices that this thesis considers, albeit not exclusively, for the most part took place, or are at least said to have taken place, in British, American, and occasionally French department stores. To introduce them and the reflections that will follow, it is therefore important to take into account how the proliferation of such "temples of consumption" (Whitlock 2005, p.19), and its perceived consequences, contextualise and frame my research. At the turn of the 20th century, "Britain, France and the United States had the three highest per caput GNPS in the world" writes Rachel Bowlby, and that "together with Germany, they were by far the most developed countries in terms of the scale of industrialization and their reliance on cheap raw materials imported from colonies" (2010, p.11). It was here that, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, commerce had evolved "from the satisfaction of stable needs to the invention of new desires" (ibid., p.1), and that the department store as an architectural model, as much as the objects on sale inside it, both contributed and testified to this evolution. This does not mean, however, that the importance of the department store at this time cannot be overstated. In fact, "for many historians of consumer culture, the department store has gained a kind of totemic status" which Mary Louise Roberts argues is "completely out of proportion to its relative significance in the nineteenth century" (1998, p.841). While they might have been threatened economically by this new model, traditional shops did not disappear, and in the United Kingdom at least, middle-class women's magazines

often advised their readers to visit individual shops, more refined and selective, rather than a department store (Rappaport 2000). But to determine whether department stores revolutionised consumer habits to the extent that scholars in this field may have perceived them to have done, is beyond the scope of this research. Rather, it is this perception in itself, and its origins, that I want to examine here. Because if historians of consumer culture have overstated the importance of the department store in the 19th century, they would have done so following the authors, journalists, and commentators, who already at the time, and in the second half of that century in particular, saw the widespread diffusion of department stores, and eventually of shopping districts throughout the Western world, as the primary cause of a fundamental dislocation: that of the middle-class woman, away from the home and into the world.

In their defence, and in defence of those historians who might have romanticised the first department stores as more revolutionary than they actually were, it should be noted that from the mid-19th century, shopping districts targeting primarily female consumers had multiplied in major cities of both the United Kingdom and the United States (Rappaport 2000; Cohen 2017). In London, especially after the 1870s, foreign tariffs were contributing to the development of the West End as a site of consumption, designed to appeal to local consumers. Here "the consuming public was primarily, if not wholly, a feminine entity … a mobile crowd, a group of traveling suburban and provincial women who were defined by their presence outside of the domestic sphere" (Rappaport 2000, p.18). In New York meanwhile, a series of grand department stores on Sixth avenue had coalesced into the 'Ladies' Mile' ('Ladies' Mile Historic District', n.d.), supposedly safe enough for middle-class white women to go shopping without men. In practice, what made these districts possible were raw materials imported from the colonies, technological innovation, and new models of production. A range of items that had long been manufactured at home, were starting around this time to be produced industrially and sold (Abelson 1989; Bowlby 2010). Of course, women might have been visiting these districts and stores, and purchasing these commodities, to ensure that their families were clothed and fed, in line with their traditional responsibilities – in other words, to satisfy stable needs rather than new desires. Yet "shopping was linked in the public mind with pleasure and personal freedom" (Abelson 1989, p.6) which is significant in itself. In France, Rita Felski observes how in a novel as popular as Emile Zola's *Nana*, first published in 1880, "[c]onsumption is presented as an act of tacit female aggression" (1995, p.77). In this and other literary productions from the same time period, women's shopping is portrayed as a challenge to male authority, which Felski relates to a "Marxist understanding of capitalism as enacting a radical and potentially liberating dissolution of traditional and organic social bonds" (p.88-9).

Whether or not consumer habits, and the motivations beyond consumption, were changing to the extent that they were perceived to be changing, these perceptions attest to the widespread fear that when women gathered in public, among themselves, their priorities might change – that away

from their families, women might feel entitled to aggressively pursue their own “business and pleasure” (M. Smith 1883). This fear was not entirely unfounded: department stores encouraged and catered to their desires, and it was there that middle-class white women were recognised for the first time, and in their own right, as a consuming public (Felski 1995; Rappaport 2000; Parkins 2002), indeed as consumer citizens (Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017). For all of its limitations, this recognition was significant. “As late as the nineteenth century,” in both the United Kingdom and the United States, Ruth Lister writes that:

> a married woman did not exist as an independent individual under the common law doctrine of coverture, which meant that she lived under the ‘cover’ of her husband who, as head of household, enjoyed the status of civil citizenship. (2003, p.69)

In the department store however, her experience of being a citizen comes a little closer to that of her spouse. She becomes, in a sense, more of a citizen than she had been until then. While arguing that historians have overstated the significance of department stores at this time, Roberts herself points out that in France, after mid-century:

> Unable to participate in national politics because of the cultural perception that they were frivolous consumers, women nevertheless gained civic (if not) political legitimacy *qua* consumers giving concrete substance and value to the nation. (1998, p.826)

The newfound legitimacy that female shoppers could earn in return for their purchases was bound to upset patriarchal hierarchies and their defenders, even though of course, consumer citizenship and civil citizenship are far from the same. Notably, consumer citizenship needs to be bought. Sure, women could gather among themselves in the public space of the department store, and look whether or not they bought. Yet participation in the financial exchanges that define consumer citizenship – and consequently ownership of the commodities on which one’s identity as a citizen depends (Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017) – were a privilege of those who could afford them, and even then, a privilege that for married women was still often mediated by their husbands’ allowance. There was, however, a way around these limitations.

From the mid-19th to the early 20th century in France, the United Kingdom and the United States, in the department store where she becomes more of a citizen, woman becomes a shoplifter at the same time. Not that she had never been one before: shoplifters are likely as old as shops themselves. In England, the need for a Shoplifting Act was felt as far back as 1699, when its approval by Parliament made of the petty crime a hanging offense, if the stolen goods were worth more than five shillings. But the international visibility of the late 19th-century shoplifter, her relation to a new consumer culture and to the new spaces where this culture unfolded, distinguish this shoplifter from the ones who came before and since. Not only was the archetypal shoplifter at this

time a middle-class woman, at least in her appearance and most certainly in her desires, she was also chronically unable to resist them. In the late 19th century women were believed to be especially prone to the nervous disorders which could be caused or worsened by the rapid changes and technological innovations of modern life (McKnight 2024). The term *klopemanie*, from the Greek *kléptō* 'to steal' and *maníē* 'madness', first coined in 1816, became widely popular to explain with a nervous disease why ostensibly wealthy women, and always women they were, had taken to steal from stores in such supposedly high numbers, for no discernible reason (Dominguez 2014). Over the course of this thesis, I will not be engaging directly with the psychoanalytic theory on this phenomenon which was gaining traction at the turn of the 20th century – partly because the scale and remit of this project require me to be selective in my choice of literatures, but also because I am wary of the opinions of male doctors that at this point in time, it would have been in a shoplifter's best interest to persuade she was mentally unstable. Indeed, if the prospect of middle-class women shopping for pleasure worried those who saw in the department store a threat to the doctrine of separate spheres, paradoxically, or perhaps not quite, the idea that kleptomaniacs might steal for pleasure, and steal indiscriminately either luxuries or trifles which would be no help in the feeding or clothing of their families, was supportive enough of their argument that a woman's place was at home, that it could even gain the thieves some sympathy. The blame shifted away from the shoplifter and toward the store, with its irresistible open-floor displays. Non-white bodies still attracted attention in department stores (Cohen 2017), as did those visibly too poor to pass for potential customers (Byrnes 1886). But if they looked the part, amateur as well as professional criminals could blend into a crowd of shoppers. If they happened to get caught stealing, they could take advantage of the new leniency that was now afforded to kleptomaniacs, profess to be suffering from a nervous disease, and plead for a more compassionate sentence. "Illness became defense" (Abelson 1989, p.8) and if newspaper reports are to be believed, the kleptomania epidemic spread across national borders as rapidly as consumerism itself.

1.3 First Research Question: Shoplifting and Citizenship

When the first department stores opened in the Western world, the middle-class women whose desires they encouraged and catered to still could not vote. A wife was less of a citizen than her husband was: she rarely earned a wage, and until the approval of Married Women's Property Acts marked the beginning of the end of the common law doctrine of coverture, in the mid-19th century in the United States and in the late 19th century in the United Kingdom, "nothing was actually hers" (Rhodes 2018). In this unequal gendered context, women's shoplifting in those department stores can be posited as an act of assertion – in the shadow of their less impulsive, more self-aware, and arguably more virtuous struggle for equality and the right to vote that the incipient feminist

movement was undertaking at the same time. In the 1990s, feminist scholars (Abelson 1989; Camhi 1993; Gamman 1999) have argued in favour of a revaluation of women's shoplifting in the 19th century: it is in their wake that I would like to situate my research, as a contribution to the feminist literature on this phenomenon. Its interpretation as a form of resistance is the starting point of this thesis, and my first research question asks, more specifically:

Can women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century be understood as a feminist act of citizenship?

Here I refer to the work of scholars who understand citizenship as a practice or process rather than a status, as the struggle itself rather than just the rights that one might be struggling for (Lister 2003; Isin 2008). Engin F. Isin's definition, in particular, is helpful for thinking with women's shoplifting at this time, when he argues that an act of citizenship needs not necessarily to be known as such by the actor who enacts it. He writes that "[a]n act is always oriented towards its objects before calculation, responsibility or intention" (p.34) and that it is the role of interpreters, with hindsight, to recognise it as an act of citizenship. I also refer to feminist studies that have approached critically a traditional definition of citizenship, exposing and challenging the prejudice which is implicit in its formulation (Lister 2003; Puwar 2004; Sheller 2012). The language of universal rights hides a very particular somatic norm. In the work of these and other scholars "[t]he universalist cloak of the abstract, disembodied individual has been cast aside to reveal a definitely male citizen and a white, heterosexual, non-disabled one at that" (Lister 2003, p.68). The metaphor of the cloak here is insightful: as I set out to answer this question, I will engage with texts that consider how the differences between men's and women's dress at the turn of the 20th century testify to their different experience of citizenship (Roberts 1998; Parkins 2002), and that reflect on the important role that clothes could play, at this point in time, in women's citizenship claims (Felski 1995; Crane 1999; Rappaport 2000). An expanded formulation of citizenship should account for the bodies and experiences of groups, including women, that a traditional definition leaves out: in the late 19th and early 20th century, while the recognition of middle-class women as consumer citizens was significant enough to threaten established hierarchies and gender roles, it was still transactional, temporal, and premised on exclusion. But if unlawful acts can be considered acts of citizenship (Parkins 2002; Lister 2003; Isin 2008) could the shoplifter's transgressive practice not be understood as comparatively more inclusive than shopping? Could it not be understood, moreover, to challenge the financial exchange that it sidestepped, as the very premise of the citizenship that only some women were allowed to experience at this time?

Dressing the part was key to the process. In fact, if clothes played an important role in women's citizenship claims at this time, they would have been even more essential to the shoplifter's practice, whether professional or amateur, and whether or not we understand her stealing as an

act of citizenship. If she was a middle-class kleptomaniac, her fashionable clothes would attest to her husband's, and by proxy to her own status. In making it clear that she did not need to steal, they would support her claim that she was suffering of a nervous disease, no less than a doctor's diagnosis. Studies of fashion which were published in the late 19th and early 20th century, famously those of Thorstein Veblen (2009 [1899]) and Georg Simmel (1904), might seem outdated to the contemporary reader, for overemphasising the importance that the communication of the wearer's class position has in their clothing choice. But even authors whose research shows that already at the time, the wearing of specific clothes could communicate, beyond their wealth and status, information about the wearer's personal character, values, or political views, acknowledge that at this time in history "[t]he dominant style was designed to maintain existing social class boundaries, being relatively inaccessible to the lower middle and working class" (Crane 1999, p.261). Relatively, however, does not mean entirely so – and if getting away with theft depended on it, clothes that were designed to maintain class boundaries could be worn tactically to infiltrate them. Onlookers could be fooled. Fashionable clothes could be bought second hand (Cohen 2017), reproduced in cheaper materials following the paper patterns published and distributed in women's magazines (Breward 1999; Burman 1999), or they could be stolen. At least until the well-dressed, middle-class kleptomaniac herself became someone that shop assistants and store detectives had learnt to keep an eye out for, fashionable clothes could be the means for a pretence of wealth and status that a woman might wear whether or not she held either, so as to place herself above suspicion in the public space of a department store. As Caitlin Davies observes in *Queens of the Underworld*, expert shoplifters "assumed the role of the middle-class shopper in order to shoplift … then … used the profits to *become* the middle-class shopper" (2021, p.219).

1.4 Second Research Question: Sartorial Technologies

Underneath what she might have worn as either a disguise or as a signifier of her social class, however, the shoplifter's clothes would have been yet more essential to her practice as sartorial technologies wherein to store, carry, and hide whatever she stole. It is to distinguish between these two aspects, rather than to imply that both could not coexist within the same outfit or even the same garment, that throughout this thesis I will address as sartorial technologies the shoplifter's clothes which might have contributed to her practice more for their functional, rather than for their symbolic attributes. Smith's muff, for example, with "a flap of material, whose function is to cover and conceal the purse … and satchel" (1883) could easily have lent itself to shoplifting – the thimble or buttoner, perfume-bottle or pocket-mirror in its satchel-shaped pocket's compartments might well have been stolen. Another invention, patented in London by Margaret Emily Hills in 1910 (Fig. 1.2), concerns a new way to hide the flap of material which covers a muff's pocket:

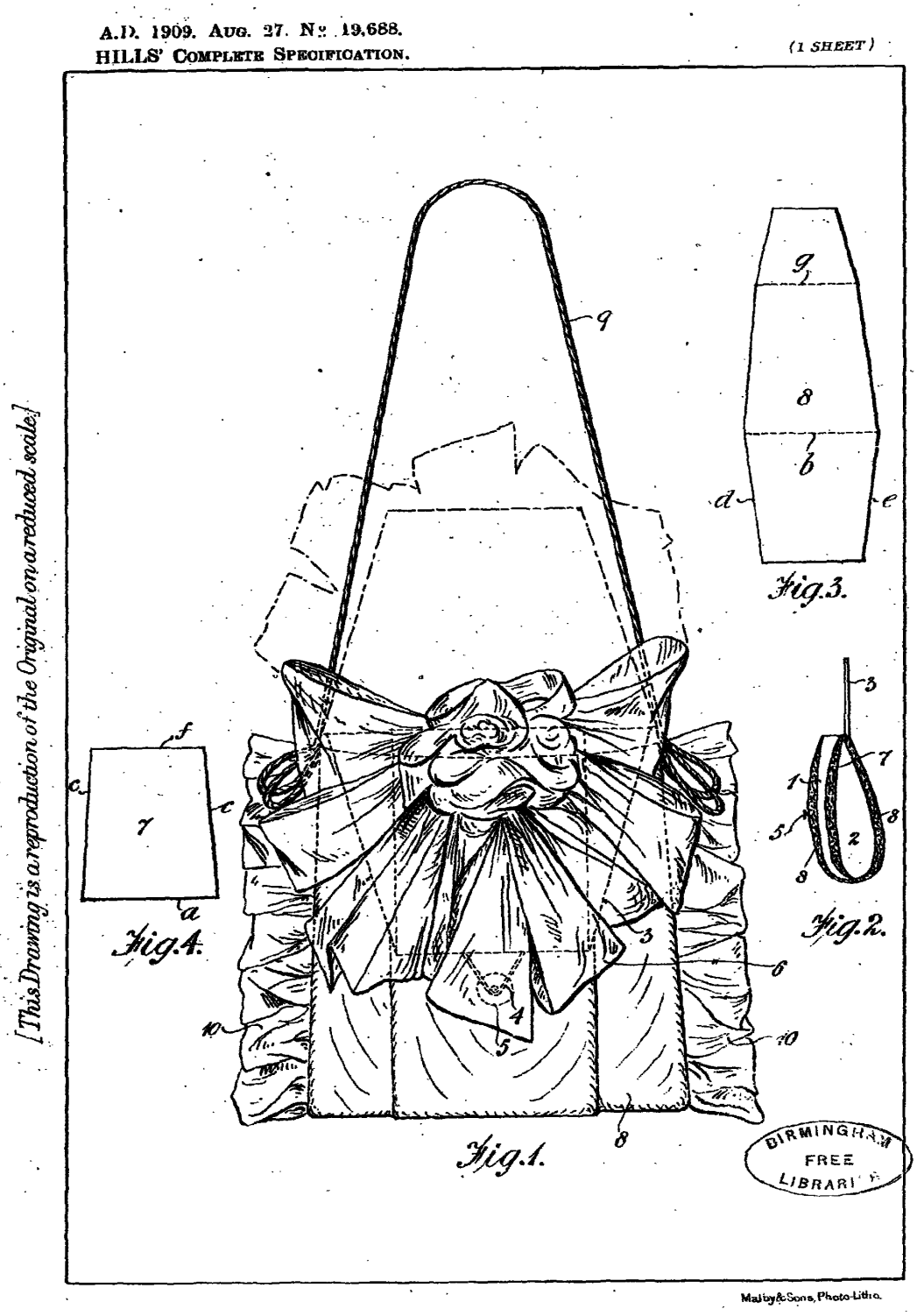


Fig. 1.2: Margaret Emily Hill's 'Improvement in Muffs', 1910, GB190919688A.

The essential feature of the present invention is that the flap covering the pocket is masked or hidden by an ornamental device, such as a large bow … which is tastefully arranged so as to have the appearance of a natural ornamentation and not a palpable mask for concealing the existence of the pocket (Hills 1910)

Pockets might still have been a rare sight in womenswear in 1910 – but that a muff's pocket should have been found so distasteful to the eye, and by enough women that a new way to hide the flap of material that already covered it should have been deemed deserving of a patent, is suspicious at least when considered in the context of the kleptomania epidemic. Especially because until it became old-fashioned in the mid-1940s, according to Brian McDonald the muff "was the most common shoplifting tool used by both amateurs and professionals" (2015, p.120). It features frequently in newspaper accounts of shoplifting technologies at this time, from both the United Kingdom and the United States (*Weekly Irish Times* 1908; Harris 1912; *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph* 1918), and McDonald goes on to report that in the early 1920s, a shoplifter named Frances Edgar was caught in the Bon Marché department store in London, having stolen a pair of gloves precisely by way of a muff with inside pockets. While the wearing of sartorial technologies more unambiguously designed for stealing would have betrayed a degree of premeditation on her part, at odds with the irresistible temptations that kleptomaniacs were expected to fall prey to, the wearing of a muff with inside pockets, which might or might not have been covered with a flap of material masked by a large bow, was in itself not so damning to hinder Edgar's chances of talking herself out of an arrest. "Sometimes the pleas of innocence worked" writes McDonald:

> the tearful Edgar pleaded 'I don't know what made me do it' and offered to pay for the items. She got off with a fine and settlement of the cost of the gloves and other items found inside her clothing (2015, p. 165).

In truth, whilst Edgar's pleas might have been in bad faith, premeditation on the wearer's part would not have been necessary for a pocketed muff, or any other item of clothing equipped with concealed repositories, to lend itself to shoplifting. At times, the affordances (Gibson 1979; Michael 2016; Sampson 2020) associated with particular clothes might have encouraged the woman who wore them to take advantage of an opportunity. In STS (Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015) and other fields (De Certeau 1988; Ahmed 2019), the work of scholars who have researched the ways that objects may stray away from the uses they were originally intended for, will help me answer my second research question, which, aiming for a more comprehensive appreciation of the shoplifter's clothes beyond their function as a signifier or a disguise, is formulated as follows:

<u>What role might sartorial technologies have played in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century?</u>

In asking about the role that they might have played; I want to recognise the sartorial technologies that shoplifters might have worn as actors in a hypothetical crime scene. Here I draw from theories about the agency of nonhuman objects which were first developed in the subset of STS that John Law, after Donna Haraway, calls 'material semiotics' (Law 2012; 2019): comprising of those

approaches within this field that refute the privileged position of human actors in a relational network (Latour 2005; Haraway 1991; Barad 2007). These theories were later embraced and expanded upon in the work of scholars associated with what I refer to as an interdisciplinary Object Turn, such as political theorist Jane Bennett, whose 'vital materialism' is especially relevant to this enquiry when she considers the role that nonhuman objects can play in political actions (2010). Across STS and Citizenship Studies, Noortje Marres' understanding of 'material participation' (2015), which Kat Jungnickel already applies to her analysis of the bicycle suits that women patented and wore in the late 19th century (2021; 2022), will be equally helpful, drawing back to my first research question, to understand the role that in those same years, unlawful sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting as a feminist act of citizenship. Of course, when an hypothetical crime scene is understood as a relational network, the cast of human and nonhuman actors that might have played a role includes many beyond the shoplifter herself and the sartorial technologies she might have worn – from the clothes she might have worn, on top of them, as a disguise or as a signifier of her social class, to the stolen object, the department store's open-floor displays, as well as any detectives or sales assistants who might have been present. It is the scale and remit of this project that requires me to be selective, and the gap I have identified in existing literature that leads me to research the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies in particular.

1.5 The Shoplifter in the Archive

I wrote earlier of the archetypal shoplifter in the late 19th century. In my search for accounts of shoplifters caught in the act, for what they wore, and for whether what they wore played a part in their thefts, I rely on anglophone newspaper archives: principally the British Newspaper Archive for the United Kingdom, and Chronicling America for the United States. In both of these countries, French news was reported at length. Occasionally, I have also consulted the Trove newspaper archive for Australia as a British colony. In the accounts I encounter in these archives, for the most part, not much detail is given on the identity of the shoplifters who got caught, whose names – "Tricky Thornby" for example (*The Weekly Dispatch* 1899, p.9) – may well be aliases, if not entirely made up. For notorious criminals (*The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1899) or high-society women (*The Weekly Freeman* 1887; *The Umpire* 1909), full names and sometimes addresses are provided in articles that are frequently accompanied by illustrations or photographs. But otherwise, shoplifters are usually at best characterised as "well dressed" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; Rose 1912, p.2; *New-York Tribune* 1920, p.4) (Fig. 1.3). This scarcity of detail is telling in itself. While male shoplifters are mentioned at times, it is fair to assume that they would have stood out in a department store that catered first and foremost to women's desires, even more than the "poorly dressed" (*Freeland Tribune* 1891, p.3) or 'foreign', usually either "French" (*Eagle River*

Review 1892, p.7), “German” (*Birmingham Daily Post* 1917, p.5) or “Italian women” (Weippiert 1891, p.3), who feature only rarely in these accounts. The fact that these characteristics are only occasionally specified suggests that when they are not, these newspapers expect that their readers will picture the well-dressed shoplifter in question according to the archetype: to have been born in the country in and from which she is stealing, to be most likely white, and “of the classes not ashamed to call themselves genteel” (*Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser* 1884, p.2).

One must be cautious to draw such conclusions too quickly, however, on the basis of the clothes that shoplifters are said to have worn. Indeed, a reporter might trust that their readership will know how to read between the lines, and that the woman they describe as well-dressed was middle-class at least – this specification might have been enough for the reporter themselves, who is unlikely to have been present at the moment of the theft, to believe her to be, from the testimony of store detectives or shop assistants. That these women often refused to give their names in order to protect their reputation might have been considered additional evidence of the fact that there was a reputation to protect in the first place (Fig. 1.4). But professional shoplifters might have been equally reluctant to give their names if they had previous convictions. The same authors and commentators who might have overstated the impact of department stores on consumer habits, might also have oversimplified and coalesced the distinctive traits of individual shoplifters into an archetype which can also be considered a caricature – not unlike that of the suffragette who was often represented as “mannish” in the media (Felski 1995, p.168), presumably because she threatened established male privileges with her demands. As noted above, fashionable or well-made clothes were no longer the incontrovertible signifiers of class that they were often still perceived to be, and a shoplifter did not need to belong to that class to be able to dress the part of a potential customer in a middle-class department store.

Rarely, articles that reflect on the kleptomania epidemic as a whole rather than on an individual theft, acknowledge that individual shoplifters at the turn of the 20th century might actually have little in common beyond their gender, and may not even always be as well-dressed as readers might have been led to believe: “[g]reatly dissimilar as they are in dress, in age, in skill, in intelligence, in social grace, in wealth and in almost every way, their motives are as like as peas” (*New-York Tribune* 1909). Indeed, not enough detail about these shoplifters’ background is usually provided for a researcher to presume to be able to parse their “motives, purposes, or reasons” (Isin 2008, p.38) for stealing. But neither should she presume to be able to parse the reason for stealing that the wealthy, high-society woman whose fall from grace is documented in more detail might have had. If the shoplifter herself is quoted, or rather, if a quote is included that the reporter ascribes to the shoplifter in question, this is usually a declaration of innocence or a plea for mercy – but it would be preposterous to assume that every shoplifter who, like professional criminal

Frances Edgar, is said to have claimed when caught that “she did not know what made her do it” (*Fulham Chronicle* 1909, p.1) was being entirely sincere. It is in this respect that Isin’s acknowledgement of the role that interpretation and hindsight play in understanding an act as an act of citizenship is key to this study. As I consider, throughout this thesis, whether it is possible to understand women’s shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century as a feminist act of citizenship, I will never assume that this is how these shoplifters rationalised their thefts to themselves. Whether they did or did not, is no more the focus of this research than trying to identify who a shoplifter was, beyond her gender and on the basis of the few details on her background that a newspaper account of her theft provides. Rather, it is the theft itself, as a network comprising of both human and nonhuman actors, and arguably as an act of citizenship, that I am interested in.

What is relevant in this respect, is that contrary to those few details, exhaustive descriptions are usually provided instead of the techniques and devices of which shoplifters are said to have availed themselves. Not much else may be said about her, but the often, if not always well-dressed shoplifter in these newspaper accounts is also often the “inventor” (Weippiert 1891, p.3), and always the wearer of elaborate sartorial technologies – at times so elaborate, that the reader cannot help but question how truthful these accounts can be (*Dundee Evening Post* 1903). The turn of the 20th century was a time of rapid technological innovation – this had allowed, as noted above, for the industrial production of items that had previously been produced at home, and the development of shopping districts. But it would also have been encouraged in turn by the consumer culture that department stores expressed and cultivated, and the promise of profit should one’s invention be commercially successful. New laws and lower fees had made patenting more accessible to broader sections of the population, including women like Smith and Hill (Khan 2000; Jungnickel 2018a). “These fair creatures, once held to be dreamy and unpractical, are now beginning to contrive and invent, buy and sell, in such manner as to hold their own in the market” wrote *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1893 (H. 1893, p. 902). In this context, newspapers’ fascination with shoplifting technologies makes sense. “It seems a pity” laments the *Wicklow News-Letter and County Advertiser*, in an article on ‘Modern Shoplifting’, “that persons such as these do not turn their ingenuity to better account” (1911, p.6). Although the techniques and devices described in these newspapers are certainly impressive, the accounts of women’s shoplifting that can be found in newspaper archives are however necessarily, for the most part, accounts of failed shoplifting attempts. In this thesis, I will refer to my growing collection of shoplifting reports from newspaper archives as an archive of failures. Data on successful shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century is difficult to come by (Abelson 1989), and while I will reference in later chapters at least one account written by a police informant (Rose 1912), criminal autobiographies (Lyons 2019 [1913]) are both few and even less reliable than newspaper reports. Still, with archival accounts of failed shoplifting attempts as a methodological starting point, I will go on to speculate about how, with better luck or better clothes, those thefts and others could have unfolded otherwise.

Fig. 1.3: Well-dressed shoplifters in *The Sun*, 1906, p.9 (top), *New-York Tribune*, 1920, p. 4 (right), *The Washington Times*, 1919, p. 33 (left).

Fig. 1.4: Tora Teje plays a kleptomaniac who, caught stealing a ring and asked to reveal her name, pleads for forgiveness in Benjamin Christensen's silent film *Häxan* 1922.

1.6 The Invention in the Archive

Failure precedes invention (Carroll, Jeevendrampillai, and Parkhurst 2017; Ahmed 2019). When the same shoplifting technology recurs in newspaper accounts, later accounts often describe a more precise, more complex version of that invention than earlier accounts do. While both versions may ultimately have failed – this is how they ended up in newspapers in the first place – newspaper archives may at times provide the researcher with enough fragments to piece together a possible timeline for the evolution of a particular shoplifting technology. These reports themselves, which were often reprinted by multiple newspapers, might have contributed to the diffusion and development of that invention. But a timeline populated exclusively of failures is inevitably only one side of the coin. To try and imagine the sartorial technologies that a successful shoplifter might have worn, and the role these might have played in her theft when her theft is understood as a relational network of human and nonhuman actors, visual and textual archive materials should be sourced, beyond those that newspapers can provide.

I have encountered Margret Smith's and Margaret Emily Hill's patents, as well as many others, in the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset. POP is a five-year research project, funded by an ERC Consolidator Grant to investigate the connections and tensions between citizenship and clothing, by way of an extensive collection of patents for wearable inventions from around the world, issued over the last 200 years. Whilst not immune from trends, the POP dataset offers a parallel history for the evolution of clothes to that which fashion studies commonly provide. An evolution marked not, or not only, by what the clothes look like, but by what they can do, by what their wearers can do with them on. Both of these histories are ultimately partial – particular styles may be worn for a long time after fashion magazines pronounce them obsolete (Fennetaux 2019), and only a percentage of the inventions that are granted a patent ever get commercialised (Jungnickel 2019). Yet to speculate about the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn, the POP dataset is a most valuable resource, that I will return to throughout the course of this thesis.

Of course, if successful shoplifters' clothes are missing from newspaper reports, they will not be found, as such, in the POP dataset. But the analysis of selected patents from the late 19th and early 20th century, pertaining to women's clothing and often patented by female inventors, may offer clues as to how a particular shoplifting technology might have emerged from the material culture of its time, how it might have adopted components of other wearable inventions, how it might have adapted to changing fashions and silhouettes, or developed beyond the point when it no longer features in newspaper archives. I will be searching in the dataset for patents for inventions that in their descriptions or illustrations, resemble the sartorial technologies, or more precise and complex versions of the sartorial technologies that according to newspaper reports, the shoplifters who got caught were wearing. As a whole, the inventions in the POP dataset seek

to fulfil a variety of purposes, or solve a wide range of problems. But each patent tends to be quite prescriptive with respect to the users who will use the invention it describes, and the uses it will be used for. Still, as I have noted for the terms 'business' and 'pleasure' in Smith's patent, patents' descriptions also lend themselves to multiple readings, and occasionally, they voluntarily allow for some flexibility. In Smith's patent, for instance, it is not just the items in the pocket's compartments that may change according to the wearer's taste or fancy, but the "flap of material, whose function is to cover and conceal the purse … and satchel … may be made, as fancy may dictate, of the same material as the body of the muff or of any contrasting material" (1883). In practice, this decision could have resulted in two very different inventions, one of which would have lent itself to shoplifting, much more readily than the other. Other patents similarly concede that some "parts of the device may be made as ornamental as desired to suit the taste and fancy of the manufacturer and user" (Roberts 1905), or conclude a detailed description of their invention by clarifying that:

> While I have illustrated and described practical embodiments of my invention, it will be obvious that it is not strictly limited to them and that many modifications may be made in the latter without departing from the spirit of the invention. (Scott 1905)

But even when an invention's flexibility (Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015) is not acknowledged in advance, if these inventions ever were commercialised, their possible users and uses would have exceeded those that their inventors could have foreseen. As much as the archetypal shoplifter in newspaper reports might not reflect who the women stealing from department stores at the turn of the 20th century actually were, so the actual users of a successful invention at this time might not have been the ones that its inventor had imagined, or they might not have used that invention how its patent prescribed that it should be used. Some of the wearers of some of the sartorial technologies in the POP dataset might have misused or misworn them. Could the same or similar inventions not have inspired, enhanced, or contributed components to successful shoplifting technologies? If they were ever misworn by shoplifters, could the same or similar inventions, by virtue of their material or technical affordances, not have lent themselves to the purpose of stealing, as well as arguably, and arguably "before calculation, responsibility or intention" (Isin 2008, p.34) on the part of the women who stole, could they not have lent themselves to perform a feminist act of citizenship?

1.7 The Invention out of the Archive

Archival documents are discontinuities (Tamboukou 2014). Moments in time, never the whole story. This might be especially true for documents that concern shoplifting technologies, whose being in the archive at all only attests to the day of their failure. But my endeavour with this

research is not to find out how and by which means successful shoplifting acts were actually carried out in the late 19th and early 20th century, as much as it is to suggest how and by which means they might have been. “The extra-textual nature of archives is considered” Nydia A. Swaby and Chandra Frank observe, “… by tuning into the speculative qualities of archives” (2020, p.5), and the approach to archive materials which I strive for, throughout this thesis, is one that “gives primacy to creative ways of imagining the past” (p.8). This does not just apply to the gaps I try to fill between archives, or between archive materials within each of the archives that I explore. It also applies to the reading of individual archival documents. A patent, for example, introduces a new invention by way of technical drawings and text that specify how it should be made, who should use it, and what it should be used for. But between the lines of these instructions, the researcher can make out opportunities for diversions that might alter the invention itself or challenge its prescriptions.

Still, to speculate from an archival document about the alternative uses that the invention it describes might have lent itself toward, is a creative leap that calls for a stepping stone. As well as by tuning into its speculative qualities, Swaby and Frank encourage the researcher to consider the extra-textual in the archive by way of multisensory approaches and “embodied ways of knowing” (2020, p.9). Embodied ways of knowing allow us to rethink the archive as interactive (Pester 2017), or rather to recognise and embody the researcher’s inevitable intra-action with the archive (Tamboukou 2014). It is to this end that building on speculative sewing (Jungnickel 2022) as the method at the core of the POP research project, I will rely on the making and wearing of performative replicas of sartorial technologies from historical patents. Making and wearing affords to my propositions a ground to stand on. Moreover, as Jungnickel explains it, making as a research practice, and specifically the making of clothing inventions from historical patents, can bring the researcher not just closer to their research subject, as many traditional and new methods in social science have aspired to do, but when the clothes that are made are worn, inside it (2018a; 2022). Opportunities for diversion that could not have been made out from a patent’s text and drawings might make themselves known when the invention is let out of the archive.

Llewellyn Negrin writes that the clothes we wear “become a prosthetic extension of the body, mediating our practical interaction with the world” (2016, p.122). At the turn of the 20th century the experience of wearing particular clothing inventions might have led a woman to imagine alternative uses for them, as much as the wearing of performative replicas of those inventions might lead me to reimagine today, once again, which uses she might have come up with. Shoplifting might have been one of these uses. In the late 19th and early 20th century, shoplifters might have worn sartorial technologies that could, for example, extend their reach, or vanish various amounts of stolen items within their folds, or allow them to leave the premises of a department store more or less quickly, or more or less inconspicuously, by distributing the weight of their loot. Making and wearing

performative replicas of the technologies which I propose that shoplifters might have worn, is key to understand the role that these inventions might have played in the relational network of a particular crime scene, and to reimagine the untold story (Le Guin 1996) of a successful shoplifter at this time. Of course, the inventors of these sartorial technologies might not have anticipated this particular use, but even while following their instructions, I will make and wear performative replicas of these inventions inevitably with shoplifting in mind. I call these replicas performative because research methods always are (Coleman, Page, and Palmer 2019), and I want to acknowledge the influence that my interests and perspective are bound to have on my findings. Embodied knowledge does not aim to be objective, and the making and wearing of performative replicas of sartorial technologies from historical patents is not a way to find out the truth (Sampson 2020; Jungnickel 2022), but rather to open up possibilities. Yet my replicas are performative also in the sense that, as nonhuman actors in the relational network which we both participate in, they are not simply manifestations of my interpretations and expectations – but might also come to challenge or exceed them.

1.8 Research Aims and Chapters' Outline

Shoplifting is still widely distrusted as a practice of resistance, let alone citizenship, even when it is not condemned outright. The fact that shoplifting aims not to be seen is often perceived as cowardly. The personal greed that seems to motivate it, its materialistic concerns, and I would argue its feminine associations, are deemed at odds with the righteousness and sacrifice, the higher collective principles we associate with good citizens and political activists. "To loot is not to shoplift" writes Evan Calder Williams, for example, in an otherwise convincing 'Open Letter to Those Who Condemn Looting' "… [l]ooting is not consumerism by other means" (2011). Yet referring to the work of those scholars who, in the 1990s, already have argued for a less simplistic understanding of these particular thefts, in this thesis I too want to put forth a revaluation of women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. Here I do not wish to imply that the desire to steal from department stores was ever not the product of a capitalism so insidious, that desire can hardly be thought of outside of its bounds – but I do hope to demonstrate at least that it is reductive, and fatalistic, not to take into account how a product of capitalism might turn against it.

In this I am inspired by authors who have considered other commonly maligned subjects, in academia and the political left alike, from more nuanced perspectives. Throughout my research I share Bennett's ambition, in *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, "to deny capitalism quite the degree of efficacy and totalizing power that its critics (and defenders) sometimes attribute to it and to exploit the positive ethical potential secreted within some of its elements" (2001, p.115). Here Bennett is writing specifically about commodities. Already crafting the kind of arguments that she

would develop more fully in *Vibrant Matter*, she seeks to differentiate from commodity fetishism what she calls enchantment, or "the momentary impression that the natural and cultural worlds *offer gifts*" (2001, p.156). Bennett's ambition, which is mine too, also resonates with what Fredric Jameson calls utopian thinking, or the utopian method: "a strategy of changing the valences and of converting the gloomy indices of the pessimistic diagnosis into vital promises of some newly emergent historical reality to be welcomed rather than lamented" (2009, p.428). In his essay on 'Utopia as Replication', the phenomenon whose valences he wants to change is Wal-Mart – perhaps a direct descendant, possibly a degeneration, of the department stores that I write about, where the thefts that I will discuss over the course of this thesis are most often said to have taken place.

Of course, these authors discuss commodities and hypermarkets at the time of their writing. Jameson, moreover, is thinking in the present about the future. But such a strategy can also be directed toward the past, and I would argue that it is equally important to do so, because questioning the history that archives tell always is. I want to consider, as these scholars do, the possibility that a challenge to the principles of patriarchal capitalism might develop within consumer culture itself – and so as to change the valences specifically of women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, the possibility that inside those "temples of consumption" (Whitlock 2005, p.19) which were the first department stores, invisible acts of transgression, perhaps feminist acts of citizenship, might have taken place that could not have taken place elsewhere. A revaluation of this kind calls for a reassessment of these historical crime scenes in their various components, both human and nonhuman. But rather than the stores they might have been stolen from, or the things for sale themselves, what I want to focus on in this thesis are the means by which they are stolen, the means by which things for sale could stray from their preordained paths (Appadurai 2013), and cross the threshold of a store without having been paid for, to undermine the logic of the capitalist exchange: what I want to focus on, are the shoplifter's clothes. And more specifically, in asking about the role that clothes played as technologies rather than as symbols, in women's shoplifting at this time, I want to acknowledge the contribution, whether fortuitous or premeditated, that womenswear might have made to what might have been a feminist citizenship practice – despite, or perhaps in spite, of "what we sense to be generally true: that men's clothes are made for utility and women's for beauty" (Carlson 2023, p.173-4).

The revaluation of women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century that I want to put forth aims to understand these thefts, with hindsight, and without implying that the shoplifters who carried them out rationalised them to themselves as such, as indices of the teeming discontent below and behind the hardly fought for and righteous victories of the feminist movement in its early stages – and to demonstrate in the process that resistance is indeed to be found everywhere, whether or not we see it straight away, whether or not it knows itself as such. My research aims

to be a contribution to the cultivation of a utopian feminist thinking willing to give credit to, be encouraged by, and rejoice in the various forms that women's struggle has taken through the centuries, and the various actors, both human and nonhuman, that contributed to it.

In the next chapter, I will examine in more detail the three key literatures that I will engage with over the course of this thesis: Shoplifting Literature, Feminist Citizenship Studies, and the Object Turn. I will explain how the two research questions that I have outlined in this chapter arise in the gaps between these literatures, and what each literature can still contribute to the answering of either or both of them.

In Chapter Three, I will expand on the methods that I will rely on to conduct this research, which I have already briefly introduced in this chapter: archival research in both newspaper and patent archives, and the making and wearing of performative replicas of selected clothing inventions patented at the turn of the 20th century. I will consider the process that led me to these methods, take their limitations into account, and reflect on the nature of my research data.

Chapter Four, Five, and Six will be in-depth analyses, through the lens of the theories and ideas reviewed in Chapter Two, of three chosen items in the shoplifter's wardrobe: the shoplifter's skirt, the shoplifter's sleeve, and the shoplifter's garter. I will consider the various versions of each of these items that existed in the late 19th and early 20th century according to newspaper reports, and on the basis of those reports, try to trace a timeline of their evolution. I will examine these various versions alongside both popular fashion trends, and clothing inventions patented at around the same time. To try and imagine the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn, and the contribution they might have made to their practice, I will make and wear performative replicas of the clothing inventions which in their patents' descriptions and technical drawings, most resemble particular versions of the shoplifters' skirts, sleeves and garters described in newspaper reports.

In Chapter Seven, I will return to the two questions I have introduced in this chapter, and try to answer them on the basis of what I will have learnt throughout this thesis. I will consider other routes that my research could have taken, and the nature of my contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I examine the three key literatures that I will refer to throughout my thesis: Shoplifting Literature, Feminist Citizenship Studies, and texts which concern what I describe as an interdisciplinary Object Turn. I do not explore these literatures in their entirety, but on the lookout for data, perspectives, approaches and ideas relevant to frame and address my two research questions, which arise at their intersection, as well as my position with regards to the issues they raise.

In the first section on Shoplifting Literature, I review texts that consider specifically women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, in the United States, United Kingdom and France. A first set of texts are primary sources, published at the time, while a second set of texts are critical reinterpretations of the first, as well as of other archival sources, published by feminist scholars a century later. This second set of texts propose a revaluation of women's shoplifting at this time in history, which is interpreted as a form of protest. This becomes the starting point of my inquiry into whether it could be understood, more specifically, as a feminist act of citizenship. Throughout both sets of texts, references to the shoplifter's clothes are made which I draw attention to, and which introduce the terms of my second research question, about the role that sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting at this time.

In the second section on Feminist Citizenship Studies, I review texts that challenge and expand a traditional definition of citizenship, in particular to account for embodied, unintentional, and unlawful practices. I also review texts that reflect on the way that women's citizenship was changing at the historical juncture that both my research questions refer to, in particular with respect to the relation between middle-class women's shopping and the emerging consumer societies. Throughout these texts, references are made to the way that women's claims to, and practices of, citizenship, have found expression in their choice of clothes. The concept of material participation, which considers the role that technologies can play in acts of citizenship, provides another lens from which to interpret the contribution that clothes have always made to women's citizenship practices, beyond their symbolic attributes, and ties my first and second research questions together.

In the third section on the Object Turn, I review texts primarily, but not exclusively, from Science and Technology Studies (STS), that recognise the role that objects can play, first in relational networks, and next specifically in political actions. I also review texts that account for how the

Object Turn has influenced the theorising of misuse, in STS and beyond. These Misuse Theories are especially relevant to think with the sartorial technologies that shoplifters might have adopted and worn, which might not originally have been invented with shoplifting in mind.

2.1 Shoplifting Literature

In this chapter's first section on Shoplifting Literature, I consider two sets of texts that contextualise the kleptomania epidemic, and demonstrate how ideas about this phenomenon in particular, as well as about women's shoplifting in general, have evolved. The review of these often-opposing perspectives sets the scene for my first research question, which considers whether these ideas could evolve further, and whether women's shoplifting at this time could be understood as a feminist act of citizenship. First I review archival sources, such as the serialised reports written in the second half of the 19th and in the early 20th century by male journalists (Mayhew 2009 [1861-62]), police officers (Byrnes 1886), and psychiatrists (Castoldi 1994 [de Clérambault 1908-10]) in New York (Byrnes 1886; McCabe 2006 [1872]), London (Felstead 1923; Mayhew 2009 [1861]) and Paris (Castoldi 1994 [de Clérambault 1908-10]). Then I review the radical reinterpretations of their findings, and of women's shoplifting more broadly, published by feminist scholars mostly in the 1990s (Abelson 1989; Camhi 1993; Pinch 1998; Gamman 2012 [1996]; 1999), as well as selected 21st-century texts that focus on the all-female criminal gang known as the Forty Thieves (Meier 2011; McDonald 2015; Davies 2021). I situate my research alongside and in the aftermath of these reinterpretations, but in the process, I also draw attention to some descriptions of the shoplifter's clothes that they might have overviewed in their source materials, or taken into account primarily for their symbolic properties, rather than as sartorial technologies. This introduces the terms of my second research question, on the role that sartorial technologies specifically might have played, in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century.

2.1a Historical Perspectives

The first set of texts often reflect, and expand upon the popular opinions that are frequently found in newspapers' articles from around the same time – about specific shoplifting attempts, or about women's shoplifting in general – such as those that as I will discuss in the next chapter, I have gathered in anglophone newspaper archives. These texts offer by way of example, often unsubstantiated scripts for how shoplifting acts might occur, or are said to have occurred, and try to paint the picture of a female shoplifter in her quintessential, most recognisable characteristics. For instance, Henry Mayhew writes briefly about London's female shoplifters in the fourth volume of his book series on *London Labour and the London Poor*, that was published in the early 1860s as a collection of Mayhew's reports for the *Morning Chronicle*, originally printed between 1849 and 1850. He claims that shoplifters may be as young as 14 or as old as 60, that they often operate in

groups of two or three, and at times when the shops are busy. While Mayhew's investigation is unlikely to have helped those who, at the time, sought to prevent shoplifting by identifying in advance the women who were most likely to steal, it is helpful to my research now, for the attention it pays to the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies. Although they aren't always, Mayhew claims that shoplifters are frequently dressed respectably, and that sometimes they are indeed ladies of high social standing, leading otherwise reputable lives. But if one were to inspect it more closely, he notes that their respectable dress can reveal elaborate shoplifting technologies:

> We frequently find the skirt of their dress lined from the pocket downward, forming a large repository all around the dress, with an opening in front, where they can insert a small article, which is not observed in the ample crinoline. (Mayhew 2009 [1861], p.311)

In the United States in the 1870s, James D. McCabe also argues that "[w]omen of respectable position, led on by their mad passion for dress" are as likely to steal from New York's shops as are professional female thieves (2006 [1872], p.377), of which he reports that according to detectives' estimates there are 350 operating in town. Compared to them however, women of respectable position are considerably less likely to be prosecuted, even when caught red-handed, given their contacts and influence (McCabe 2006 [1872]). In the 1880s, police inspector and chief of New York's detectives Thomas F. Byrnes again would claim that the city's shoplifters are for the most part female, and that they are either professionals or well-off ladies too weak to resist temptations. He observes that the poor don't often shoplift, as their appearance drives immediate attention to them. Byrnes' account reinstates the importance of respectable dress to the practice of shoplifting in the late 19th century – but like Mayhew, he makes notes of the sartorial technologies that might hide underneath it. "The ordinary female dress may be skilfully constructed so as to be an expansive receptacle for loot of all kinds," he writes, so that false pockets may be missed even during a body search. Notably, Byrnes describes the female shoplifter as "a migratory storehouse" (1886, p.30-1).

Both Byrnes and McCabe hold the open-floor displays in department stores, that place many items within easy reach of all potential customers, as responsible for making it easy for shoplifters to steal. This perspective would also be shared by Sidney Theodore Felstead, writing in the United Kingdom in 1923. In *The Underworld of London*, Felstead argues once again that most of the city's shoplifters are ladies who steal without premeditation – and like those in New York 50 years prior, that they are seldom prosecuted, as court cases are bound to negatively affect a department store's reputation. But this is, in Felstead's opinion, a good thing. He writes disapprovingly of the harsher laws that up until the 1850s sentenced shoplifters to be hanged or sent to the colonies, and claims that to let them go with a warning is usually effective enough, and preferable even to sending women to prison. Most ordinary women have "neither the courage nor the mentality,"

Felstead argues, to set off knowingly against the law (1923, p.224). At the same time however, he admits that almost a quarter of shoplifters in the department stores of London's West End are professionals at the time of his writing. They wear and carry voluminous muffs and capes, cloaks, large reticules and hemp bags under long coats that serve as receptacles for stolen goods. Professional shoplifters are compared to wolves, that mix in with the ordinary shoppers who hunt for a bargain on days of sales. Days of sales, as much as the open-floor displays, are for Felstead examples of how the system of modern shopping encourages shoplifting (1923).

When the blame shifts towards the system, it shifts away from the thief. Even as they recognise the abuse of kleptomania as an excuse (Byrnes 1886; Felstead 1923), male authors in the late 19th and early 20th century are not particularly interested in debunking the supposed mental illness of the shoplifters whose cases they cite by way of example. On the contrary, Felstead goes so far as to write that all "crime is more or less of a disease" (1923, p.238). What they seem more interested in, is the understanding of kleptomania as a whole, as a side-effect of the culture of consumption that department stores promote. Their accounts allow that women are the primary target of department stores, but also imply that this is the case because they are known to be by nature more susceptible to temptation, and are targeted for this very reason. The medical discourse around kleptomania at this time, is no less prejudiced in its consideration of why it is women who suffer from it the most. Over the course of this thesis, I will not engage with this discourse, in part because I am less interested in determining whether the women who are said to have committed the thefts that I will write about, and are said to have claimed to be kleptomaniacs as an extenuating circumstance, might actually have been kleptomaniacs or not – and more interested in the consequences that the popularization of this diagnosis might have had on the perception and the perceived diffusion of women's shoplifting at this time. Still, it is worth nothing as an example, the interviews that French psychiatrist Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault conducted at the Centre pénitentiaire de Fresnes with four female prisoners, all of them in detention for repeatedly stealing silk from department stores. Published in 1908 and 1910, they are relevant for my research for the attention that de Clérambault pays to the role played by a nonhuman object – or rather a material, silk – in his patients' compulsion to steal as well as in their sexual desire (Castoldi 1994). Though filtered through the psychiatrist's own, often sexist analysis, de Clérambault's interviews are still rare direct testimonies from convicted female kleptomaniacs in the early years of the 20th century, that will be much revisited and reinterpreted by the feminist authors of the second set of texts that I will now introduce.

2.1b 1990s Perspectives

A newfound interest in the kleptomania epidemic of a century prior, inspired the work of feminist historians and scholars of consumption in the 1990s. Their texts seek to return dignity to the

Victorian shoplifter and to her crime, as a practice of protest and struggle against the social structures and oppressions of patriarchal capitalism. But with the exception of Lorraine Gamman's interviews with Shirley Pitts – a 20th-century professional shoplifter, who trained as a child with members of the Forty Thieves – which were first published in the 1996 biography *Gone Shopping* (Gamman 2012 [1996]), these scholars and historians by necessity base their analyses primarily on archival sources, such as those that I have reviewed above and more besides. Elaine S. Abelson recognises the problems of an archival approach to this topic:

> Newspapers and trade journals created the sample and popularized the [shoplifter-kleptomaniac] archetype, but the accounts dealt with women bereft of context. It is the male voice that we hear … What these women thought, what environmental stress or personal anxiety or domestic issues they may have been responding to in shoplifting, remained hidden. (1989, p.8)

In the late 19th and early 20th century, it is always a male detective, doctor, or judge, who has "to decide, not actually on a question of fact, but on a woman's probable intentions," and Felstead was not wrong to remark that "that, to a mere man, is almost impossible" (1923, p.228). Felstead's tongue-in-cheek observation is revealing: despite the near impossibility of this task, it is the judgement of the man who presumes to be able to determine whether a female shoplifter intended to steal or made a mistake, that gets recorded and archived as fact. Still, it is from the starting point of these unreliable archival tales that it is possible to speculate on what is missing from the archives and why. This is what I set out to do in my own research, and what I would argue that this second set of texts are doing too.

To begin with, the authors of these texts observe that unlike earlier accounts, archival sources and reports from the years of the kleptomania epidemic are not unsympathetic, and rather testify to a new leniency toward shoplifters. In the United Kingdom shoplifting was still punishable by execution until the early 19th century, but by the end of that century the more forgiving laws that Felstead welcomes had been introduced – and Felstead welcomes these more forgiving laws precisely because the same sentiment still clearly inspires his writing in 1923. But what inspired this leniency, in the first place? At the turn of the 20th century, the prosecution of female shoplifters, especially if they were wealthy, was no longer worth the trouble for many shopkeepers: suing could be very expensive, they risked being vilified in court, and later shunned by other wealthy customers in retaliation (Abelson 1989; Davies 2021). At the same time, perhaps also to justify her release, the idea that the female shoplifter was not truly to be held responsible for her crimes was gaining traction. Feminist scholars in the 1990s also notice how often accounts from this time period portray the female shoplifter as the "victim" (Abelson 1989, p.151; Felski 1995, p.65; Gamman 1999, p.79) of a new system that encourages middle-class women to consume

excessively. While the chief inspector was aware, as noted above, that shoplifters had to dress well in order not to attract attention in a department store, Abelson reports that in 1889, Byrnes himself made a public statement in support of the plea of kleptomania of "two well-dressed women" who had been arrested for shoplifting and brought to the central police headquarters (Abelson 1989, p.194). Archival sources frequently write something along these lines: that together with the desire to buy, if not as the other side of that coin, a "mad passion" (McCabe 2006 [1872], p.377) is "bred in them" (Byrnes 1886, p.32) that ends up driving women to steal. But the 1990s reinterpretations of these and other critiques of consumption recognise that even as they can absolve shoplifters from unduly harsh punishments, they hardly do them justice. On the contrary, Abelson (1989), Felski (1995), and Gamman (1999) all argue that if kleptomania was readily accepted by male "lawyers, judges, merchants, and newspaper reporters" (Abelson 1989, p.8), as well as "doctors and psychologists" (Felski 1995, p.69) as an explanation the rising number of female shoplifters in the late 19th century, this was precisely because it conformed to Victorian views on women's biological and psychological inferiority.

Rita Felski's analysis of popular novels of the late 19th century attests not only to how widespread these views were, and to how they spread further by way of literature, but also to their political significance. In *The Gender of Modernity*, she argues that novels like Emile Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise* and *Nana*, that reflect upon and are critical of the rise of consumer culture, reveal when read more carefully a certain trepidation on the part of their author, with regards to the threat that women's consumption could pose to a traditional doctrine of separate spheres. Felski mentions shoplifting, but the focus of her text is women's legitimate shopping: when they were out shopping in department stores, she argues that middle-class women challenged the patriarchal hierarchies that saw the public sphere as an exclusively masculine domain. Felski quotes the description of a crowd of female shoppers in *The Ladies' Paradise*, in which the few men caught in the midst of it are depicted as feeling out of place in public, possibly for the first time (1995). Following her analysis therefore, and the analyses presented in this second set of texts more broadly, the new leniency towards shoplifters in the work of male authors and reporters from the late 19th and early 20th century should not be understood as nearly as progressive as Felstead makes it sound. The critique of consumption that justifies this sentiment is reinterpreted as not only based upon and perpetuating widespread prejudices of women's inferiority, but also as motivated by a self-serving desire, on the part of these male authors and reporters, to counter the threat that women's shopping could pose to the patriarchal order by writing at length about its addictive, corrupting qualities.

Moreover, these feminist reinterpretations point out that kleptomania by definition was only acceptable as an excuse when a shoplifter was wealthy enough that her stealing could not be otherwise explained. This is to say that kleptomania was a mental illness premised as much on

the sufferer's social class, as it was premised on gender prejudice (Abelson 1989; Gamman 1999). Of course, whether a shoplifter was wealthy enough to be a kleptomaniac was not always immediately obvious upon arrest – this is where, as for the two shoplifters that Byrnes interviewed in 1889 (Abelson 1989), and as I have already noted in the previous chapter, being "well dressed" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; Rose 1912, p.2; *New-York Tribune* 1920, p.4) was crucial. It was not only middle-class shoplifters then, but "any others successfully masquerading as middle class" (Gamman 1999, p.27) who were able to claim kleptomania as an excuse, and therefore to benefit from the masculine bias that saw women as irrational, and easily swayed away from moral judgement by the lure of temptations. This is most likely how kleptomania spread to the levels of an "epidemic" (Abelson 1989, p.112; Camhi 1993, p.3; Gamman 1999, p.55).

2.1c The Shoplifting Consumer

Other than exposing the prejudice that informed historical accounts of women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, the authors of this second set of texts also propose their own, different perspectives on this phenomenon. Leslie Camhi for example, in a 1993 essay for *Differences*, reviews the reports that note that the items most often stolen from French department stores at the turn of the 20th century are items of feminine adornment, and reads into this preference an act of rebellion to the demands that have always been placed on women, to continually increase their own exchange value as living commodities. It is in this context that theft becomes "an act of economic evasion in response to an economy without just measure" (Camhi 1993, p.6). An act of economic evasion that, it is important to remember, was happening at a time when middle-class women for the most part did not earn a wage, and still relied on their husbands' allowance. But Camhi is not suggesting here that this act of rebellion was a conscious deliberation. Felstead's claim that most women who stole at the turn of the 20th century lacked "the courage" and "the mentality" to set out knowingly against the law (1923, p.224) is misogynistic, but in Camhi's argument setting out knowingly against it is not what matters. Rather, she claims that the female kleptomaniac merely takes the imperatives of consumerism to an extreme – and yet at the same time, in a frequently cited passage, Camhi argues that by way of her thefts the Victorian shoplifter questions "an entire social order … the fraudulence of inherited wealth and social position". If followed too far, it is those very same imperatives that can "upset the logic of both capitalist and sexual exchanges" (Camhi 1993, p.10-11). Gamman too would argue that the shoplifter is not too far removed from the regular shopper, whose impulsive behaviour the system encourages. And yet again, that her crime is more significant than normally conceded. Shoplifting is "a soft but very subversive act" because it negates profit. Shoplifting "subverts the exchange process by taking consumer logic one step too far" (Gamman 1999, p.183-84), and in so doing it undermines the system, even without trying to.

In ‘Stealing Happiness’, Adela Pinch shares this view of shoplifting as an extension of normative consumer behaviour, and although her analysis focuses on the early 19th century, her insights and the questions she poses are still relevant to think with women’s shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century. Indeed, Pinch writes of her case study – the high-profile arrest for shoplifting of Mrs Jane Leigh-Perrot, Jane Austen’s aunt, in 1799 – as marking the beginning of a new epoch: that of the “modern consumer society,” characterised by the widespread suspicion “that happiness might in fact be found in the material thing” (1998, p.133). The subject of Pinch’s essay is again the relation between a shoplifter and the object she steals. But where Camhi interpreted this relation as parallel to that between a woman and femininity as a cultural product, which is the reason why in her essay “the difference between buying and stealing, … becomes increasingly attenuated, because the commodities that are bought or stolen are used to produce and maintain … the deception of the feminine masquerade” (1993, p.10), Pinch’s reading focuses on the power of the stolen object itself, rather than on the uses it may be put towards. She understands shoplifting from the perspective of the commodity, as “the luxury good’s irregular crossing of the borders between shop and street and home”. In the case of Mrs Leigh-Perrot’s arrest, the luxury good in question is a piece of lace, that “attracted to itself and to the players in its drama a range of emotions: sympathy, anxiety, contempt, dread” (Pinch 1998, p.123). In Pinch’s account, the kleptomaniac falls “under the spell of the object” (p.122). Pinch’s interpretation of the power of things, especially things for sale, and the terminology she uses to describe it anticipate perspectives that would become more common in more recent years, in affect theory and new materialism (Bennett 2001; 2010; Thrift 2010).

While Pinch’s analysis focuses on the early instead of the late 19th century, this shift of perspective from subject to object is especially relevant to understand the discourse surrounding the kleptomania epidemic. This is because the perceived increase of shoplifting cases at the turn of the 20th century was often blamed on the commodities themselves – as much as, as I have noted above, on their disposition in the new department stores, whose open-floor displays were held responsible for causing irresistible temptations in the women who wandered through them (Byrnes 1886; McCabe 2006 [1872]; Felstead 1923). Abelson’s research finds examples of women caught shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, who themselves complained in their defence, about the freedom to touch and overstimulation in the stores they stole from. She remarks that at the time, these shoplifters “found unexpected public support for these accusations” (Abelson 1989, p.47), but the feminist authors who write about this phenomenon in the 1990s don’t necessarily disagree with this perspective (Abelson 1989; Camhi 1993; Gamman 2012 [1996]; 1999). As opposed to the masculine gaze, the sense of touch had in the meantime been reclaimed by feminist theory (I. M. Young 2005), and this reclamation informs especially Camhi’s reinterpretation of de Clérambault’s interviews. Camhi observes that the French psychiatrist already had noted the importance of the tactile qualities of silk to the sexual pleasure that his patients got from stealing

it. A pleasure that, in Camhi's understanding, was all the more illicit because it was self-sufficient, since it did not involve men. De Clérambault had argued that its self-sufficiency marked the kleptomaniac's pleasure as a pleasure of an inferior quality – but Camhi redeems it as she writes that touch gives to the female kleptomaniac at the turn of the 20th century, access to a pleasure radically opposite to the "("essentially masculine") pleasure of prehension and possession," which "[u]nlike masculine fetishism … is not a surrogate (hetero)sexuality" (1993, p.12-13).

2.1d The Shoplifter's Clothes

I have noted above that historical sources such as Byrnes and Mayhew, are attentive to the sartorial technologies hidden underneath a shoplifter's respectable dress. Camhi translates another description, written in the 1880s by French psychiatrist Legrand du Saulle, of the shoplifter's "large, double-skirted dress, with a diagonal slit, into which they stuff pieces of silk, velvet, lace, lingerie, and all manner of objects" (du Saulle 1883, p.338 translated in Camhi 1993, p.4), and Shirley Pitts describes them in her own voice in *Gone Shopping* (Gamman 2012 [1996]). The latter is not just an exception in that it is the story of a shoplifter told by the shoplifter herself, but also because for this very reason, it includes rare descriptions of the sartorial technologies a shoplifter wore, that don't come to us by way of a recorded account of their failure. Unlike those written by journalists, police inspectors, or kleptomaniacs' psychiatrists, Pitts describes sartorial technologies that worked, as part of shoplifting acts that were often successful. For example, she recounts that:

> When we were getting china we would have to wear a maternity girdle as well as big granny bloomers which helped to hold things firmly against you so they didn't rattle when you walked. We wore long johns that had special elastic sewn round the leg bottoms, because, with the right clothes you could pack things down to your knees. (Gamman 2012 [1996], p.77)

But Gamman doesn't return to these descriptions in the essay at the end of the book, nor in her 1999 thesis. Whereas Camhi observes that the dress du Saulle describes is "redolent with feminine anatomical complicity" (1993, p.4), but she could just as much be referring here to du Saulle's description of it, as to the actual dress a French shoplifter supposedly wore in the 1880s. If she is referring to the actual dress, it is nevertheless the parts of a woman's body that dress resembles or reveals that in Camhi's account can contribute to the shoplifter's practice, more than the dress itself. Feminist scholars in the 1990s are more interested in how a respectable or seductive appearance could influence shoplifters' perception in the eyes of others, than in what the sartorial technologies they might have worn under their skirts could do.

Subsequent research would also occasionally reference historical accounts of the specialised garments that shoplifters wore at the turn of the 20th century, especially those worn by the Forty Thieves. The Forty Thieves were sometimes referred to as the Forty Elephants as well – a reference to the neighbourhood they came from, the Elephant and Castle area in London, but also to the "physical transformation that a hoister underwent in her depredations," to her growing in size for hiding all that she stole underneath her clothes (Meier 2011, p.428; McDonald 2015; Davies 2021). Yet both Brian McDonald's and Caitlin Davies's accounts, however well-researched, are more historical biographies than analyses. McDonald provides detailed descriptions from the archives, of both the fashionable dresses that the Forties wore on top, and the ingenious inventions they wore underneath them, but these do not lead to in-depth analyses of the shoplifter's clothes, as either technologies or signifiers. Whereas the quotes about the sartorial technologies hidden underneath their respectable dress, that William M. Meier finds in the autobiographies of detectives and gangsters who knew the Forties, serve in his argument to distinguish professional criminals from the middle-class shoplifters who stole without premeditation. But again, Meier doesn't examine further how these technologies functioned or the role they played in the Forties' crimes. He too is more interested in the clothes they wore on top of them, and the clothes they stole, as class and status symbols. For "professional hoisters" Meier writes, "dressing up was both a disguise and a performance" (2011, p.431).

Even when the studies of women's shoplifting that I have reviewed so far focus on the role and power of nonhuman objects, these are most often the objects, or more specifically the materials, that women stole: lace in Pinch's account, fur in Meier's, silk in Camhi's. But for the luxury good to irregularly cross the border between shop and street, it needs to first cross the one that gets it inside the shoplifter's clothes. Or from a different perspective, the shoplifter's clothes need to act not only as a distraction, but as a repository or receptacle that holds securely and hides the stolen good, and moves it invisibly – as a "migratory storehouse" (Byrnes 1886, p.31) – across the store's floor and out of the door. My research shows that even though 1990s and subsequent reinterpretations of archival texts on the subject of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century reference historical sources such as the ones in this section's first set of texts, that describe the specialised clothes shoplifters might have worn, these references usually go to support arguments that have to do with the gender and class implications of their clothes. For example, when Camhi translates du Saulle's text, she reflects upon the sexual connotations of the slit in the shoplifter's dress that he writes about, or the sexual connotations of du Saulle's description of that slit. For another example, in Meier's analysis the hidden technologies in the Forties' outfits are telling of their criminal class, despite the furs and diamonds they cover it up with. It is not my intention to counter the relevance of these readings. On the contrary, I wish to build upon and expand them as I address through my second research question this gap in existing

Shoplifting Literature, and focus in my analysis on the sartorial technologies hidden underneath the shoplifter's respectable or seductive disguise.

My first research question also arises from a gap in existing Shoplifting Literature, which I aim to address as I build upon the reinterpretations of archival sources that I have reviewed above. Or if not a gap, a space for elaboration which their conclusions open up. Feminist scholars in the 1990s argue that women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century challenges, upsets, or subverts established hierarchies in society, as well as capitalist and sexual exchanges. In asking whether women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century can be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, I aim for a more nuanced understanding of this challenge or subversion, that I wish to relate to the major changes to women's citizenship that were underway at this time – such as the new role that some women assumed as consumer citizens and the expectations that came with it, or the fights lost and won in pursuit of the right to vote by the suffrage movement, whose expansion at the time was itself described as an "epidemic" (Parkins 2002, p.98). But I wish to relate to, and understand alongside these changes a more nuanced understanding of the threat that women's shoplifting posed to established hierarchies, also through improved and expanded definitions of citizenship that can account for the activities of female shoplifters in this historical context. To do this I read these claims and the texts that make them through another body of literature: Feminist Citizenship Studies.

2.2 Feminist Citizenship Studies

Feminist Citizenship Studies are not only, or not so clearly a subset of Citizenship Studies addressing the subject of women's citizenship. In my understanding they include works published in different academic fields that do so tangentially, as well as texts that might not have been written with only women in mind, but that can be read through a feminist lens. What Feminist Citizenship Studies have in common is that they question and challenge a traditional understanding of what constitutes citizenship, expanding its definition to account for alternatives either informed by, or useful to think with, women's lived experience and historical struggle for equal rights. Rather than a status, citizenship in this literature is often framed as a process, performed through acts that might even be unlawful (Parkins 2002; Lister 2003; Isin 2008). In this section I review selected texts whose expanded understandings of what citizenship could and should mean (Lister 2003; Isin 2008; Sheller 2012), inform the framing of my first research question, on whether women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century might be considered a feminist act of citizenship. Next, I consider texts that revisit the ways that traditional understandings of citizenship were shifting, or were being challenged by or to account for, the bodies and experiences of women in the specific historical context that both my research questions refer to (Burman 1999; Parkins 2002; Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017). Feminist Citizenship Studies understand citizenship as an

embodied practice, and draw attention to the role that women's clothes have always played in their citizenship claims. As an example of this, I will review two texts that analyse the clothes that the so-called New Woman wore at the turn of the 20th century (Crane 1999; Myers 2014). Still, Feminist Citizenship Studies for the most part account for the role that clothes play in women's citizenship claims only as symbols. As an alternative, I introduce selected texts that recognise the role that technologies (Marres 2015), and the role that clothes specifically, when they are understood as technologies (Jungnickel 2021; 2022), can play in acts of citizenship. These texts bridge the gap between my first and second research question, which considers the role that the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies, might have played in her thefts at the turn of the 20th century.

2.2a Citizenship Reframed

In asking whether women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century could be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, I refer to, and advocate for, inclusive understandings of what citizenship should mean, which may well be considered at odds with how citizenship has been traditionally defined. The concept of citizenship has long been premised on the exclusion of those who did not qualify for it. In Feminist Citizenship Studies this exclusion is often addressed through a critical analysis of the disembodied ideal of a citizen, unswayed by passions of any kind and therefore capable of making just decisions (Parkins 2002; Lister 2003; Puwar 2004; Sheller 2012). Feminist Citizenship Studies endeavour to expose and question the unspoken bias of "the universal somatic norm" (Puwar 2004, p.10), which is to say "the disembodied, abstracted, juridical citizens of constitutional law who in fact are semantically and symbolically coded as white, male, propertied, and heterosexual" (Sheller 2012, p.242). This ideal impacts negatively on the citizenship practices of many groups, as well as intersectionally on the citizenship practices of those who differ from the somatic norm in multiple ways. While the texts that I review in this section are thorough in accounting for the specificities of exclusion on the basis of different factors, I will focus in this review on the historical exclusion from citizenship specifically of women in Western societies, whose cultural identification with nature, sexuality, and the body, situates them as the polar opposite of the disembodied ideal. Feminist Citizenship Studies offer ways to overcome this exclusion through improved and inclusive definitions that inform my understanding of what constitutes a feminist act of citizenship.

In the introduction to *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, Ruth Lister writes that we should think of citizenship "as a process and not just an outcome, in which the struggle to gain new rights and to give substance to existing ones is seen as being as important as the substance of those rights" (2003, p.6). It is interesting to note that not every 'struggle' counts as citizenship in her analysis. Lister presents a distinction between citizenship and politics more broadly: she refers to feminist

notions of intimate and domestic politics, and proposes that only the politics that happens in the public sphere should be understood as a citizenship practice. Even so, Lister concedes that "the line between the public and private spheres is not immutable" (2003, p. 30), and will come to argue in the book's conclusion, that a "*rearticulation of this public–private divide* … provides one of the keys to challenging women's exclusion" from citizenship (p.197). In 'Theorizing Acts of Citizenship', Engin F. Isin similarly thinks with citizenship as a process rather than a status, and focuses in his analysis on the act that precedes it. Isin's account of an act of citizenship can be seen to add to, and to elaborate the notion of 'struggle' in Lister's definition. He understands an act of citizenship as the act that turns a subject into a claimant: this transformation permits, even if it is not a sufficient condition for, the practice of citizenship (2008). Lister and Isin also agree that an act or a practice can be considered of citizenship even when it is against the law. In fact, Isin takes this reasoning further and claims that acts of citizenship "must call the law into question and, sometimes, break it" (2008, p.39). But while Lister's and Isin's texts complement one another in various ways, there is a significant difference in their positions, with regards to the question of the relation between citizenship and agency, or citizenship and self-awareness. Lister ultimately equates citizenship, and women's citizenship in particular, with agency, which is understood in this context specifically as a conscious capacity. She writes that "agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act but it is also about a conscious capacity, which is important to the individual's self-identity" (2003, p.39). Whereas Isin's claim that the motive or intention behind an act of citizenship need not necessarily to be known or recognised by the actor who enacts it, in order for it to constitute an act of citizenship, implicitly counters this point of view. An act of citizenship in Isin's definition needs to be no more of a conscious deliberation, than in Camhi's analysis women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century is consciously an act of rebellion. Isin's position foregrounds the researcher's hindsight. "Acts of citizenship do not need to originate in the name of anything," he argues "though we as interpreters will always interpret how acts of citizenship orient themselves towards justice" (Isin 2008, p.38-39).

In the introduction to *Fashioning the Body Politic* – where she defends the potential of dress practices to become sites of political struggle, which don't just express but reconstitute the social and the political, and in fact "'flesh out' the meanings of citizenship" (Parkins 2002, p.4) – Wendy Parkins similarly opposes a traditional view that sees politics as legitimate only if rational and deliberate. This traditional view finds expression in 'the great masculine renunciation' of luxury, and she argues that it has served to justify women's historical exclusion from participation in public politics. It is in line with the disembodied ideal of a citizen that from the early 18th century onwards, an English man's "restrained style of dress worked to define the character necessary for participation in the polity" (Parkins 2002, p.7). Throughout the Western world in fact, the dull uniformity of men's formal attire defines and signals to the objectivity of the wearer (M. L. Roberts 1998; Parkins 2002; Trufelman 2022). This insight, and later Parkins' chapter on 'The Epidemic of

Purple, White and Green': Fashion and the Suffragette Movement in Britain 1908–14', contribute to a timeline for the history and evolution of women's citizenship that emerges in and as Feminist Citizenship Studies – and that shows, among other things, how important clothes have always been to women's citizenship claims. In much the same way that the well-dressed shoplifter was able to blend in with a crowd of middle-class shoppers and go unnoticed, the latest fashions they often wore (Felski 1995; Crane 1999; Rappaport 2000; Parkins 2002) worked in the suffragettes' favour, as an illegible disguise when they had to flee the scene after engaging in unlawful acts of civil disobedience. But perhaps more importantly, Parkins argues that the deliberate use of fashionable womenswear in the suffragettes' citizenship claims challenges, on a conceptual level, the disembodied ideal of the citizen, and therefore the ideal citizen as implicitly male. "The suffragette emphasis on a fashionable femininity drew attention to female specificity as grounds for inclusion rather than exclusion from the political domain" she writes, "it insisted that women be political subjects because of their sexual difference not in spite of it" (Parkins 2002, p. 105).

This conceptual challenge calls for new and improved definitions of citizenship that can account for the suffragettes' practice, and more besides. Parkins proposes that the suffragettes' acts of civil disobedience could be thought of more specifically as acts or practices of "dissident citizenship" or of "diva citizenship" (2002, p.100-01), after the formulations of Holloway Sparks and Lauren Berlant. Sparks' dissident citizenship is premised on political courage, and on the understanding of dissent as fundamental to the practice of citizenship (1997). Acts of diva citizenship meanwhile, if one observes Lister's distinction between citizenship and politics, are the acts that bridge that gap and drag the intimate and political out into the public realm. As Berlant defines them, they are "grandiose public dramatic performances of injured subjectivity" (1997, p.228), and a diva citizen is the one who "stages a dramatic coup in a public sphere" (p.223). But not all acts of citizenship that take place in the public sphere need to be grandiose or dramatic, and while Parkins' suffragettes fought for political recognition, Mimi Sheller reminds us that "subaltern claims for political inclusion and attempts to exercise their rights are a double-edged sword, since the expression of political subjectivity is also always a further inscription into the state order" (2012, p.9). Taking Caribbean history as its case study, Sheller's *Citizenship from Below* argues that aside from expressions of citizenship that aim for inclusions in existing structures of power, "citizens … have improvised and invented ways to dodge, escape, and trick the state with forms of power from below exercised in evolving everyday practices" (p.34). In Sheller's understanding these everyday practices, which aim to infiltrate rather than be welcomed into public space, are acts of citizenship from below. Contrary to the disembodied ideal of the citizen, "citizenship from below signals not just the 'lower orders,' the subordinate, the common people, and the subaltern, but also the lower body, the vulgar, the sexual, the impure, and the forbidden" (2012, p.30). It is important to note that whilst an embodied citizenship practice is at the centre of Feminist Citizenship Studies, this should not be taken to allow for any biological essentialism. On

the contrary, implicitly echoing scholars whose attention to relationality I will return to in the last section of this chapter, Sheller observes that categories such as gender, race, sexuality or class are performed and constituted in social interaction. Referencing both Sara Ahmed and Nirmal Puwar, she claims that in the public space, "race and ethnicity, as well as gender and sexuality, are attached to bodies through their spatial 'orientations,' their ongoing relations with other bodies" (p.37).

2.2b The Consumer Citizen

As Parkins credits the suffragettes for informing the shift by way of which British women start conceiving of themselves as a political public and not just as a consuming one, she notes how important the first department stores, and pictorial advertisements, had been for women to start conceiving of themselves as a public at all in the first place (2002, p.99). In the timeline for the history and evolution of women's citizenship that emerges in and as Feminist Citizenship Studies, this insight identifies a turning point, which concerns the relation between women's citizenship and consumption. If citizenship is the politics that happens in public, women's shopping in department stores inherently threatens the public-private divide whose rearticulation, in Lister's analysis, can challenge women's exclusion from citizenship . This is not just a conclusion that scholars have come to with hindsight. In *Shopping for Pleasure*, Erika Rappaport examines the institution of London's women's clubs, that became popular in the 1880s as places for women to rest, meet among themselves, or listen to lectures between shopping expeditions. At first, some of these clubs were openly political: "women's clubs served as a point of access to the public sphere" writes Rappaport (2000, p.78), and that "[a]lthough women might enter clubs as consumers … they would exit as citizens" (p.88). Yet she also observes how in the late 19th and early 20th century, just as the club became more leisure-oriented, it was the department store that aligned itself with the calls for women's emancipation. Of course, this was in the department store's best interests. To see female consumers as only the passive victims of the temptations of the marketplace (Felstead 1923), Rappaport reminds the reader, is insufficient if not misogynistic – on the other hand, to view consumption as emancipation is to buy into an entrepreneurial narrative. Although department stores at the turn of the 20th century could be considered more democratic than most women's clubs, these spaces of mass entertainment relegated women's participation in public life to their being consumer citizens (Rappaport 2000). Rachel Bowlby addresses the limitations of this specification in *Just Looking*, where she observes, after Baudrillard, that the very identity of "the consumer citizen … depends on the acquisition of appropriate objects … has to be put on, acted or worn as an external appendage, owned as a property nominally apart from the bodily self" (2010, p.17). This is to say that in the new consumer societies, women are dependent on the commodities they can or cannot afford to buy, and more precisely, to wear, for their identity as citizens (M. L. Roberts 1998; Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017). Commodities that, there where the legal doctrine of

coverture is still enforced, married women don't even effectively own once they have bought them (Rhodes 2018).

While often framed as a pleasure, emancipation, or privilege, it is also important to remember that in the consumer societies of the Western world, women's shopping was economically necessary at this time. In the United Kingdom, especially after the 1870s, although they might disapprove of her for doing so, "the middle classes also needed the domestic angel to venture into the city's commercial culture" (Rappaport 2000, p.6). Meanwhile in France, "female consumers were expected to take on the extra burden of representing their nation as well as their family and class" by choosing to buy local rather than international goods (Roberts 1998, p.826). But this was especially evident in the United States. In *Luxurious Citizens*, Johanna Cohen explains that during the War of Independence, it had been considered the civic duty of all good citizens to renounce their desire for expensive imported goods (2017). Plain and fairly coarse, American menswear at the turn of the 19th century was not only in line with the disembodied ideal of a rational citizen, it also showcased the wearer's support for American independence (Handley-Cousins 2018) – and from the early 19th century onwards, it was the relatively affordable ready-to-wear suits popularised by the Brooks Brothers company that contributed to the formation of a universal American style, while allowing the men who wore them to continue to perceive themselves above the whims of fashion (Trufelman 2022). But a shift of perspective was underway at the same time. In the period between 1783 and 1865, Cohen's research shows that opposite to what it had been like during the war, the civic duty of all good citizens became to consume expensive goods, because this resulted in high tariffs paid to the government (2017). Women, whose femininity set them apart from the disembodied ideal of a citizen, and who were therefore exempted from the dress code of rationality that men's attire was expected to adhere to, were best suited to perform this civic duty. But expensive goods were certainly not equally available to every woman. Whereas before "all citizens, rich or poor, male or female, white or black could choose not to buy for the sake of the nation," Cohen remarks that when the civic duty of a good citizen becomes the opposite, citizenship becomes more selective. Not only were luxuries available only to the few, but married women, who for the most part still relied on their husbands' allowance, could now be good citizens only by way of their spouses (Cohen 2017, p.5).

Histories of consumer culture also often address, however, how the limitations of consumer citizenship were repeatedly called into question in the 19th-century marketplace. Not just as it pertains to class and gender: already in the early 1800s, Cohen observes that "black interactions with the marketplace blurred racial identities in ways that threatened the distinctions between populations that white Americans were trying to create in the wake of the Revolution". It might have been because of this, she speculates, that as much as the law excluded them from the polity, the racist connotations of pictorial advertisements strived to exclude from the marketplace even

the small communities of free African Americans who could have afforded to participate in it (2017, p.77). It is important not to underestimate the role that advertising could play: the pictorial advertisements that she writes about would most likely have looked very similar to those that years later, across the ocean, would encourage British middle-class women to conceive of themselves as a public for the first time (Parkins 2002). Even so, Cohen remarks that "the boundaries of the marketplace were permeable and messy" and while racialised bodies would continue to attract attention, by mid-century white lower-class men or women "could appropriate the consumer goods and shopping practices that signaled middle-class status," for example by buying second-hand clothes (2017, p.171). In the press, for another example, the same item might be advertised in a range of prices, with slight variations, targeting women from different economic backgrounds (McKnight 2024). In the United Kingdom too, newspapers and women's magazines had multiplied, and by the end of the 19th century they offered shopping advice for readers who had just recently come into money, so that they might look less new to it (Rappaport 2000, p.131). Yet more directly, magazines provided readers of all classes with sewing instructions and paper patterns inspired by Parisian fashions, a practice which worried those who believed in the importance of being able to tell a woman's background by the cut of her skirt (Breward 1999; Burman 1999). This most likely contributed to how professional shoplifters from different economic backgrounds could assume the role of middle-class shoppers (Gamman 1999; Davies 2021). Perhaps ironically, in 'Made at Home by Clever Fingers', Barbara Burman explains that it was moral concerns over new working opportunities for middle-class women that had led to the revaluation and promotion of domestic skills, including sewing, since "a woman who didn't sew was potentially disruptive" (1999, p.45).

2.2c The Citizen's Pockets

These concerns were not entirely unfounded, however. At the turn of the 20th century, more middle-class women than ever before, albeit for the most part unmarried, were looking for work outside of the domestic realm: "as teachers, nurses, civil servants, saleswomen, and clerks" and in the United States, where men's absence during the Civil War had hastened this transition, even as "physicians and lawyers" (Crane 1999, p.251), or in the patent office (Swanson 2017). In *Technofeminism*, which I will return to later in this chapter, Judy Wajcman reviews how the commercialisation of the typewriter, which was originally produced in American sewing-machine workshops, contributed for its feminine connotations to the feminization of office work from the 1870s (2004). In the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States, but shortly after also in the United Kingdom and France, if the New Woman (Roberts 1998; Crane 1999; Myers 2014) didn't sew, it was because she was busy entering the workforce, and calling into question traditional ideals of femininity – also by way of her clothes.

Unlike the suffragette, who deliberately embraced elegance and femininity to counter popular representations of the militant woman as “grotesque, mannish, and sexless” (Felski 1995, p.168), the New Woman purposefully incorporated menswear into her wardrobe. And if clothes inspired by Parisian fashions could be worn either to simulate or as evidence of a woman’s wealth or class, Diana Crane argues that the New Woman’s alternative style, which was relatively cheap to reproduce, could be interpreted as a sign of the wearer’s independence, or defiance. While the women who wore clothing of this kind may not have done so with this intent, the fact that the militant women of the Women Social and Political Union (WSPU) avoided wearing this alternative style, is in Crane’s understanding indicative of its symbolic power (1999). When Janet C. Myers considers the New Woman’s outfit however, she observes that it was the adoption of integrated pockets, which had long been an exclusive feature of men’s attire, that was particularly disruptive – and this at least in part because those pockets implied the wearer’s role as a consumer citizen. In the late 19th century, integrated pockets are perceived as a “technology that allows women to behave like men, presumably as consumers, by providing a private place to hold money and other valuables” (Myers 2014, p.17). While both agree that the New Woman’s dress was challenging gender boundaries, Myers’ observations may seem to counter Crane’s argument that it also challenged class boundaries, because consumer citizenship requires spending power. Moreover, Myers argues that it was women’s new role as consumers that was perceived as the most threatening by men, whilst Crane suggests that the wearing of fashionable clothes, which inevitably implies the wearer’s seasonal participation in consumer trends, reinstated not just class but also gender boundaries, because fashionable clothes were so emphatically feminine.

To better understand the relation between shopping and women’s citizenship in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the contribution that specific items of dress could make, at this time, to women’s citizenship claims, it is useful to try to reconcile these positions. In the first place, it is important to note that in Myers’ understanding integrated pockets are disruptive for implying the wearer’s consumer citizenship – “as an external appendage … apart from the bodily self” (Bowlby 2010, p.17) – whether they are actually used to participate in the marketplace or not. In fact, while she acknowledges Burman’s interpretation that these pockets, much smaller compared to the tie-on pockets women had been wearing in the 18th century, reflected their limited access to money (2002), Myers observes that they were even more threatening for their lack of functionality, because they professed the wearer’s consumer citizenship whether or not she ever made any purchase (2014). Whether or not, in other words, she could afford to make any. With this observation Myers does not counter, but rather supports Crane’s argument that the New Woman’s outfit challenged class boundaries. In the second place, it could be argued that a wealthy woman’s participation in the marketplace, which is necessary for her to follow fashionable trends, is not a challenge to gender boundaries in Crane’s understanding, because she interprets this participation as Thorstein Veblen would. In *Theory of the Leisure Class*, first published in 1899,

Veblen argues that the wife of a wealthy man demonstrates her status as property through her consumption which is proof of his wealth (2009 [1899]). But counter to this interpretation is the discourse around the very same department stores that promoted and distributed what she understands as fashionable style, as places that overturned the doctrine of separate spheres, allowing women to gather among themselves and away from home (Felski 1995; Rappaport 2000; Parkins 2002). In fact, while Crane interprets the fact that the suffragettes wore fashionable clothes as a way to counter the accusations of those that wanted to portray them as "unfeminine freaks," which supports her argument that the fashionable style reinstated the gender boundaries that the alternative style challenged (1999, p.262), I have noted above that Wendy Parkins interprets the suffragettes' choice as all the more unsettling, precisely because wearing the latest fashions while engaging in acts of civil disobedience disproved the prejudice of femininity as apolitical (2002). As Felski also puts it, "a suffragette could be both revolutionary *and* feminine" (1995, p.168-9). When Crane's and Myers' texts are read together then, they paint a picture of women's consumer citizenship at the turn of the 20th century in which not only could this consumer citizenship find expression in different, even contradictory styles of womenswear – but in which women could challenge its limitations by way of their clothes, as well as the premise of women's exclusion from citizenship in the first place.

2.2d Material Participation

I have introduced Feminist Citizenship Studies as a body of literature that helps me to relate the challenge that according to feminist scholars in the 1990s, women's shoplifting was posing to established hierarchies at the turn of the 20th century, to the major changes to women's citizenship that were underway at this time, and therefore to formulate and address my first research question. Yet the review of the texts that I have considered in this section so far also helps me to contextualise the terms of my second research question, on the role that clothes might have played in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. Feminist Citizenship Studies show that nonhuman objects for better or worse, were key to women's citizenship claims at this point in time: from the things for sale that women as consumer citizens could or could not buy in 19th-century department stores, to the clothes that became "sites of political struggle" (Parkins 2002, p.2) – such as those worn as a disguise or to counter satirical representations by the British suffragettes, the second-hand clothes or those made following paper patterns from magazines that allowed women from different backgrounds to appear middle-class, or those worn by the New Woman to openly challenge gender and class boundaries. These texts, however, consider the role that clothes might have played as being determined by, and attributable to their symbolic properties in the first place. As I have noted above, Myers goes so far as to argue that their lack of functionality made the New Woman's integrated pockets all the more threatening (2014). And although at one point Parkins references an archival text that points to a functional element in the

suffragette's dress – specifically, Mary Richardson's claim that her fashionable fan could turn if needed into a defence weapon (2002, p.113) – her text is ultimately no more interested in the suffragette's dress as a technology, than feminist scholars in the 1990s consider as technologies the clothes worn by female shoplifters at the turn of the 20th century. Again, it is not my intention to question the significance of semiotics when it comes to the citizen's clothes. But when citizenship is conceptualised as not just a status, or identity, but as a practice performed through acts, or as a struggle, I am especially interested in the role that the materiality and mechanics of clothes might have played in women's citizenship claims at the turn of the 20th century.

Few contemporary texts consider clothes as sartorial technologies, especially in relation to women's citizenship at this particular time in history. Kat Jungnickel's research on patented cyclewear in Victorian Britain aims to address this gap. Jungnickel references formulations of citizenship that look beyond traditional understandings of the relation between the individual and the nation state, and into how "citizenship is also enacted, performed and negotiated on many scales, including sensory, material and embodied mundane daily practice" (2022, p.6). She references Noortje Marres' concept of 'material participation', that is civic participation by way of specific objects (2015), to explain the significance for their citizenship practice, of the inventive clothing that women designed and wore to ride bicycles in the late 19th century. As technologies in their own right, Jungnickel argues that their patented clothing inventions should be considered vehicles of women's emancipation as much as the bicycle itself (2018; 2021; 2022). In fact, other than marking the beginning of the end of the legal doctrine of coverture, according to which a married woman owned neither her purchases nor the contents of her pockets (Lister 2003; Rhodes 2018), the implementation of Married Women's Property Acts had led to a sharp increase in the patenting activity of female inventors, in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In *Bikes and Bloomers*, Jungnickel notes that in 1883 – the year after the 1882 Married Women's Property Act – the Patents Act also came into force in Britain: by lowering a patent's application fee from £25 to £4, it opened up patenting to a much broader section of the population. She suggests that the 1883 Patents Act might have been motivated by the comparisons that were being made at the time, with other countries where patenting was much more common, such as the United States (2018, p.80). In the United States, where Mississippi passed the first Married Women's Property Act as early as 1839, Zorina B. Khan argues that the rising number of female patentees over the course of the 19th century can be read as a record of freedoms gained in the history of the women's movement. In an article where she examines data concerning the patenting activity of female inventors in the country, Khan observes that at least in metropolitan areas, many of them were patenting clothing-related inventions (2000). Specifically, patents for clothing inventions that sought to adapt prevailing styles of women's dress to the requirements of outdoor sports became especially numerous after 1890 (Peteu and Helvenston Gray 2009; Shephard 2012). Clothing,

and womenswear in particular, was arguably recognised as a technology more commonly at the turn of the 20th century than it is today in academic literature.

But even once they were allowed to personally profit from their invention, in the eventuality of its success, women's new rights were still a far cry from equal to those of men. Notably, women still could not vote. It is precisely because they could not vote, for example against the high tariffs that targeted imported fashions and fabrics – the same imported fashions and fabrics that they were encouraged to buy, precisely because of those tariffs – that in the second half of the 19th-century American dressmakers, who were often female, were motivated to smuggle those fashions and fabrics from Europe to the United States. In 'Smuggled in the Bustle', archivist and fashion historian Hind Abdul-Jabbar notes that looking like a respectable lady was usually enough to avoid being searched by the custom inspectors, but also that to avoid detection, the smuggling dressmaker made frequent use of her sartorial skills. "Often the loose garment became a canvas where other garments were stitched on, and pockets could be sewn to carry extra yardage of fabrics" writes Abdul-Jabbar, and she cites an article written by a woman in 1873, who claims that the female smuggler's indifference toward the fact that she is committing a crime could well have to do with the fact that women had yet to be recognised as political beings. In fact, Abdul-Jabbar observes that it was only when American women got the right to vote, that tariffs at last got reformed. Her article links at once inventive sewing skills with a criminal purpose, and a criminal purpose with insufficient citizen rights (Abdul-Jabbar 2017). Indeed, if women's lawful clothing inventions were a response to their newfound property rights (Khan 2000), their unlawful clothing inventions, alterations or adjustments, can be posited as a response to the insufficiency of those rights or of their implementation. And if unlawful acts can be considered acts of citizenship (Parkins 2002; Lister 2003; Isin 2008), these unlawful inventions can be posited in turn as material participation.

In her eponymous book on material participation, Noortje Marres writes that authors associated with the Object Turn in social theory, had to "counter the deep-seated suspicion that a political or social grouping organized through things cannot possibly be a true public, but is sure to present a consumerist, domesticated parody of it" (Marres 2015, p.9). While Marres does not write about dress specifically, this resonates with the condition of middle-class women as consumer citizens at the turn of the 20th century, and with the scepticism, at the time and since, with regards to whether their purchases could truly earn them citizenship in return. Marres refers to the work of John Dewey, which she argues anticipates the contemporary understanding of a public as a 'community of the affected'. Writing in the 1920s, Dewey believed that the unintended consequences of a course of action, affecting a community, are what generates a public – and he observed that these unintended consequences are all the more common in societies marked by technological innovation (Marres 2015). Marres also acknowledges the work of Jane Bennett, who

picks up on the same ideas in *Vibrant Matter*, to consider how Dewey's writing leaves open the possibility that a public might emerge from acts that originate in nonhuman objects. I will return to this text in the next section, but this particular insight also relates, with respect to the alternative formulations of citizenship that I have reviewed above, with Isin's claim that an act of citizenship does not need to be a conscious deliberation on the part of the actor who enacts it for it to be understood as such. This is relevant when we consider the role that nonhuman objects, and clothes in particular, might have played as technologies other than as symbols, in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century. Because while there might indeed have been a distinction between the impulsive shoplifter and the professional who wore more elaborate sartorial technologies (Meier 2011), all shoplifters would to some extent have responded to the opportunities offered by the material culture of their time, as they presented themselves in their surroundings: be it the open-floor displays of department stores, fashion trends that lent themselves to the concealing of stolen items, or clothing inventions that might have been designed, produced, advertised, and sold for other purposes, but which shoplifters might have adapted, or just adopted to suit their own – because if, as Dewey observed, technological innovation often brings forth unintended consequences, lawful inventions too might have contributed to unlawful acts of citizenship.

In the next chapter, on methods, I will explain in more detail how, since archival accounts of the shoplifter's clothes in the late 19th and early 20th century are necessarily, for the most part, accounts of sartorial technologies that failed, the analysis of patents for clothing inventions issued at around the same time allows me to speculate about the sartorial technologies shoplifters might have worn, that might also have succeeded. But before that, in the rest of this chapter, to more comprehensively address my second research question, I should examine more closely the Object Turn that the notion of material participation builds upon.

2.3 The Object Turn

The Object Turn is an interdisciplinary manoeuvre. In this section, I consider a first set of texts that foreground the role that nonhuman objects can play in a relational network comprising of both human and nonhuman actors. Because my second research question considers the role that the shoplifter's clothes might have played in her practice specifically as sartorial *technologies*, these texts are gathered primarily from STS, and in particular from the subset of STS that John Law calls 'material semiotics' (2012). This is where the ideas that make up what Marres also refers to as the "coming out of things" in social, political, and cultural theory and research (2015, p.8), first emerged and evolved (Latour 2005; Haraway 1991; De Laet and Mol 2000; Barad 2007). But because it is *sartorial* technologies that I am interested in, I also include in this first set of texts, a few examples of how the Object Turn plays out in fashion studies and history (Fennetaux 2008;

Entwistle 2016; Negrin 2016), and throughout, I reflect on how this shift of focus toward the materiality of relational networks might apply to the case of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century. The endeavour is to determine how the clothes that shoplifters might have worn at this time, that feminist interpretations in the 1990s took into account primarily for their symbolic properties, could also be understood, through the lens of the Object Turn, as nonhuman actors, or actants, in the relational network that constitutes a department store's crime scene. Next, tying the Object Turn back to my first research question, on whether women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century might be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, I introduce Bennett's contribution to this manoeuvre, which Marres also builds upon. A political theorist associated with the new-materialist trend in academic discourse (Gamble, Hanan, and Nail 2019), in *Vibrant Matter* Bennett aims to set aside a human-centred tradition in political theory and draw attention to the role that nonhuman objects can play in political actions (2010). Finally, I consider how the Object Turn has influenced the theorising of misuse, in STS and beyond. I review how scripts and de-scriptions have been understood (Akrich 1992), how the idea of interpretative flexibility has evolved towards performative flexibility (Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015), and the contribution of the theory of affordances to this debate (Gibson 1979; Michael 2016). I also consider how comparable conclusions have been reached in other academic fields, which may be especially appropriate to the analysis of women's clothes (Sampson 2020), of feminist and queer practices (Ahmed 2019), and of subversion in consumer culture (De Certeau 1988). These texts are relevant for my investigation because they consider the ways that objects, technologies, commodities, and clothes in particular, allow for uses other than those they were originally intended for, and reflect on the implications of this shift of purpose when it occurs.

2.3a Material Networks

In STS, Bruno Latour's work was fundamental to the development, in the 1980s, of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), as an approach which foregrounds the mapping and analysis of relations to the study of the social and natural world, as well as of technology. To acknowledge that "things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid," is to draw attention to the role that nonhuman objects play in these webs of relations, a role which Latour argued traditional sociologists had overlooked (2005, p.72). Although the feminist scholars whose work I have reviewed above were not applying ANT to their analysis of historical accounts of women's shoplifting, Pinch's discussion of Mrs Leigh-Perrot's trial, and in particular of the stolen "piece of lace that sits at the center of this episode" (1998, p.132) could possibly be reinterpreted through the lens of this approach. As a nonhuman object which plays a role, Latour might have called this piece of lace an 'actant'. Latour's "flat ontology" (Law 2019, p.4) sees actants as symmetrical to people, or actors, in social situations: this is a first step toward decentring the human in our understanding of relational networks, a project that first STS, and more recently the

new materialisms which in their plurality have in common “an attention to relationality” and an interest in the “decentering of the human as agent” (Truman 2019, p.4), would pick up and build upon. When a piece of lace sits at the centre, humans no longer do. Pinch’s analysis aside, many of the accounts of women’s shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century that I have gathered in British and American newspapers’ archives, a process that I will go through in detail in the next chapter, can be read from such an object-centred perspective.

John Law proposes the blanket term ‘material semiotics’ to refer to those approaches in STS, including ANT but not limited to it, that challenge more traditional perspectives within this field – perspectives that, while they might already have recognised materiality as the relational effect of particular practices, shaped by particular social agendas, still reflected humanist assumptions in considering humans as the only active agents in these relational webs (2012; 2019). The term is originally Donna Haraway’s, and Law’s claim that material semiotics explore how “actors are shaped in the webs in which they find themselves” (2019, p.4), in fact reformulates Haraway’s insight that “*boundaries* materialize in social interaction… ‘objects’ do not pre-exist as such” (1991, p.200-01). This notion of the actor’s and actant’s boundaries as constantly redrawn in the social web, but also uncertain in and of themselves, which the figure of the cyborg best exemplifies – “Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?” (Haraway 1991, p.178) – recurs across key references in material semiotics. Boundaries are, for example, “vague and moving” in Marianne De Laet and Annemarie Mol’s study of the Zimbabwe bush pump as a fluid object, a paper whose stated aim is to contribute to an expansion of the definition of ‘actor’ in STS. “Not only can actors be non-rational and non-human; they can also … be fluid without losing their agency” De Laet and Mol argue (2000, p.225-27). Whereas for philosopher and physicist Karen Barad, it is humans themselves who are constantly “intra-actively (re)constituted as part of the world’s becoming” (2007, p.206). In *The Body: The Key Concepts*, Lisa Blackman observes that such a processual account of the human body is shared among approaches informed by ANT and approaches informed by new materialism. Through these approaches “bodies are considered open systems that connect to others, human and non-human, such that they are always unfinished, mutable and in dynamic processes of *becoming*” (Blackman 2021, p.120).

This insight is particularly interesting for thinking with clothes, as the objects that sit the closest to our skin, or that might even be conceptualised as an alternative to it, as another kind of boundary for the human body (Sampson 2020). As I have noted, the feminist scholars who wrote in the 1990s about the kleptomania epidemic of a century prior, wrote about the role that the shoplifter’s clothes played in her theft primarily as class and status symbols, or as disguises, rather than as technologies, or actants. Even when Camhi considers how, in the testimonies of de Clérambault’s patients, “[t]he formlessness of silk mirrors the formlessness of pure feminine materiality” (1993,

p.13) and again in a related footnote, how these interviews attest to the "disarticulation of individuation and erotic blurrings of distinction" between subject and object (p.17), she is writing about silk that was stolen, and rarely in order to ever be worn. It is worth noting however, that if Shoplifting Literature in the 1990s considered the shoplifter's clothes primarily for their significations, in the meantime "[w]ithin fashion studies the material and embodied turns have reoriented the field both towards bodily practices of wearing and the complex agencies embodied in the things we wear" (Woolley et al. 2024, p.7). "Our agency takes place through material things and objects – such as clothes" (Rocamora and Smelik 2016, p.12), and if the Object Turn affected fashion studies earlier, or more directly than other academic fields, it may be because "[f]ashion, perhaps more conspicuously than other cultural realms, consists of material objects and involves a bodily practice of dressing" (p.14). Fashion scholars have considered the applicability of Latour's work, and ANT in particular, to their object of study (Entwistle 2016), or reflected on the permeable, unstable boundary between human and clothes (Negrin 2016; Sampson 2020). In fashion history, as conduits between the body and the world, I have discussed how women's integrated pockets at the turn of the 20th century have been understood to imply their role as consumers (Myers 2014), but women's tie-on pockets in the 18th century have also been conceptualised, by the same token, as "organic extensions of the self," a site where the relationship between self and other could play out through touch (Fennetaux 2008, p.329).

2.3b An Object-Centred Political Theory

In the introduction to *Wearable Objects and Curative Things: Materialist Approaches to the Intersections of Fashion, Art, Health and Medicine*, editors Dawn Woolley, Fiona Johnstone, Ellen Sampson and Paula Chambers clarify that the volume's "object-centered approach" is inspired by "materialist thinkers" that recognise the "world-making properties" of objects, such as, among others, Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett (2024, p.2). This premise could apply to my research too. Indeed, while their work is claimed by different disciplines – STS for Latour, political theory and new materialism for Bennett – both scholars ought to be considered pivotal figures of the interdisciplinary Object Turn, which informs the terms of my second research question. But if Latour and Bennett can both be considered 'materialist thinkers', in Bennett's field of political theory, 'materialism' comes with specific associations, which she aims to challenge: Bennett prefaces *Vibrant Matter* with the observation that in this academic context the term 'materiality' is frequently used, but in texts and debates that often forget to account for materials themselves, and rather want to discuss "human social structures or … material constraints on … human action" (2010, p.xvi). She endeavours to set aside this human-centred tradition, to follow instead the power of things. Thing-power is for Bennett a vibrancy, "the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness" (ibid.), or "an efficacy of objects in excess of the human meanings, designs, or purposes they express or

serve" (p.20). Still things don't act on their own any more than humans do: Bennett argues that "there is not so much a doer (an agent) behind the deed … as a doing and an effecting by a human-nonhuman assemblage. This federation of actants is a creature that the concept of moral responsibility fits only loosely" (p.28). Shoplifting too could be regarded, from this perspective, as the effecting produced by the human-nonhuman assemblage comprising of a woman and the clothes she wears. Yet the idea that the concept of moral responsibility may only loosely fit this federation of actants has in this context implications not just for my second research question, on the role that sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, but for my first research question as well, on whether this shoplifting can be understood as a feminist act of citizenship.

Bennett observes that we can consider an act a political act even when people "do not explicitly intend, endorse, or even consider the impact" of their actions (2010, p.98). When a citizenship practice is understood as the politics that happens in the public sphere (Lister 2003), this observation echoes Isin's claim that a researcher may interpret an act as an act of citizenship even if the actor who enacted it did not (2008). For Bennett however, it follows therefore that we should be able to consider nonhuman acts political too. Like Marres, she finds the seeds of the Object Turn – or at least of her own version of it, which she calls 'vital materialism', as opposed to the historical kind – in John Dewey's "object-centred political theory" (Marres 2015, p.15). In fact, Bennett argues that human agency always presupposes some nonhuman agency. "No one body owns its supposedly own initiative" (2010, p.101), writes Bennett citing Dewey, whose work also anticipates Haraway's questioning of the skin as the human body's most definite boundary, when he writes that "[t]he epidermis is only in the most superficial way an indication of where an organism ends and its environment begins" (Dewey quoted in Bennett 2010, p.102). Bennett does not acknowledge this connection, but she does draw a line between Dewey's work and Latour's actant, which she understands as a further elaboration of Dewey's attempt to distance the idea of action from human intentionality. When that action is political, this distancing does not imply a depoliticisation of the human half in the human-nonhuman assemblage in question, but rather a politicisation of the nonhuman after the hyphen. Bennett concludes that "to imagine politics as a realm of human activity alone [may be] a prejudice against a (nonhuman) multitude misrecognized as context, constraint, or tool" (p.107-08).

It seems relevant to point out here that as well as to the work of Dewey, the appreciation of nonhuman objects as political agents can be traced back, if not quite that far back, also to Arjun Appadurai's 1986 introduction to *The Social Life of Things*. Appadurai's text is particularly relevant for my research, because he writes in it specifically about things for sale. Intended for exchange, commodities are for Appadurai "thoroughly socialised" things (2013, p.6), and their compliance to preordained path, or diversion from them, can respectively ensure the reproduction of established

systems of power, or threaten them. Theft, in particular, is for Appadurai "the humblest form of diversion of commodities from preordained paths" (p.26). This is why things ought to be followed – perhaps especially when stolen – because it is when they move that things are all the more revealing of their social contexts, and of the political orders they enable or impede. Appadurai's text implicitly recognises the political agency of nonhuman objects in the human-nonhuman, ever changeable webs that make up the social sphere, at once as it can inspire and inform research attuned to the transformations of boundaries and matter – a commodity, for example, is in Appadurai's understanding only a "phase in the social life of a thing" (2013, p.13), a phase that the thing spatially as well as temporally moves in and out of.

But if Dewey first, and Appadurai later, sowed the seeds of it, it is in recent years that academia has become increasingly aware of the political importance of nonhuman objects. In *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*, an anthology which both Bennett and Marres contribute chapters to, editors Bruce Braun and Sarah Whatmore argue that this awareness challenges "humanist understandings of agency in public life" by countering the idea of deliberative democracy as the only mode of public engagement (2010, p. xi). In Feminist Citizenship Studies, beside Isin's text, I have observed this intention also in Parkins' introduction to *Fashioning the Body Politic* – where she writes that by examining dress practices as political acts, the book aims to offer a critique of the perception that politics is only legitimate when it is rational (2002). It should be noted that most of the chapters in Parkins' book have an historical focus. Indeed, Braun and Whatmore point out that although the awareness itself is new, the scholars who share it don't propose that the political importance of nonhuman, and specifically of technological objects only pertains to the current times, when technology is advanced and ever-present. On the contrary, "they question human authority and self-sufficiency from the outset" (2010, p.xvii). In fact, Braun and Whatmore surmise that from this perspective, "nonhuman and technical objects are an irreducible part of all stories of the becoming-being of the human, both individually and collectively" (p. xix). While neither Parkins nor Braun and Whatmore understand clothes specifically as technologies, these insights allow me to relate my second research question, on the role that the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies might have played in her practice at the turn of the 20th century, back to my first research question, on whether women's shoplifting at this time could be understood as a feminist act of citizenship.

2.3c Misuse Theories

Through the lens of these ideas, shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century may be understood as a relational web, in which the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies render possible, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest or influence the thefts that, especially when considered in the larger web of the kleptomania epidemic as a mediatic phenomenon, are further

distanced from human intentionality. Victorian women might not have been cyborgs yet (Haraway 2019), but a dressed shoplifter at the turn of the 20th century already was her own unique entanglement of technology, fabric and flesh. The shoplifter's body may be understood to extend beyond the point where her skin ends, to encapsulate both her clothes and the object she steals, or in turn the clothes she wears may be understood to encapsulate both the shoplifter's body and the stolen object. In *Worn*, writing about her experience of wearing pointy shoes, Ellen Sampson observes that:

> By extending and lengthening the foot, and thus the bodily schema, and the boundaries of the body, I, as wearer and performer, was more 'in the world' … My dressed body moved forward before me, my shoes jutting out beyond my feet (2020, p.31)

I want to argue that the same could be said for the sartorial technologies that at the turn of the 20th century, both mediate and facilitate a shoplifter's experience of the world and of the department store, as they further her reach. Of the *Wearable Objects and Curative Things* that their book discusses, Woolley, Johnstone, Sampson and Chambers write that they:

> are social agents, capable of exerting affect and influence on the subjects they encounter (or at least having been marketed to the prospective consumer as having the ability to do so). Neither independent of, nor entirely dependent upon, the bodies of their human co-conspirators (2024, p.4)

Again, this could also apply to the shoplifter's clothes in the late 19th and early 20th century. For example when they failed to function as the wearer expected they would, and gave themselves away: this is how sartorial technologies designed for shoplifting ended up in newspaper archives. Or – and this is where the distinction between what a wearable object is marketed as being for, and the abilities it actually has, becomes most relevant – the sartorial technologies that shoplifters wore at the turn of the 20th century might have been designed, advertised and sold as solutions for other problems, and might have been subsequently adopted and adapted by shoplifters to solve their own. Their abilities might have exceeded those that their inventors foresaw.

I wrote above that Gamman does not return to the descriptions of the sartorial technologies she wore to steal in the essay at the end of her biography of Shirley Pitts, yet she does consider the role that the poor design of retail environments played in her thefts, similarly to how Byrnes, McCabe and Felstead wrote about open-floor displays. Gamman refers to the notion of an object's 'script' as developed by Latour and Madeleine Akrich, and concludes that "successful criminals turn user scripts into abuser scripts" (2012, p.180). A script, in Akrich's understanding, is a prediction about the world that inventors inscribe in their inventions. But whenever its user defines a different role for a technical object from that which its inventor had planned, she argues that a

de-scription occurs (Akrich 1992). This notion recurs in different formulations across STS. It resonates, for example, with the understanding of the 'interpretative flexibility' of technical objects, which allows them to be used for purposes other than those they were invented for. This is a crucial concept among social constructivists, and in *TechnoFeminism* Wajcman considers why it may be especially significant in a world where most engineers are men, and women's emancipation relies on the appropriation of existing technology. "Technofeminist research has been at the forefront of moves to deconstruct the designer/user divide and, more generally, that between the production and consumption of artefacts," she argues (2004, p.46). Yet in material semiotics, more recently, the theory of the social construction of technology has been recognised to reflect a kind of theoretical humanism, for the privileged position it still assumes people to have, for instance in defining different roles for the technical objects they interact with. In light of the Object Turn, Marres has updated the idea of the interpretative flexibility of technical objects towards what she refers to as their 'performative flexibility' instead: where the former "in good social constructionist fashion, locates flexibility in the different interpretations that actors may bring to technology, performative flexibility highlights the adaptability of devices themselves" (2015, p.74).

Relevant to understand this adaptability, or the extent to which a technical object might lend itself to a purpose other than the one it was invented for, is also the theory of affordances. Originally formulated in the 1960s by psychologist James Gibson, this theory aims to describe the relationships that exist between organisms and their environments. In Gibson's understanding, "the affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (1979, p.127). Informed also by the perspectives in social sciences which he describes as 'sociologies of the object', Mike Michaels revisits Gibson's theory to consider how seemingly nonsensical events take place in everyday life. If "everyday events can unfold toward the possible (rather than the probable)," he argues that it is "in relation to the 'affordances' associated with particular objects" (Michael 2016, p.647-8). Affordances depend upon an object's propensities, one's own body's capacities when interacting with it, and one's own unfolding plans. The theory of affordances is valuable for thinking with misuse because, like Marres' performative flexibility, it highlights how actors' interpretations, or their plans, are only one factor in the unfolding event for which an object's own propensities are equally decisive. Indeed, Michael calls that among objects and humans a 'technosociality' (2016). Sampson references Gibson's theory too. When she introduces her "'wearing-based' research methodology," Sampson observes that "[g]arments are active and at times unruly agents" (2020, p.34), that "help and hinder intention" (p.37). While garments are not referred to specifically as technologies in *Worn*, this is to say that they too can contribute to the unfolding of improbable events. Later on in the book she takes this notion a step further to understand the wearer in a network:

> Taking the idea of a distributed personhood in a chain of affordances, and of the artefact as both mediator and facilitator of intentionality, we are presented with personhoods that may spread out from the body via artefacts and artefacts that can facilitate or hinder a user's intentions (Sampson 2020, p.125)

I bring this back to Sampson's *Worn* because while affordances, performative flexibility and descriptions are especially discussed in STS, the theorising of misuse is not exclusive to this body of literature, and comparable concepts have developed outside its disciplinary boundaries. Given that the nonhuman objects of my enquiry, women's clothes, have only rarely been recognised as technologies, it is useful to refer as well to texts from other fields that have come to similar conclusions by way of different trajectories. In Queer Theory for example, Sara Ahmed refers as 'queer use' to the use of something which is not the use that something was designed for. Queer use occurs "when things are used for purposes other than the ones for which they were intended" (Ahmed 2019, p.26). An emphasis on the use, or usefulness of things from a human perspective, might seem to return us to the kind of theoretical humanism that the Object Turn endeavours to overcome. Yet in the conclusion of *What's the Use?* Ahmed proposes that "a potentiality … already resides in things given how they have taken shape. Queer use could be what we are doing when we release that potential" (2019, p.200) which evokes Bennett's reflections on the power of things. Ultimately, Ahmed understands use as distributed, as a relation which depends on the affordances associated with things.

Although she does not reference his work directly, Ahmed's understanding of queer use also brings to mind Michel de Certeau's writings on consumers' resistance. The consumer becomes the user in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, through a shift of perspective that wants to draw attention to the active role she plays (1988). Although she also does not reference it directly, Wajcman arguably hints to this text when, in order to widen the network beyond the masculine engineering lab, she considers technological commodities in the marketplace, and writes that "consumers or users modify the meanings and values of technologies in the practices of everyday life" (2004, p.47). Consumers for de Certeau resist not by refusing the products they are presented with, but "by using them with respects to ends and references foreign to the system" (1988, p. xiii). Even though consumers' ends and references develop within a particular system of power, that system does not capture them entirely. When this perspective is applied to the context of women's consumer citizenship, and the changes in commerce and that were underway in the second half of the 19th century, it fits with Felski's argument that while women's desires might have been manipulated into existence in the interest of profit, once awakened those desires might also have given way to unexpected consequences, ultimately upsetting patriarchal hierarchies (1995). De Certeau defines as consumers' antidisciplinary everyday 'tactics', the clandestine and almost invisible ways that consumers develop of seizing opportunities as they present themselves, in

order to outwit systems of power (1988). Although his understanding of consumers' tactics have been referenced by many – Wendy Parkins describes as tactics the suffragettes' wearing of the kind of clothes that allow them to blend in with a crowd of shoppers (2002, p.99), Sarah Hallenbeck describes as tactics the ways that early female riders adapt the bicycle to their own needs (2016, p.36) – when shoplifting is conceptualised as an extension of normative consumer behaviour (Camhi 1993; Pinch 1998; Gamman 1999), his definition of everyday tactics also arguably applies to shoplifting methods. De Certeau is too early for the Object Turn, yet his ideas are especially relevant for my research because he might have been the first to recognise the radical potential of misuse specifically in the commercial sphere, and to give credit to the consumer as a political agent rather than just the passive victim of temptations. This is important when considering how women's clothes can be misused, or rather misworn – such as when the smuggler's loose garment becomes a canvas for other garments to be stitched on (Abdul-Jabbar 2017), a fashionable fan (Parkins 2002) or a hatpin (Segrave 2016) become weapons, or even when deep shoplifter's pockets are repurposed "for concealing stones intended to smash windows" by the criminal turned suffragette (McDonald 2015, p.92).

Conclusion to Chapter Two

In the first section of this chapter on Shoplifting Literature, I have introduced texts on women's shoplifting written in the late 19th and early 20th century, and texts from the 1990s that reinterpret them. While these later analyses refer to, and reproduce archival data on the sartorial technologies hidden underneath shoplifters' clothes, my review shows that they tend to understand what shoplifters might have worn less in terms of what the shoplifter's clothes could functionally do, and more in terms of what they stood for, as symbols or disguises. It also shows that their reassessment of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century as an act of subversion, could be further developed if understood in relation to both the changes to women's citizenship that were underway at the time, and expanded definitions of citizenship that can account for the bodies and experiences of women in the historical context when this shoplifting reportedly happened. In the second section on Feminist Citizenship Studies, I have referenced texts that question and challenge a traditional understanding of citizenship, built on the exclusion of those who do not qualify for it. While they differ from one another in various ways, these alternative formulations all expose the inherent bias of the disembodied ideal of the citizen, and reframe citizenship as an embodied practice rather than just a status, which takes place in the public sphere. Through the lens of these texts an act of citizenship does not need to be grandiose, lawful, nor deliberate, and does not have to aim for political recognition. In the same section I have also reviewed texts that consider the relation between women's citizenship and consumption in the late 19th and early 20th century, in the consumer societies of the United States, United Kingdom and France. While the

significance of the clothes worn by the consumer citizen is brought up in these analyses, they are once again most often understood as symbols or disguises, rather than sartorial technologies, despite the fact that patenting was on the rise at the time, and that many of the inventions patented by female inventors were clothing-related. When women's clothes are recognised as sartorial technologies, the concept of material participation, developed across Citizenship Studies and STS, contributes an alternative approach to consider their significance in women's citizenship claims at this point in time. In the third section of this chapter on the Object Turn, I have reviewed the origins and interdisciplinary development of the ideas that the concept of material participation builds upon, which concern the role that nonhuman objects can play in relational networks. Primarily through the work of Jane Bennett, I have considered the political implications of the Object Turn, and finally its influence on the theorising of misuse, by way of a set of texts which will help me to understand how some of the numerous clothing inventions patented at the turn of the 20th century might have served a purpose other than the one they were invented for.

My research questions emerge at the intersection of the literatures that I have reviewed in this chapter, which also inform my approach as I set out to answer them. In the next chapter, on methods, I will outline how archival research and the making and wearing of selected inventions give substance to, and expand upon, the ideas presented here – providing not just new findings to answer these questions, but different angles from which to consider the questions themselves.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODS

This chapter begins with an acknowledgment of the influence that Sadiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives* has had on my approach to archival data, and research methods more broadly. Here I explain that my aim with this research is not to discover what happened, but to consider what might have happened, in the gaps between archives. I go on to outline the three methods that I will use to conduct my research throughout this thesis. Although in practice I will move back and forth between them, I present them here, for clarity, as three separate steps. These are archival research in newspaper archives, archival research in patent archives, and the making and wearing of performative replicas of selected clothing inventions.

In the second section on newspaper archives I discuss, to begin with, the process that led me to them. I had originally considered criminal records as my research data, but came to realise that female shoplifters, at least in London, were not often trialled in the late 19th and early 20th century. I consider why this might have been the case, even at a time when shoplifting was perceived to be on the increase. I then reflect on the role that the press might have had in the diffusion of this perception and of shoplifting itself, as well as, arguably, of specific shoplifting technologies, and turn to newspaper archives instead. I explain how I conduct my searches in these archives, what keywords and filters I use, the difficulties I encounter there, and how I organise my findings into what I describe as an archive of failures, because it is usually only the thefts of the women who got caught that get written about in the press. I also reflect on the successful thefts of the shoplifters who were never caught, that newspapers could not have been writing about.

In the third section on patent archives, I discuss how patents for clothing inventions from the turn of the 20th century help me to imagine what's missing from newspaper archives: the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn. I consider that patent archives, too, may be considered archives of failures, since many of the inventions that were patented failed to become as popular or commercially successful as their inventors clearly expected they would. Again, I explain how I conduct my searches in these archives and how I organise my findings. I introduce patents in their different components, as documents that can tell us something about the problems that a society was going through at the time when they were issued, and that are prescriptive about the purpose of the invention they describe, but can still lend themselves to alternative readings.

In the fourth section on making and wearing, I discuss how the making and wearing of performative replicas of selected clothing inventions patented at the turn of the 20th century, ground in tangible experience my speculative reflections on the alternative uses that these inventions, or sartorial technologies similar in kind, might have lent themselves to. In particular, I am interested in whether they might ever have been worn by successful shoplifters. I explain why I call the result of my attempt to follow a patent's instructions a performative replica, outline the various steps of this process, and consider what I can and cannot learn from it.

This research was carried out in compliance with Goldsmiths' Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC) and received ethical approval.

3.1 A Note on Method

> The endeavor is … to exhume open rebellion from the case file
>
> *– Sadiya Hartman, Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*

Sadiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives* begins with 'A Note on Method'. Here she admits that what she knows of the lives of the women that she writes about, she has learnt in archives that categorise them as problematic. Hartman wants to craft a counter-narrative: she "pressed at the limits of the case file and the document" to pry revolutionary ideals out of ordinary life stories (2021, p. xvii). For example, later on in the book, Hartman would come to write that fifteen-year-old Mattie Jackson, in detention at the New York State Reformatory for Women in the late 1910s, "treated possession as if it were conditional, rather than absolute, as if beautiful objects … were rightly a communal luxury". In Hartman's interpretation, Mattie is "indifferent to rightful ownership and innocent of the notion of theft" (p.70-1). Admittedly, aside from this one example where she is in fact writing about someone stealing, the protagonists of *Wayward Lives* would have been very different historical subjects from the shoplifters that I write about. Hartman's book ultimately focuses on "young black women as sexual modernists, free lovers, radicals, and anarchists" (p. xvii) rather than thieves, while the shoplifters who could blend into a crowd of shoppers at the turn of the 20th century were most likely white, and either middle-class or at least "well dressed" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; Rose 1912, p.2; *New-York Tribune* 1920, p.4) enough to pass as potential customers in middle-class department stores. Yet Hartman's approach to archival data from this time period still informs and inspires what I set out to do. Although I am not going to speculate about these shoplifters' ideals – about whether their actions were performed at the time "in the name of anything" (Isin 2008, p.38) – when I ask if women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century could be understood, with hindsight, as a feminist act of citizenship, and what role these shoplifters' clothes, as sartorial technologies, might have played in their thefts, I too go

in search of a narrative different from the one that might emerge from a more straightforward interpretation of my data. Rather than the truth, I am looking for the possibility of untold stories.

The understanding that a method and its object are mutually constitutive (Haraway 1991; Barad 2007; Law 2004; 2008; 2019) is central to my research practice. It is in this respect that it is important to acknowledge the ontological politics (Mol 1999) that lead a researcher to research, and therefore perform, a reality or narrative rather than another. While all research methods should be understood as constitutive of their objects, and vice versa, in Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford's formulation an inventive method is the one that engages more directly than others with the form-giving process that is essential to all social inquiry. The purpose of an inventive method "is not to capture what is so much as to inspire what might be" (Boehner, Gaver and Boucher quoted in Lury and Wakeford 2012, p.11), or in the case of the inventive methods I use to conduct my research on women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, not to capture what was so much as to imagine what might have been. Inventive methods "expand and explore the possibilities of [a] latency," that of the possible within the actual (Lury and Wakeford 2012, p.15). This is what I would argue that Hartman does, and what I also aspire to do.

3.2 An Archive of Failures: Newspaper Reports

Before I discuss how my research begins in anglophone newspapers' online archives, and how I approach both this research itself, and the archival data from the late 19th and early 20th century that I gather there, I want to clarify what led me to search for recorded accounts of women's shoplifting at this time, in newspaper archives in the first place. When looking for answers to research questions such as mine, court record archives might be considered a more obvious starting point. Yet when one looks for shoplifting cases, for a start, in London's Old Bailey criminal court's online archive, it becomes clear that as the 19th century progresses, the number of women who go on trial for this offense actually decreases. Those from the first half of the century, accessible at oldbaileyonline.org, could still be considered a source of relevant data, even though my research focuses on a later time period. These court cases give us clues as to how shoplifting techniques might have evolved over the course of a hundred years, and are suggestive of their close relation to, and reliance on, prevailing fashions at a given time. Catherine MacNalty for example, who was trialled for shoplifting in 1806, had been able to fit as much as eight shawls in each of her pockets (t18060917-18). The following year Hannah Stevens, indicted for stealing seventeen pair of gloves and three pairs of stockings, was said to have worn "two pockets almost as big as sacks" (t18070701-56). At the turn of the 19th century, these women are still wearing 18th-century pockets (Fennetaux 2008), and taking advantage of their generous dimensions. While tie-on pockets did not disappear as soon as they went out of fashion, and shoplifters especially continued to wear them (Burman and Fennetaux 2019), the fact that by 1838 Mary Paget stole a

scent-bottle by means of her reticule (t18380101-356) – the kind of small purse that was popular in the early decades of the 19th century despite its impracticality (Burman 2002; Matthews 2010; Carlson 2023) – is indicative of how shoplifting techniques, whether or not any premeditation was involved in the crime, might have had to adapt or respond to changing trends in womenswear.

But the fact that fewer shoplifters were trialled in the second half of the 19th century, at least in London, should not be taken to mean that any less shoplifting occurred. In the years of the kleptomania epidemic, on the contrary, the general impression was that shoplifting was on the increase. Yet neither should these fewer court cases be taken to mean that fewer shoplifters were caught and more succeeded. Fewer trials might testify instead to the new leniency toward shoplifting, and the more forgiving laws that Felstead writes about and welcomes in *The Underworld of London* (1923). They might testify to how the female shoplifter, especially if she was wealthy, had been recast from criminal to "victim" (Abelson 1989, p.151; Felski 1995, p.65; Gamman 1999, p.79), and was now more likely to be pitied than trialled. It is important to note however, that the general impression that more shoplifting than ever before was taking place in the second half of the 19th century was also primarily an impression, that newspaper reports contributed to, but whose accuracy is not easy to establish today. It was only in the second half of the century that department stores proliferated (Rappaport 2000; Cohen 2017), making comparisons with previous times difficult. And although in theory a careful analysis of stores' inventories might help to clarify how much shoplifting actually happened, in the 19th century "methods of bookkeeping and stock taking … were still wildly inexact" (Abelson 1989, p.112), and still in 1913, "professional thief-catcher" D. J. Cotter revealed to *The Evening Times* that "[t]he department stores haven't yet reduced their accounting to an infallible system. We have returned truckloads of stuff to the stores – and found that the managers hadn't missed them" (1913, p.3). Even if they could, department stores might have preferred not to keep a written record of shoplifting cases, and rather deal with shoplifters off records so as to protect their reputation, and to avoid boycotts if the women they accused had influential friends – as did Elizabeth B. Phelps, the vice president of the National Woman's Suffrage Association in New York, allegedly unjustly accused of stealing candy from Macy's in 1870 (Abelson 1989, p.120-22). Another reason why department stores might have preferred not to publicly accuse shoplifters was to avoid the risk of spreading the virus that caused women to steal. "Since kleptomania was contagious," Leslie Camhi observes that at least in France, in the late 19th century, "authorities may also have assumed that merely reporting the incidence of theft would cause it to increase" (1993, p.3).

This worry was not unsubstantiated. The kleptomania epidemic was first and foremost a mediatic phenomenon. To establish whether the impression that more shoplifting than ever before was taking place at the turn of the 20th century was an accurate one, is not the focus of this study – but if it was and shoplifting was on the increase, the newspaper reports featuring detailed descriptions

of shoplifting techniques and technologies would have played a role in the contagion. These newspapers might have been motivated by a desire to report the truth, but they might also have been motivated by the understanding that sensational headlines about women and crime sell more papers, or they might have shared the political views of those who opposed women's newfound freedom of movement in department stores – the same political views that might have led to the female shoplifter, if she was wealthy, being recast from criminal to victim. Whether or not their reports were exaggerated for political or business purposes, what these newspapers reported upon in such detail had yet more chances to happen, or to happen again, once those reports were published and distributed. It could perhaps be argued that in the late 19th and early 20th century, the newspaper reports on shoplifters' techniques and technologies, that emerged from and reflected the views and concerns of the newspapers that published them, were performative of their object of study, the shoplifting which was then in turn performative of yet more reporting. It is of course difficult to determine to what extent this was actually the case. If shoplifters were asked how they came up with their techniques or technologies, their answers are usually not included in newspaper reports – although I did come across one in which a "youthful criminal" is said to have "claimed to be inventor" of a gauntlet glove with small hooks that she would attach stolen jewellery to (Weippiert 1891, p.3). What we do know however, is that in the second half of the 19th century, "[c]ompulsory education, the mechanization of paper making, type casting, and typesetting as well as the introduction of fast rotary presses and increased advertising revenue laid the foundation for a press that catered to the 'millions'" (Rappaport 2000, p.112). Again, this was the case in both the United Kingdom and the United States, where after 1896, advancements in the postal service meant that women's magazines as well as newspapers, could be delivered to rural areas too (Helvenston and Bubolz 1999). And while it may be difficult to determine the extent to which newspaper reports contributed to the diffusion of particular shoplifting techniques or technologies, the thought had certainly crossed some people's minds. For example, in the 1929 silent film *Asphalt*, when a shoplifter is asked how she came up with the idea of stealing a diamond using the hollowed tip of her umbrella, she admits that she once read about it in a newspaper (Fig. 3.1).

It is because of the relative scarcity of criminal records on women's shoplifting at the turn of 20th century, and of middle-class women from court proceedings in general, and because of the key role played by the media in the kleptomania epidemic, that I chose to search for recorded accounts of women's shoplifting in anglophone newspapers' online archives. The reports that I have gathered amount to 290 items that come for the most part from either the Library of Congress' Chronicling America, or The British Newspaper Archive. Occasionally I have consulted Trove, the National Library of Australia's newspaper archive, or the archives of influential newspapers which might not be included in these nationwide collections, such as *The New York Times*. Although I have searched at times for earlier or later accounts, for comparison, I have been focusing for the most part on the period between 1881 and 1920. The years of the kleptomania epidemic are not

clearly defined, but articles discussing women's shoplifting as a neurosis or disease, a malady or a plague, appear in anglophone newspapers throughout this time (*Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser* 1884; *The Evening World* 1900; *The Savannah Morning News* 1903; *New-York Tribune* 1920), and I wanted to consider a period long enough to notice whether changing fashions had any impact on prevailing shoplifting techniques, at least according to newspaper reports. I searched for keywords such as 'shoplifting' or 'kleptomania', combined with specific items of women's dress, such as 'glove', 'muff', 'umbrella', and so on. Often in the thousands, the numbers of results generated from these searches should however not be taken as evidence of the more or less important role that each of these items respectively played in women's shoplifting over this time period. Not only was not all of women's shoplifting reported upon, but not all newspapers, not all issues, nor all of the pages for each newspaper's issue are preserved in the archives I consulted. At times, the item of women's dress that I was searching for was mentioned in a newspaper article as the object that a shoplifter stole, rather than as the means by which she did so. Other times it was not mentioned in the article on women's shoplifting itself, but in an advertisement positioned next to it on the newspaper's page, that the searching filter I used picked up on (Fig. 3.2). The same article might also be reprinted multiple times by different newspapers, recurring throughout my search results, but referring to only one theft. While this testifies to the fact that reports about women's shoplifting in department stores either sold more papers, or were otherwise supportive enough of the political views of a particular newspaper or of its readership to be deemed worth reprinting, it is also further evidence that the numbers generated from these searches should not be trusted to determine whether one item of women's dress lent itself to shoplifting more readily than another at a given time. Still, specific articles that I have come across in the process were able to provide valuable insights nevertheless, and those were the ones that I saved. I organised my collection in different categories according to the item that facilitated, enabled, or otherwise played a role other than that of the stolen object, in the shoplifting act that each article discussed. In the process of collecting and organising these articles I might notice that specific techniques or items of dress were discussed only or prevalently at a given time within my date range, and would run subsequent searches in both newspaper archives and in the archives of women's magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* or *Women's Wear*, to determine whether this prevalence corresponded to those items being more or less fashionable at that time, or to new styles or trends being introduced. I also introduced additional categories for the supporting actors, or actants, that I frequently encountered in the crime scenes described in newspaper reports: female detectives, notorious criminals, and the kleptomania excuse [Appendix A].

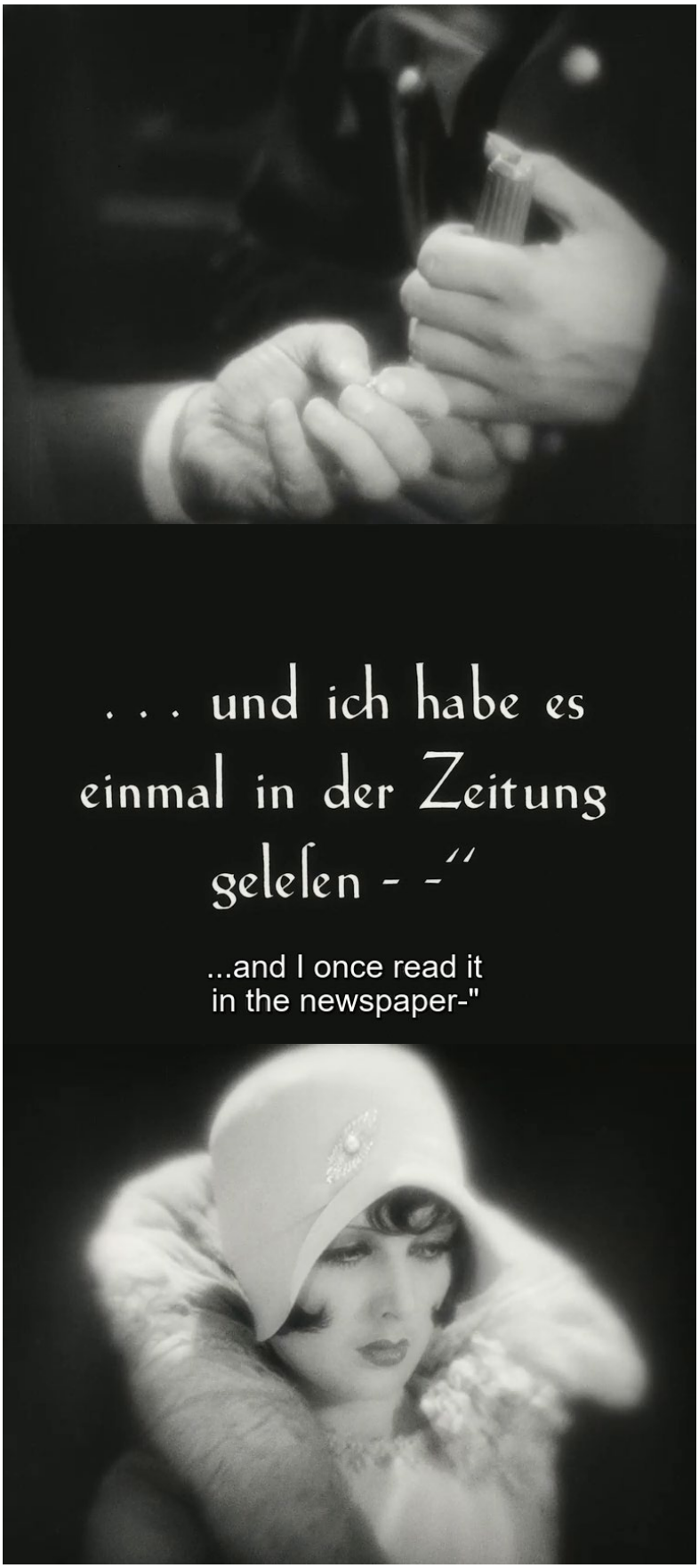


Fig. 3.1: Betty Amann plays a shoplifter who draws inspiration from a newspaper report, in Joe May's silent film *Asphalt*, 1929.

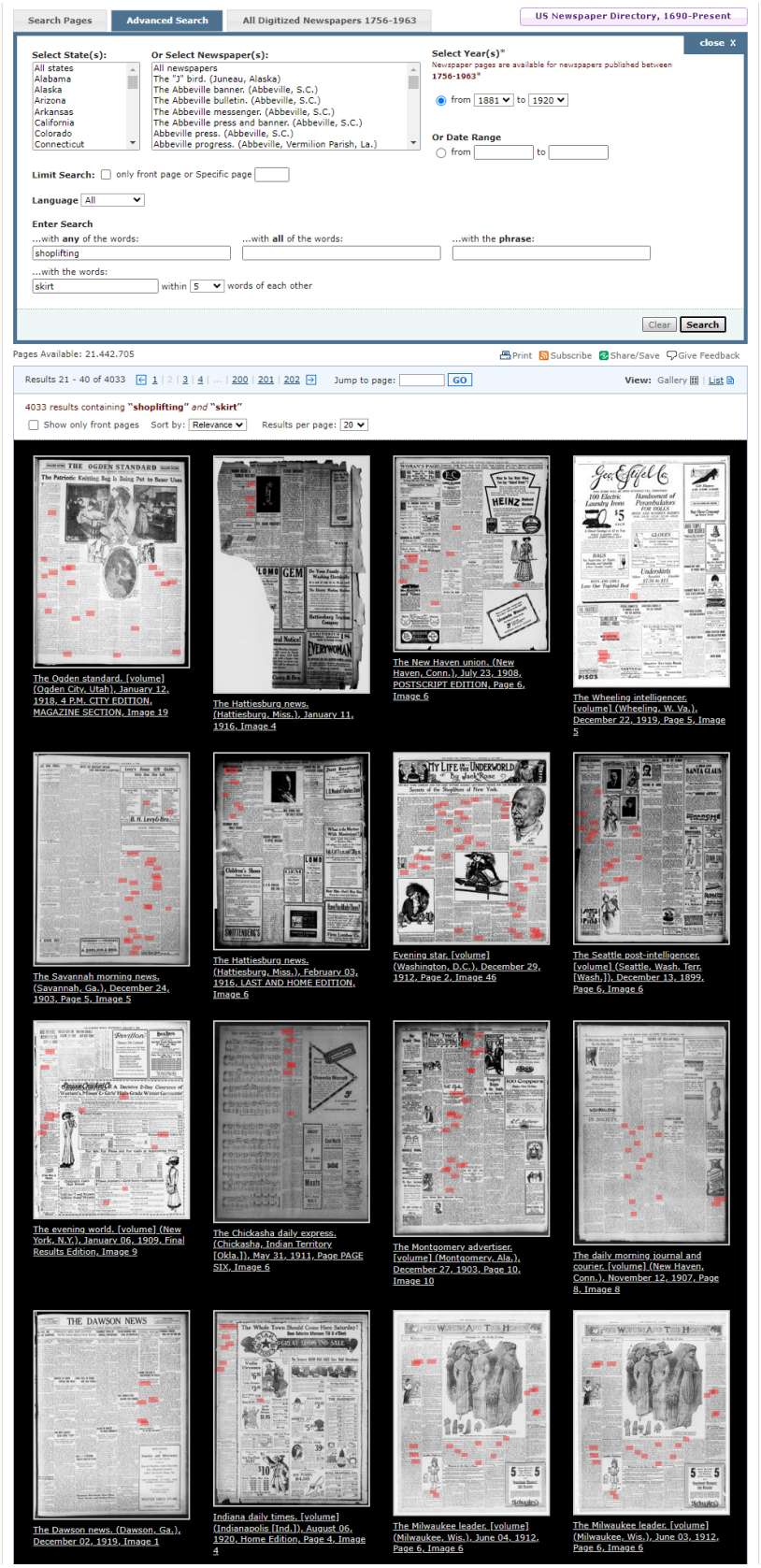


Fig. 3.2: An example of searching for the words 'shoplifting' and 'skirt' in the Chronicling America online archive. Between 1881 and 1920, this search brings up 4033 results. While some of these results are useful, and I will return to them in the next chapter, this number itself should not be relied upon. Although I selected that the words should be within 5 words of each other, it is evident at first glance, from the pink highlights, that in some cases the word 'shoplifting' is found in an article, and the word 'skirt' in an advert on the same page. The same article on the bottom row, also appears twice.

Fig. 3.3: *The San Francisco Call* warns its readers that shoplifters are taking advantage of the big muffs that are fashionable in 1912: "[t]he magnet in the muff draws a pair or two of the stockings into the place where the woman's hands ought to be". This practice is referred to as "muffing", p.1.

Each report in my collection consists of text, often in a very small font size, printed on a white, sepia or yellowed background. While these are photocopies, the paper is still frequently creased, the ink smudged or faded in places, the scan itself blurry or dark in others. Illustrations or caricatures, as well as ads and later photographs, fill the gaps between articles, or between sections of the same, and Gibson Girl-type characters feature frequently in American newspapers. The tone of the text is rarely sympathetic toward shoplifters, but not necessarily as condemning as one might expect. Occasionally, it betrays a reporter's begrudging admiration for their skills or their techniques – such as when *The Waterbury Evening Democrat* pronounces some shoplifters as having "rapidity and grace of movement and remarkable self possession" (Weippiert 1891, p.3). How a theft allegedly occurred, or how it might occur, is usually written down as a precise script of consecutive steps, sometimes accompanied by detailed diagrams (Fig. 3.3).

Collectively, the recorded accounts that I have gathered add up to what I call an archive of failures, because they are usually reports of shoplifters caught in the act – whereas, especially if a department store's accounting system is "wildly inexact" (Abelson 1989, p.112), when shoplifting goes well it leaves no trace. In the art and practice of shoplifting as "knowledge from below" (Halberstam 2011, p.11; Foucault 2003), skill and luck both consist in the ability to go unnoticed, to be missing from newspaper archives. Archival traces record occasions when shoplifters failed to be illegible, both to the authorities and commentators of their time, and to posterity – with some exceptions, when a theft was deemed extraordinary enough that it deserved reporting even if it had been successful. Yet the journalist who writes about that extraordinary theft might not always be able to tell how or why it succeeded, to describe the shoplifting technique or the technology that was used in as much detail as the journalist who writes about the theft that failed, about the shoplifter who was searched or driven to confess. Save for rare, sensational memoirs (Lyons 2019 [1913]; Gamman 2012), it is mostly through the failures in newspaper archives, mostly through this archive of failures that we can know or suspect anything today, about shoplifting techniques and technologies at the turn of the 20th century. If "dominant history teems with the remnants of alternative possibilities" (Halberstam 2011, p.19), then these recorded accounts of shoplifters caught in the act are the legible remnants that conjure up illegible success stories. From the starting point of this archive of failures I follow the invitation of Nydia Swaby and Chandra Frank, in the introduction to an issue of *Feminist Review* dedicated to archival experiments, to use "fragments and scatters in the archive as a point of reorientation … for other stories and narratives to emerge" (2020, p.125). These alternative narratives or illegible success stories, are the latency in the archives whose possibility I wish to expand and explore.

This is not to say that their illegibility or absence from the archives is regrettable. Recent feminist scholarship in archival theory has questioned whether presence and legibility in historical archives should still be considered a desirable outcome for marginalised groups (Dever 2017; Swaby and

Frank 2020), given that no archive is ever neutral in its formation or intent. Presence and legibility in newspaper archives should certainly not be considered a desirable outcome in the perhaps self-evident case of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, when women's shoplifting at this point in time is posited as an act of citizenship. Absence from newspaper archives is auspicious in this instance, as the condition of possibility for any success story. And this absence should not be considered per se an obstacle for the researcher to overcome or resolve. As Maria Tamboukou suggests, "in the same way that we interpret voices, we should perhaps start interpreting silences or somehow include them in our analysis" (2014, p.619). Of course, a lack of records is no more proof that any successful shoplifting occurred, than it is proof that no shoplifting occurred at a given time and place. It does not even exclude that shoplifting might have occurred and failed, and have been dealt with without written records according to a department store's policy, or that records might have been written which no longer exist. But proof is not what I am looking for – in my analysis I do not aim to capture what was but to imagine what might have been. And if shoplifting did occur at that given time and place, and if the shoplifter went unnoticed, her success story and the detailed description of the technique or technology she used would most likely be missing from newspaper archives. It is important to remember as well, that what's missing from the archives always outnumbers what's there: for every shoplifter who got caught, there would have been plenty more who succeeded.

Of course, to speculate from the remnants and fragments in the archives, about the illegible success stories that are missing from them, is a political choice. In the archives especially, partiality is inevitable. Feminist archival theory now recognises that the researcher's emotions, theoretical frameworks, gender identity and interests, constitute her research findings – and vice versa, are constituted by them in intra-action (Tamboukou 2014). To call them 'findings' in fact, might already be misleading: archive materials are no longer accepted as simply pre-existing and awaiting discovery. Rather, the researcher's interaction is understood to be just as formative of their evidentiary status, as the archive's own history of formation (Dever 2017). "Each way of envisioning the past entails a set of decisions about how to imagine what has come before" writes Bo Ruberg in *Sex Dolls at Sea: Imagined Histories of Sexual Technologies*, "the politics of the present lie in the practices of envisioning the past – regardless of what is true" (2022, p.10). It is in this respect that the idea of 'giving voice' to silenced narratives ought to be questioned (Sheller 2012; Pester 2017), because it risks erasing the researcher's entanglement with her object of study. It risks resurrecting the myth of an impartial observer (Haraway 1991; Johnson 2020), which is no more believable as an ideal, than that of the disembodied citizen whose vote is always impartial. In my research, I gather shoplifters' stories into an archive of failures, but this archive of failures is no more neutral in its formation than the archives these stories are gathered from. I strive to do justice to the shoplifters I encounter in it, but I could not presume to speak for them. My own emotions, frameworks, identity, interests and political views inform how I approach, first,

the act of searching for them, and second, the newspaper reports on these women's failed thefts. Newspaper reports which, as I noted above, reflect the political views, interests, identity, framework and emotions of the ones who wrote them. For example, Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, which I reviewed in the previous chapter, features descriptions of London's shoplifters which were first published as newspaper reports. Among many other *London Poor*, it also features the description of a young girl selling watercress, who would become what Carolyn Steedman describes as an obsession of hers, for over a decade. Yet in an eponymous chapter in Tamsin Spargo's *Reading the Past*, Steedman acknowledges that "the Little Watercress Girl was indeed Henry Mayhew's child, a figure wrought out of his perception and his transcription of her words. She is not to be found looking away from his gaze" (2000, p.23). From this perspective, those shoplifters too should be referred to as Henry Mayhew's shoplifters. And to do so would be to echo Elaine Abelson's remark, that "[i]t is the male voice that we hear" when we search in the archives for the stories of female shoplifters (1989, p.8). As I retell those stories once again, I wish at least to make sure that it's clear that I do so in my own voice.

3.3 An Archive of Failures: Patents

I wrote above that, with some exceptions, archival traces record occasions when shoplifters failed to be illegible. It would be unfair however to impute this failure to the shoplifter alone. Responsibility for the failure, as well as for the success of a shoplifting act at the turn of the 20th century, should be shared across the relational network that constitutes a department store's crime scene. It could be argued that to some extent, perhaps as part of their recasting of the female shoplifter from criminal to victim, newspaper reports on women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century already recognise this. As they describe, often in detail, the sartorial technologies that shoplifters wore to steal, responsibility for a failed theft is effectively shared between humans and nonhumans in the department store in question. Still, that the media should pay attention to clothes that fail is nothing unusual. Bruno Latour writes that when objects break down, the role they play in a social situation becomes temporarily more obvious (2005), and this may be especially true of clothes, which as Ellen Sampson observes, "are frequently most present for us when they do not function" (2020, p.73). To this day, gossip columns about wardrobe malfunctions are frequently written about clothes, especially women's clothes, that fail to function as the wearer expects they will. On the other hand, it is not just shoplifters' clothes but technologies in general that become more invisible the more successful they are (Jungnickel 2019), even when invisibility is not in their best interest. Of course, when a sartorial technology is perceived as a fluid component (De Laet and Mol 2000) in a relational network comprising of a woman, the clothes she wears, the object she steals and the department store where the theft occurs, success and failure are relative terms: what is a success from the woman's perspective is a failure from the department store's, and vice

versa. When I write of shoplifters who failed to be illegible, I do not mean to pass any kind of moral judgement. Rather, I understand this failure spatially, as collapse, as well as temporally, as a moment of rupture between the present and the anticipated future (Carroll, Jeevendrampillai, and Parkhurst 2017). It is in this temporal sense that failure also precedes invention (Carroll, Jeevendrampillai, and Parkhurst 2017; Ahmed 2019), meaning that successful and unsuccessful shoplifters' clothes do not need to be thought of as entirely separate from one another. The sartorial technologies described in newspaper reports may have inspired the women and shoplifters who read them, not just to imitate the techniques and technologies of the shoplifters who came before them – as in the case of the shoplifter in *Asphalt* and her umbrella with the hollow tip (Fig. 3.1) – but to improve upon them, once they identified the reason why those clothes had failed to function, in the first place, as the shoplifters who came before them had expected they would. By way of this improvement, if it was effective, unsuccessful shoplifters' clothes might have become successful.

To try and imagine the sartorial technologies that escaped the archive of failures, how they functioned and why they succeeded where others did not, I cross reference reports of shoplifters' clothes from newspaper articles published at the turn of the 20th century with patents for clothing inventions issued at around the same time. Searching for shoplifters' clothes in patent archives might seem counterintuitive: shoplifting is an unlawful practice, while a patent affords to an inventor legal ownership over an idea. From the date of issue for as long as it is valid, a patent is a record of intellectual property, whereas stealing defies property laws. But my second research question concerns the role that the shoplifter's clothes, specifically as sartorial technologies, might have played in her practice – I am interested in how these technologies developed and evolved, in their relation to prevailing fashions and to the material culture of the society where they emerged. As intellectual productions, patents are the result of material conditions and social relationships. They "provide a glimpse into the socio-cultural context of the time" (Jungnickel 2018, p.496), and patenting as a whole was on the rise in the 19th century: designated patent offices opened in the United States in 1836, the United Kingdom in 1852, and France in 1901 (Hemmungs Wirtén 2019). In patent archives, chronicles of inventive activities may be surmised that can provide a glimpse, or shed some light, on the relations, development and evolution of inventions beyond those that patents could legitimately be granted to. The sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters wore or might have worn at the turn of the 20th century could most certainly not be patented, yet the sartorial technologies that could and were patented at around the same time, albeit for purposes other than shoplifting, help me to imagine how they might have functioned and why they might have succeeded.

Of course, no less than newspaper archives, it is important to keep in mind that patent archives are neither unbiased nor comprehensive. "Patents measure inventive activity imperfectly" writes

Zorina Khan “because not all inventions are patented or patentable” (2000, p.164). Even when unlawful inventions are not the subject of one’s research, we should be wary therefore of relying uniquely on patents to understand the different solutions to a problem that people came up with at a given time (Peteu and Helvenston Gray 2009, p.48). And even the inventions which made it into patent archives might have been categorised in ways that restrict their accessibility. Kara Swanson describes how the American patent office operated in the mid-19th century: “[t]o recognize an invention as new, the examiners needed to compare it to previous inventions and knowledge, as represented by earlier patents … Creating knowledge hierarchies as they divided inventions into classes by subject” (2017, p.44). While such categorisations may be convenient for the researcher who is searching today for historical patents for clothing inventions specifically, these knowledge hierarchies ought to be taken into account when working with patents as research data. More than the solutions to a problem, historical patents might be helpful to understand the problem itself: “the things that did not work, that consistently broke down or were … not successful” (Peteu and Helvenston Gray 2009, p.48). As much as in my collection of newspaper reports on shoplifting methods, in patents archives too what is preserved are histories of spatial and temporal failures. The inventions whose patents we can access today contextualise themselves as solutions to the problems caused by objects that did not function in the society of their time, or to the problems which previous inventions, that they sought to replace, had failed to resolve. But the patent archive could be considered an archive of failures also because, with hindsight, it is immediately obvious that the inventions that were granted patents have rarely become as commonplace, or changed the course of history as much as their inventors promise they will. This is not necessarily because they were faulty. As STS scholars have pointed out, “it is not necessarily technical efficiency, but rather the contingencies of sociotechnical circumstances and the play of institutional interests that favour one technology over another” (Wajcman 2004, p.36). Yet “[patent] archives record the work of all inventors, irrespective of commercial success” (Jungnickel 2020a, p.71). As a result, most of the patents that still survive in the archives are themselves “remnants of alternative possibilities” (Halberstam 2011, p.19), of imagined futures that never came to be.

In my search for patents for clothing inventions which could help me understand how successful shoplifters’ clothes might have worked in the late 19th and early 20th century, I relied first and foremost on the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset. The POP dataset comprises of around 320000 patents for clothing inventions, from all around the world, issued between 1820 and 2020. These are sourced from a range of online and paper-based archives, most notably from the European Patent Office’s Worldwide Patent Statistical Database, PATSTAT GLOBAL, where they are categorised via the International Patent Classification/Cooperative Patent Classification (IPC/CPC) system for ‘A41 – Wearing Apparel’. The POP dataset includes the subcategories A41B, for shirts, underwear, baby linen and handkerchiefs, A41C, for corsets and brassieres, A41D for outerwear,

protective garments and accessories, and A41F, for garment accessories and suspenders (Jungnickel 2020b). The dataset is searchable because POP's research team spent many months cleaning, ordering, correcting errors, and translating worldwide data in English. This was critical especially for older patents of lower quality, poorly scanned or machine-read, which are missing data, were mis-coded or contain typographic errors. Like in newspaper archives, I searched primarily for patents issued between 1881 and 1920: in total, there are 18834 patents in the POP dataset for this date range. Of course, I could not search in the dataset for 'shoplifting' as such – rather, I looked for the items of women's dress that at least according to newspaper reports, had been most consistently playing a role in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, such as 'skirt', 'muff', 'sleeve', 'glove' or 'garter', at times combined with the specific components that according to those reports, turned these items of women's dress into shoplifting technologies, such as 'hooks' or 'elastic'. Occasionally I ran comparative searches on the European Patent Office's own online archive, Espacenet, which at times results in fewer, but other times in more results than on the POP dataset, since older patents might elude the IPC/CPC system. When I wanted to observe peaks of inventiveness concerning specific items, I broadened the date range. When looking at the patenting timelines of specific items, especially items of women's dress, it is important to take into account the effect of Married Women's Property Acts on the rising number of patents issued to female inventors in the United States (Khan 2000), as well as the patenting boom of the 1890s in the United Kingdom (Jungnickel 2018a). But a peak of inventiveness might also be due to an uncomfortable item, or an inconvenient silhouette being fashionable at a given time, and there might be other reasons, too. In their analysis of American patents for women's skirts between 1846 and 1920, for example, Mihaela Cornelia Peteu and Sally Helvenston Gray observe that the high number of patents for foldable bustles issued in 1887 and 1888 can be explained by the competition between two inventors in Bridgeport, Connecticut, who were both trying to come up with a viable version of this technology at the same time (2009). These searches occasionally led me to patents for clothing inventions which were not all that similar to the ones described in newspaper reports about women's shoplifting, but that I could imagine being useful to shoplifters, in specific ways, nevertheless – in these cases, I returned to the newspaper archives with new search terms.

Aside from its title, which usually references the item that the invention it describes endeavours to improve, a patent always includes a patent number and the dates of application and issue, as well as the signatures, or at least the names, of both inventor and witnesses. As a legal document, it introduces an invention by way of both text and annotated technical drawings (Fig. 3.4). The text is specialised and structured, not unlike the newspaper articles I described above but much more formally, as a detailed script of consecutive steps. It usually begins with the inventor's address, often specifies their occupation, or marital status if she is a woman, and ends with a summary of their invention's claims to novelty (Fig. 3.5). In the case of patents for clothing inventions, the

technical drawings are at times accompanied by a sewing pattern. Arguably, technical drawings or sewing patterns, and detailed instructions should allow for a more comprehensive understanding of a garment than the illustrations or photographs, and descriptions published in advertisements and women's magazines can do. Sewing patterns and instructions are what Roland Barthes, borrowing from linguistics, describes as principal shifters between the technological garment and, respectively, image-clothing and written clothing (2007 [1967]). However, this is true for patents only up to a point. In the next section on making and wearing, I will return to the issue of how to address what patents don't say. Omissions here are not just inevitable in the translation from a technological garment to image- and written clothing, or an oversight caused by inventors taking for granted steps or specifications that over a century later would require more thorough explanations to fully comprehend. At times, they are intentional. Eva Hemmungs Wirtén writes of the bargain that patenting involves: "The trade-off for the protection is that you show as well as tell. But just how much that is shown and told is a balancing act". Disclosure may be an essential feature of patents, but the information they include is often elusive on purpose, to limit the reproducibility of one's own intellectual property (Hemmungs Wirtén 2019, p.583).

From the results of my searches in the POP dataset and on Espacenet, I gathered the patents for inventions that in their essential components, as outlined in either their technical drawings as image-clothing, or in their descriptions as written clothing, most resembled the sartorial technologies that featured most frequently in newspaper reports of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, or improved versions of the same (Fig. 3.6, 3.7). My collection amounts to date to 140 patents, over two thirds of which were issued in the United States, and I have organised them in categories matching some of those that I had come up with to organise my collection of newspaper reports [Appendix B]. In bringing it together however, I became especially interested in those patents whose elusive instructions or drawings, whether or not they might have been motivated by an inventor's reluctance at disclosing any more information about their invention than they were strictly required to do, open them up to alternative readings. As Latour observes, "objects overflow their makers" (2005, p.85), and if inventions such as these ever entered circulation, the range of their potential uses would not have been limited to those that their patents prescribe (De Certeau 1988; Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015; Ahmed 2019). If prospective shoplifters did not come across those inventions themselves, they might still have come across the extensive press coverage that new inventions received (*The Gazette-Times* 1914), or advertisements for them (McKnight 2024), in the very same newspapers where shoplifting reports were published (*The Topeka State Journal* 1895a; *The Topeka State Journal* 1895b). Would the thefts that failed have succeeded if the shoplifters who got caught had been wearing sartorial technologies similar to these? Had other shoplifters, the ones who never got caught, in fact been wearing this kind of clothes?

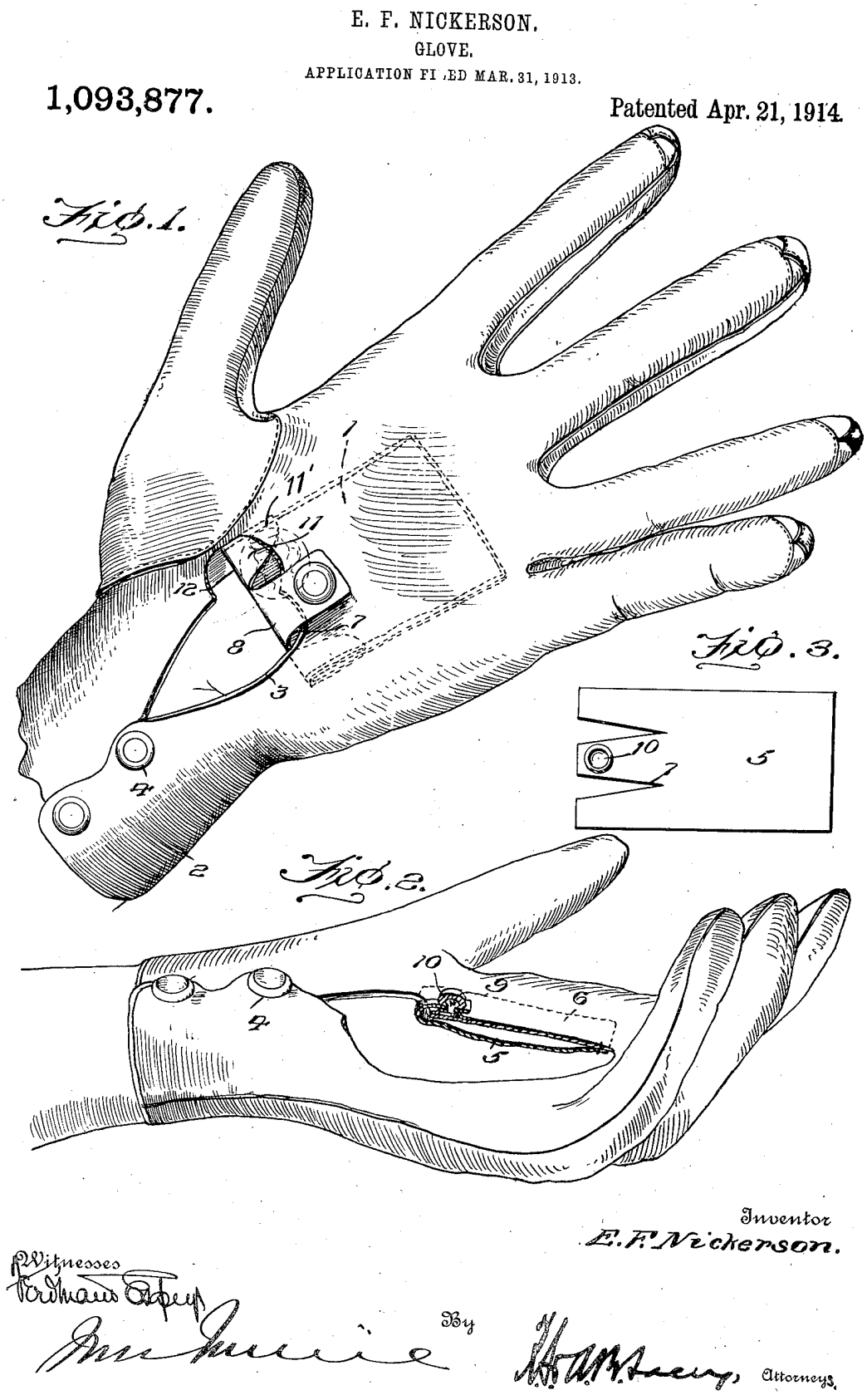


Fig. 3.4: The first page of Edith F. Nickerson's patent for a pocketed glove includes the date when it was filed and the date when it was issued, annotated technical drawings, the patent number and the signatures of inventor, witnesses, and attorney, US1093877.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

EDITH F. NICKERSON, OF BOURNE, MASSACHUSETTS.

GLOVE.

1,093,877. Specification of Letters Patent. Patented Apr. 21, 1914.

Application filed March 31, 1913. Serial No. 757,990.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, EDITH F. NICKERSON, citizen of the United States, residing at Bourne, in the county of Barnstable and State of Massachusetts, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Gloves, of which the following is a specication.

This invention relates to apparel gloves and more particularly to a glove provided with a pocket for containing money, car tickets, and other small articles which it is desired shall be readily accessible and which one ordinarily inserts in the palm of a glove.

It is one aim of the invention to provide a glove with a pocket which will not be conspicuous and will not interfere with the free movement of the hand although access may be readily had to the pocket.

Another aim of the invention is to so construct the mouth of the pocket that the coins, or the like, contained within the pocket will not be liable to be lost.

For a full understanding of the invention reference is to be had to the following description and accompanying drawing, in which:—

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a glove provided with a pocket embodying the present invention, parts being broken away. Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the glove, the pocket being shown in longitudinal section. Fig. 3 is a plan view of the blank from which one wall of the pocket is formed.

Corresponding and like parts are referred to in the following description and indicated in all the views of the accompanying drawing by the same reference characters.

In the drawing, the palm of the glove is indicated by the numeral 1 and the wrist by the numeral 2, the wrist and palm being provided with the usual palm opening 3 which may be closed at the wrist by snap fastenings such as indicated at 4 in the drawing, or by laces, buttons, or any other ordinary fastening means.

As will presently be made apparent, the palm of the glove constitutes one wall of the pocket and the other wall consists of a substantially rectangular piece preferably of the same material as the glove and indicated at 5 which is united by lines of stitching 6 to the inner side of the palm, the lines of stitching extending along the lateral edges of the piece 5 and along that end edge which is located next adjacent to the fingers of the glove. At its wrist end the piece 5 is not united to the glove and this end of the said piece is located at the finger end of the palm opening 3.

The piece 5 constituting the inner wall of the pocket is at its wrist-end formed with substantially V-shaped incisions at the opposite sides of the longitudinal median line, as indicated at 7 so as to provide a closure flap 8 designed to engage over the edge of the palm at the finger end of the palm opening 3, in a manner clearly shown in Figs. 1 and 2 of the drawings.

While any suitable fastening device may be employed for the purpose of holding the closure flap in closed position, the stud-member 9 of a snap fastening is here shown as secured to the palm of the glove at the finger end of the palm opening 3 and the closure flap is illustrated as provided with the socket member 10 of such a fastening.

The portions of the blank at the opposite sides of the closure flap 8 are indicated in the drawings by the numeral 11, and are stitched at their outer lateral edges as at 11′ to the corresponding edges of the piece 5 and between the same and the palm portion 1 of the glove, it being observed from an inspection of Fig. 1 of the drawing that these pieces are folded back so that at their folds 12 they serve to partly close the mouth of the pocket, so that while the closure flap 8 at its juncture with the piece 5 is of less width than the mouth of the pocket, the pieces 11 constitute auxiliary closing means and effectually prevent loss of small coins and the like, although when the closure flap is opened for the purpose of inserting or removing something from the pocket, such insertions or removal may be readily accomplished.

It will be apparent that inasmuch as the closure flap 8 is relatively narrow it will not render the glove inconvenient and uncomfortable to wear for it does not interfere with opening and closing of the hand, nor will it serve to spread the palm opening. It will also be noted that by locating the mouth of the pocket, as above described, and shown in the drawing and by the peculiar arrangement of the closure flap 8, splitting of the palm or any other portion of the glove is rendered unnecessary. It is particularly clearly shown in Fig. 1 of the drawing that the edge of the palm portion of the glove at

the finger end of the palm opening extends in the kerfs resulting from the formation of the incisions 7 and that these kerfs are effectually closed by the said palm portion of the glove.

Having thus described the invention what is claimed as new is:—

1. A glove having a palm opening, a pocket located within the glove and having a mouth presented at the palm opening, a closure flap for the mouth of the pocket arranged to extend over the edge of the palm at the said opening and the said pocket at its mouth having corner pieces located at opposite sides of the closure flap and constituting auxiliary pockets closing the mouth of the first mentioned pocket at each side of the closure flap.

2. A glove having a palm opening, a pocket wall attached to the inner side of the palm and forming a pocket in conjunction with the said palm, the pocket having a mouth presented at the opening in the palm, a closure flap for the mouth of the pocket carried by the first mentioned wall thereof and arranged to extend over the edge of the palm at the said opening, means for holding the flap in closed position, the first mentioned wall of the pocket being provided at opposite sides of the closure flap with corner pieces folded over and secured at their outer edges between the walls of the pocket the said corner pieces closing the mouth of the pocket at opposite sides of the closure flap.

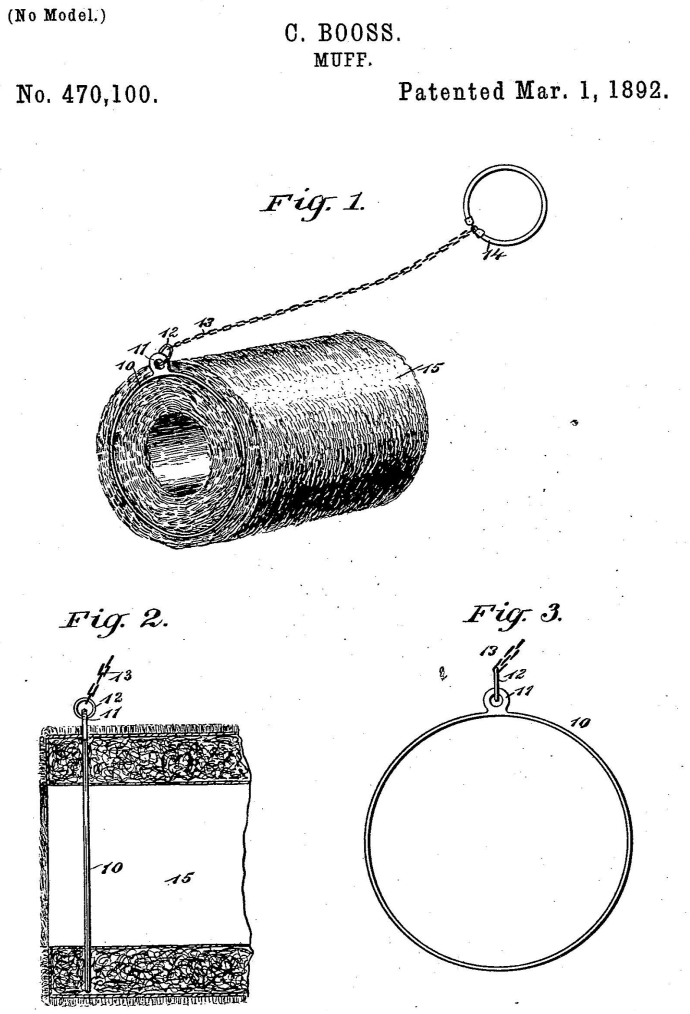
In testimony whereof I affix my signature in presence of two witnesses.

EDITH F. NICKERSON. [L. S.]

Witnesses:
EDWARD S. ELLIS,
ALICE C. BOURNE.

Fig. 3.5: The second and last pages of Nickerson's patent repeat the information of the first, but instead of annotated technical drawings, include detailed instructions for the making of the pocketed glove. The text begins with Nickerson's address, and ends with her invention's claim to novelty. It specifies that the glove's pocket is for "money, car tickets, and other small articles" US1093877.

Fig. 3.6: The technical drawings in Catharine Booss' 1892 patent for an improved attachment for muffs, which should prevent their loss and help them retain their circular shape, on the left. On the right, an extract from the instructions explains how an outwardly-extending hook or ring should be secured to the ring inside the muff,



(No Model.)

C. BOOSS.

MUFF.

No. 470,100. Patented Mar. 1, 1892.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

The device is provided with a ring 10, which may be either flat or round and may be of any suitable material; but it is preferably yielding, and on one side of this ring is an outwardly-extending perforated ear 11, to which a hook or ring 12 may be secured, and this ring carries a chain 13, which at its free end connects with a bracelet 14, adapted to be worn upon the wrist in the usual manner.

"The long-haired muff, which is so much in fashion now, has been responsible for hundreds of thefts from the counter. It covers a multitude of sins—like charity. I believe that most women shoplifters develop a craze—to give it a gentle name—from very small beginnings, and that they do not wilfully and of set purpose become professional thieves. But when they have got hardened to it, it seems like drink—they cannot keep off it, and will use every artifice to effect their purpose. You would hardly believe it, but

HOOKS, CONCEALED ALONG THE LONG FUR

of the muff, 'accidentally' catch unconsidered trifles in the shape of lace handkerchiefs, collarettes. These and many other dainty articles have a fatal habit of getting 'hooked.' Then the muff is deftly turned, and the lace, the trinket, the gloves, or the fan instantly lies snugly between the muff and the lady's corsage. The fur, too, conceals a capacious pocket running half-way round the muff, and into this the articles captured by the hooks are presently transferred.

Fig. 3.7: A detective interviewed by *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* describes how hooks concealed in the long fur of a shoplifter's muff can help her steal articles such as lace or gloves, which are then transferred to the muff's pockets, 1909, p.7.

Such connections between items in different archives are "willed" (Pester 2017, p.121) rather than discovered. But it is with this kind of questions in mind that I consider the unexpected uses that clothing inventions such as, or similar to those that these patents describe might have lent themselves to, allowed, encouraged, or suggested. It is from these reflections on the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn, from these reflections on forgotten

technologies and their untold stories, that speculation about other worlds and possibilities (Halberstam 2011; Swaby and Frank 2020), about counter-narratives (Hartman 2021), stems in my case. And speculation especially befits the study of patents, since patents themselves are speculative in nature. Whether or not the inventions they describe ultimately do, patents "seek to carve out new and different futures" (Jungnickel 2019, p.66). Of the Victorian advertisement, Lori Anne Loeb writes that it "emerges as a graphic depiction of the deepest materialistic desires of the Victorian middle class. While it illuminates the material reality of Victorian middle-class existence, it reveals Victorian hopes, fears, and aspirations" (1994, p.ix). The same, and to a greater extent, is true for the patent, because while a commodity which is advertised is not necessarily a commodity which is widespread, a technology which is patented may still never be commercialised at all. If "archives capture or contain emotions and other forms of affect that were experienced by the creators or others engaged or present in the making of the records" (Cifor and Gilliland 2016, p.2), patent archives preserve, and convey, the hopes and dreams of the inventors those patents were issued to. But where they sought to carve out different futures, I now seek to open up the history that archives tell to the possibility of different pasts. A key reference for this process is 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', where Ursula Le Guin writes about the theory that human evolution was not heralded by the invention of weapons to kill and fight with, but by that of containers to gather and safeguard with. Since "it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag … and then take it home with you" (Le Guin 1996, p.151-52). She argues that to accept this theory is to decentre the hero from history, and to open up human evolution to alternative narratives. It is to consider, in other words, that there are alternative histories to that told by the authorities, the writers of newspapers, the patent officers – that there are untold stories that begin with the invention of containers, bags, or shoplifters' clothes. "Hence it is with a certain feeling of urgency" Le Guin notes, "that I seek the nature, subject, words of the other story, the untold one, the life story" (1996, p.152).

"How do such lowly things keep the story going?" would Donna Haraway later ask, reflecting upon Le Guin's influential text. In her view, "those concave, hollowed-out things" by means of which women have always gathered seeds and sprouts, keep the story going because they imply a reciprocity between human and planet, because they are suggestive of a shared becoming and a shared flourishing (2016, p.40). But if we extend it to the concave, hollowed-out clothes that a successful shoplifter might have worn at the turn of the 20th century, the question of how they keep her story going can be taken quite technically. To ask how these clothes succeed is to ask a question of affordances. Lowly things, or "mundane technologies," as Mike Michael calls them, "can yield unforeseen routines" (2016, p.650). The successful shoplifter's clothes might have been designed with shoplifting or other purposes in mind, and if they were designed with other purposes in mind, shoplifting is the improbable event that because of their affordances, they might nonetheless allow, encourage, or suggest. Speculation, which links the actual to the potential, in

Luciana Parisi's formulation becomes "the felt thought of the object, exposing its propensity to extend beyond its own constitution" (2012, p.242). In the context of my research, this may be understood as the propensity of the clothing invention that a patent describes to exceed the purpose its patent declares – the propensity of concave, hollowed-out clothes to hide stolen items within their pleats.

3.4 Making and Wearing

Not unlike newspaper reports on women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, I wrote above that the information that patents deliver cannot be considered comprehensive. Not only then should we pay attention to what is missing from patent archives – the inventions that were never patented, like the shoplifters who were never caught – but to what each patent does not openly declare. This is not just because too much disclosure may not be in the best interests of the inventor who hopes to profit financially from their invention, but also because in order to be approved by the patent office where they are filed, patents ought to "give the appearance of an incontrovertible list of claims. Their formulaic nature is deliberately … persuasive" (Jungnickel 2018a, p.496). I have referred to the patent archive as an archive of failures not necessarily because the inventions that patents were granted to were faulty – but this does not mean that they were always as effective as their patents insist they are. There might be differences between what a wearable invention is marketed as having the ability to do, and the ability it actually has (Woolley et al. 2024). Hemmungs Wirtén writes that while models were required, until the mid-19th century, to demonstrate that an invention worked as its inventor claimed, they had mostly been abandoned in patent applications by 1900 (2019). Persuasive, yet elusive, a patent does not speak of how the invention it describes might fail to perform as its inventor promises it will, nor does it debate what alternative uses that technology might allow, encourage or suggest, or how it might be adapted to suit yet more. A patent cannot speak of what unforeseen routine the invention it describes might be put toward, of its propensity to extend beyond its constitution. But by making the invention it describes following its instructions, what the patent does not say has a chance to resurface. "Making provides … new entry points into research," and this is especially true when it comes to the making of clothing inventions that can be worn (Jungnickel 2018a, p.497). This also allows for a different relationship with archive materials. As Holly Pester observes, "embodied motives of re/searching can resist the normative lenses and functions of archive documents and prescribed relationships with them" (2017, p.117). If to give form is to figure out, the making and wearing of clothing inventions from century-old patents afford to the knowledge of these technologies a "sensory plenitude" (Lury and Wakeford 2012). To make and wear a clothing invention from an historical patent is to expand and explore the possibilities of a latency. It gives shape to the silences in the archive.

Informed either by the material and embodied turn in fashion studies (Davidson 2019), or when clothes are understood as sartorial technologies, by methodologies of reconstruction and replication in STS (Jungnickel 2022), the scholars who have engaged with the reconstructions of historical garments as a method have learnt about them more than they could learnt from the analysis of textual or visual sources alone (Heuvel and Oskarsen 2014; Bendall 2019; Jungnickel 2022). It is their work that inspires my decision to try and do the same. Of course, when a researcher makes a clothing invention from an historical patent, she is not reconstructing the reality that history forgot (Jungnickel 2018a), any more than she can hope to discover impartial truths through archival research (Dever 2017). When there are no extant examples of a given garment to compare them to, these reconstructions are necessarily speculative (Jungnickel 2022) and experimental (Bendall 2019). But as Kat Jungnickel observes, reconstructions in STS are "speculative, multiple, and creative entanglements" (2022, p.4) which "rarely aim for perfect or static outcomes" (p.11). If the result of my attempt to follow a patent's instructions looks nothing like a faithful historical reproduction, while it might seem convenient to say so, this is in fact on purpose. I call it a performative replica instead, for two key reasons. First, to acknowledge that when I follow those instructions, I interpret them – with hindsight, with specific research interests in mind, and from my own partial perspective. If in the archive, a "'researcher's cut' is … an agentic intervention shaping the form of the research that will emerge" (Tamboukou 2014, p.626), so on fabric, to cut and sew following the instructions of an historical patent is not a way to reveal the past. Rather, "a scissor's cut … *produces* a reality" (Celant 1996, p.31 *my translation*), which is both informed by and shapes my reflections. A cut that produces a reality is an agential cut (Barad 2007). Research methods are always both performative and political (Coleman, Page, and Palmer 2019), and making as a research method is constitutive of its object in the most direct way. But second, my replica is performative also in the sense that it does more than just give substance to, and confirm my expectations. It goes beyond them, and might defy them. When she discusses the flexibility of technical objects, Marres notes that to describe it as 'interpretative' gives primacy to the interpretations of human actors, while to call it 'performative' recognises the flexibility of those technologies themselves (2015, p.74). Similarly, in calling my replica performative I want to emphasise that while it is shaped by my interpretation of a patent's instructions, it might also manifest, as Bennett puts it, "traces of independence or aliveness" (2010, p.xvi).

How I approach the making of the performative replica of a clothing invention varies considerably from a patent to the next (Fig. 3.8). If the patent provides a sewing pattern, I scale it up and try to follow it, if it does not, I try to make one myself. If the claim to novelty of the clothing invention comes down to a relatively minor intervention that can be performed on different kinds of garments, I might try to adapt an existing garment rather than making a new one from scratch. While contemporary garments might differ significantly from the garments that an inventor at the turn of the 20th century would have imagined to perform this intervention on, so do the fabrics and tools

available to me from the fabrics and tools that were available to her, when I decide to make those garments from scratch. When I do this, I try to choose fabrics that might resemble in weight and give those that the invention whose patent I am interpreting might have been made out of. If an invention is meant to be waterproof, for example, I choose a heavier fabric for my performative replica than I would use for the performative replica of an invention which is intended to be worn under one's clothes, as underwear. I usually make a few iterations of my performative replica for the same invention, with different patterns, fabrics, or fasteners. I do this to consider various possibilities when a patent skips a step, or allows for multiple choices – but I also do it when I think that the invention would lend itself to a different purpose if something was done slightly differently. I do this because I am less interested in determining whether the particular invention that my performative replica is based upon could have been worn to shoplift, and more interested in whether sartorial technologies of the same kind, or inventions sharing the same essential components of the one whose patent I am interpreting, might have been. I am also interested in how shoplifters might have adapted particular clothes or existing technologies to suit their own needs. This allows me to exercise some creative freedom with the performative replicas I make.

While making ought to precede wearing to some extent, I do not approach them as two consecutive phases. Wearing often leads me back to the sewing machine. It is through wearing that I understand if I have made a mistake, or if an invention would be more comfortable, or work better if some changes were made. When I wear my performative replicas, I pay attention to how they affect my movements. By way of how they affect mine, I consider how the inventions that my performative replicas are based upon may have affected the movements of the women who might have worn them, or might have worn similar inventions, at the time when they were patented. I observe how the propensities of my performative replicas relate to my intentions in their regard, and consider how the propensities of the inventions they are based upon may have related to the intentions of the women who might have worn these or similar inventions, in the late 19th and early 20th century. When the clothes we wear are incorporated into our corporeal schemas, they produce the comportment or demeanour of our body in space (Negrin 2016; Sampson 2020). This being the case, the wearing of performative replicas of clothing inventions described in patents which are themselves speculative in nature, may well lead to the production of comportments or demeanours that it would be impossible to predict before putting them on. I am interested in the ways in which these inventions may stray away from the uses that their inventors had in sight for them (Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015). With objects such as, or resembling in weight, shape, or size, those that according to my research in newspaper archives, were often stolen by shoplifters at the turn of the 20th century, I test the capaciousness of these concave, hollowed-out clothes – how safe and accessible their secret pockets are when they are worn and how much weight they can hold [Appendix C]. If I can tell that they would be stronger, safer, or more capacious if I had made different decisions in the making process, I return to it.

Fig. 3.8: Steps in the making of performative replicas of three different inventions, that I will return to in Chapter Four, Five, and Six.

Fig. 3.9: Wearing performative replicas of two different inventions, that I will return to in Chapter Four and Six.

Wearing grounds speculation in bodily experience (Fig. 3.9). I wrote in the previous chapter, with respect to the object turn, that the shoplifter's body does not have to end where her skin does, but can be understood to expand and include the concave, hollowed-out clothes where stolen things are kept. The same could be said about the researcher's body, when performative replicas of patented inventions are worn. "The breakdown of subject/object dualism, which underlies the material turn" writes Sampson, "… is brought to an unconventional if logical conclusion in wearing

as research" (2020, p.44). It is because of this breakdown, which is not just inevitable but generative, that as much as partiality is unavoidable in making, wearing as a research method does not presume to produce objective, but rather embodied or "tactile knowledge" (ibid., p.30). The notion of tactile knowledge, in relation to wearing as a research method, recognises that if the clothes we wear are incorporated into our corporeal schemas, to both create and mediate our experience of the world (Negrin 2016; Sampson 2020), it is through touch that this incorporation occurs. Reflecting upon what pleasures a woman might experience in wearing clothes, other than that derived from internalizing the male gaze, Iris Marion Young notes that "touch immerses the subject in fluid continuity with the object" rather than in a relation of property (2005, p.69). And whilst clothes afford protection, from both injury and prying eyes, they do not necessarily desensitize. On the contrary, like "a second skin: a two-sided surface, touching the body-self and the world" (Sampson 2020, p.94), they can heighten the wearer's awareness of their body and of their movements in space, of the image they project and the attention they draw or elude. It is from wearing an uncomfortable pair of jeans that Umberto Eco becomes aware of the relational web they both are part of: "I thought about the relationship between me and my pants, and the relationship between my pants and me and the society we lived in. I had achieved heteroconsciousness, that is to say, an epidermic self-awareness" (2007, p.316). The sense of touch, the friction of fabric and skin, is key to the process.

Conclusion to Chapter Three

At the start of this chapter, I acknowledged that the methods I use perform the reality that I investigate, which reflects my own partial perspective. In the first section on newspaper archives, I considered why the cases of women's shoplifting trialled at London's Old Bailey criminal court might have decreased as the 19th century progressed, and explained my reasons for turning instead to anglophone newspapers' online archives. I drew attention to the role played by the media in perpetuating the general impression that more shoplifting than ever before was underway at the turn of the 20th century. I explained which period I focused on, how I decided my search terms, which articles I saved and why I ran parallel searches in the archives of women's and fashion magazines. I described my collection of these recorded accounts as an archive of failures, since these reports only concern the shoplifters who got caught: to be missing from the archives is the condition of possibility for a shoplifter's success.

In the next section I argued that responsibility for the success or failure of a shoplifting act in the late 19th or early 20th century, should however not be imputed to the shoplifter alone, but distributed across the relational web of a department store's crime scene. Since failure precedes invention, I considered how the sartorial technologies that were described in newspaper reports, worn by the shoplifters who got caught, might have informed or inspired those of the shoplifters who succeeded.

I explained why, to try and imagine the clothes that successful shoplifters might have worn, I turn to patent archives, and to the POP dataset first and foremost. Again, I explained which period I focused on, how I decided my search terms, which patents I saved and how these sometimes led me back to newspaper archives. I observed that patent archives might also be described, for the most part, as archives of failures – but if the clothing inventions I encountered there lent themselves to a purpose other than the one which their patents declare, I wondered whether they could have been helpful to shoplifters. I recognised that such connections between archives are willed, but also noted why speculation especially befits the study of patents, documents which are themselves speculative in nature, even though the inventions they describe are rarely as revolutionary as their patents promise they will be.

In the third section I argued that since patents conceal as much as they reveal, we should pay attention to the affordances of the inventions they describe, that patents don't openly acknowledge. The making and wearing of selected inventions from the POP dataset allow for what their patents don't say to resurface. I drew attention, once again, to the inevitable partiality involved in the process of making from historical patents, and described the end result of my attempt to follow a patent's instructions as a performative replica of the invention it describes. I explained what I hope to learn by wearing my performative replicas, about the thefts of the women who might have worn the inventions they are based upon, or sartorial technologies similar in kind, to steal in the late 19th and early 20th century. Lastly, I observed that what grounds such speculation in tangible experience is the sense of touch, which always plays a fundamental role in the incorporation of the clothes we wear into our bodily schema.

In the next three chapters, I will examine three items of womenswear that according to newspaper reports, played a key role in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. I will cross reference these reports with patents for clothing inventions concerning the same items of dress, issued at around the same time in either the United States or the United Kingdom. I will reflect on the role that these inventions, or sartorial technologies similar in kind, might have played in their practice, if they were ever worn by the shoplifters who were never caught. I will contextualise these thefts and technologies in relation to women's increased public presence at the turn of the 20th century, and consider this role through the lens of a more inclusive definition of citizenship, which can account for embodied, unlawful, and unintentional acts. The three items I will be focusing on are the skirt, the sleeve, and the garter.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE SHOPLIFTER'S SKIRT

My research on the role that sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, and on whether women's shoplifting at this time could be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, begins in this chapter with the shoplifter's skirt. An analysis of selected newspaper accounts suggests that two prevailing versions of this sartorial technology existed at the time – and that both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, but also as far as Australia, these versions coexisted and merged. As a recurrent feature of the shoplifter's skirt, I consider the wide slit that allows the wearer to reach inside it. Referencing Barbara Burman, I draw a comparison between this slit and the slit in 18th-century skirts, that allowed women to reach for the tie-on pockets they wore underneath them. This places the shoplifter's skirt in historical perspective, and posits it as a direct descendant of the tie-on pockets that fell out of favour in fashionable womenswear over the course the 19th century. As much as the sexual connotations of their shape and position, I argue that at least part of the reason why pockets were so consistently disapproved of, would have had to do with their relation to women's consumer citizenship – and to the threat this posed to traditional understandings of citizenship and to patriarchal privileges. Still, I draw attention to the limitations of this kind of citizenship, and propose shoplifting as a comparatively more inclusive practice, similarly enabled by specific sartorial technologies. I then reflect on how certain skirt styles that were fashionable in the late 19th and early 20th century, or the inventions that sought to make the wearing of those skirt styles more convenient or comfortable, may have helped or inspired, rather than hindered women's shoplifting. I discuss hobble skirts, hollow bustles, skirt lifters, and how the drawstring fail-safe drastically improved the shoplifter's skirt at around the same time that, at the height of the cycling craze, drawstrings were being introduced to transform the skirts of female riders into bloomers. As it became more common for women to participate in outdoor sports, demand for skirt protectors grew: this is reflected in the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset, where a specific variety of skirt protectors bears significant similarities with the shoplifters' skirts described in newspaper accounts. The making and wearing of two performative replicas of a skirt protector of this variety, patented by American inventor Lena Sittig in 1908, inform my speculative reflections on whether this or similar inventions might ever have been worn to shoplift, and contribute significantly to my understanding of the kind of skirt that a successful shoplifter might have been wearing at this time.

4.1 The Kick

Out of the various shoplifting technologies discussed in newspapers at this time, what most distinguishes the skirt is its capaciousness. In the late 19th and early 20th century, in the anglophone press, it is widely reported that either the pocket or bag which a shoplifter's skirt accommodates, or the shoplifter's skirt that itself becomes not unlike a pocket or bag, reaches "very far down" (*The New York Times* 1881, p.3). It reaches "below the knees" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26; *The Morning News* 1892, p.3), "from waist to feet" (*Hampshire Telegraph* 1892, p.11), "around the entire body and down to the heels" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1). Newspapers in both the United Kingdom and the United States describe either the shoplifter's skirt, or the pocket or bag that is concealed inside it, as "huge" (*The Anaconda Standard* 1895, p.10; *North Bucks Times and County Observer* 1911, p.7), "capacious" (*The Savannah Morning News* 1903, p.5; *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer* 1910, p.3), "of deep design" (*The Sun* 1907, p.15); "mammoth" (*The Morning News* 1892, p.3) if not "immense" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1899, p.6). More precisely, it is alleged to be either "a foot square" (*Rugby Advertiser* 1905, p.2), "two feet square" (*Middlesex Gazette* 1893, p.6), or "a yard long" (*Daily Mirror* 1905, p.6). In Melbourne, Australia, the pockets found on two shoplifters' skirts in 1906 are written about as sartorial wonders "of shark-like capacity – 24 inches by 18, no less". One of the women who had been caught wearing "these caverns," is said to have been able to fit inside them at once fifty yards of silk and four straw hats (*The Bulletin* 1906, p.13).

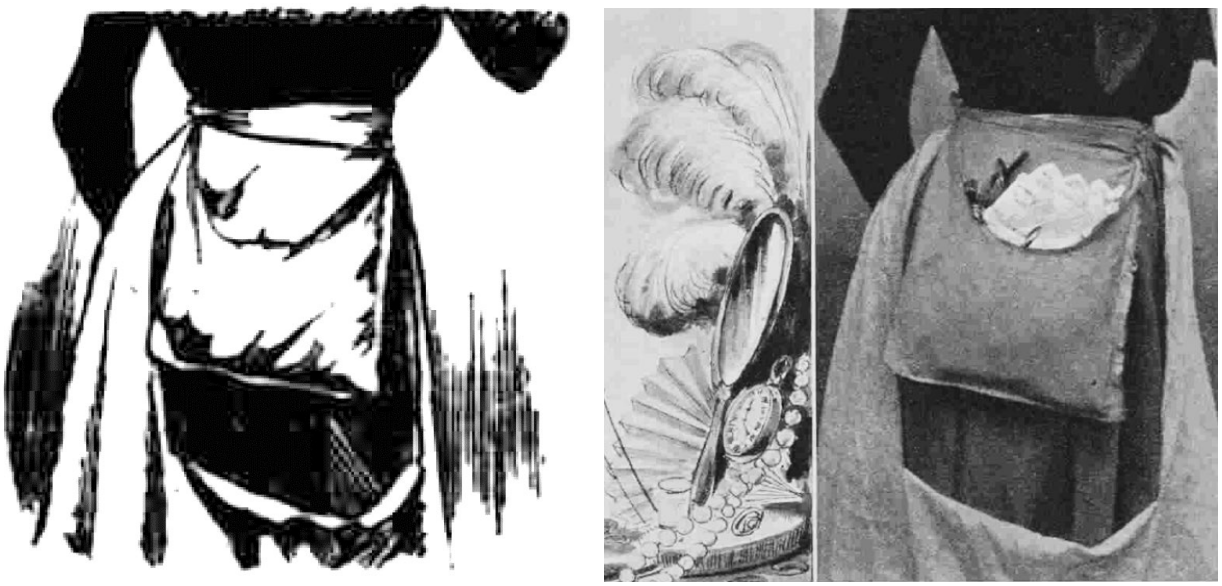


Fig. 4.1: The same police photograph of a shoplifter's skirt, with a pocket big enough to hold packages a foot square. Reproduced in both the *Rugby Advertiser* 1905, p.2 (left), and *The Illustrated London News* 1906, p.799 (right).

Either the pocket or bag that a shoplifter's skirt accommodates, or the shoplifter's skirt itself, are sometimes referred to in archival records as the "kick" (Byrnes 1886, p.202; *Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; *Eagle River Review* 1892, p.7; *The Topeka State Journal* 1895b, p.14) or the "kick-skirt" (*The Western Mail* 1899, p.9) – probably after how a shoplifter would have to kick its contents around while hurrying away, if she had stolen too much or something too heavy. Proficient shoplifter Ellen Darrigan, also known as Ellen Matthews, whose mugshot features in detective Thomas F. Byrnes' 1886 anthology of *Professional Criminals of America,* was reportedly wearing a kick which contained a $50-worth piece of beaded cloth, when she was arrested in Sixth Avenue, New York, in 1885 (Byrnes 1886). This address, on the Ladies' Mile, recurs in American newspapers' accounts of women's shoplifting (*Omaha Daily Bee* 1884; *The Sun* 1891; *The Savannah Morning News* 1903). I have discussed in Chapter One how urban spaces dedicated to consumption as a leisure activity had emerged in major American cities from the mid-19th century (Cohen 2017), but if the Ladies' Mile was safe enough for women to go shopping without men, it was clearly not safe enough from them. It might have been devised to encourage shopping for pleasure, but if "female pleasure in shopping was not as harmless as it appeared" (Felski 1995, p.65), this encouragement itself had most likely led to the undesirable consequence of a multiplication of shoplifting cases.

A concise history of the kick, in what the article presents as three consecutive phases of its evolution, originally from the *New York Herald*, was reprinted in 1891 in the *Iowa County Democrat*. It clarifies, in the first place, that:

> The shoplifter's 'kick' is the technical name of the capacious bag or pocket she – who prefers to 'buy' when the clerk has his back turned – has concealed under her cloak, or rather sewed to the same on the left side (1891, p.1)

To picture what this might have looked like, it may be helpful to refer to the photograph of a shoplifter's skirt which was taken in London, by the local police, and reproduced both in the *Rugby Advertiser* (1905, p.2) and *The Illustrated London News* (1906, p.799) (Fig. 4.1). Though it is fastened not under the cloak but under the skirt, it depicts a spacious pocket worn at waist level, on the right side. But if shoplifters in the United Kingdom clearly still wore versions of the kick in the early 20th century, the article in the *Iowa County Democrat* goes on to claim that in the United States, already by 1891, "the old 'kick' is going out of use … because section 508 of the Penal Code makes it a criminal offense for any one to have it in his or, her possession". I was not able to verify this claim, but it is not difficult to believe: in the 21st century, carrying a bag lined with aluminium foil, of the kind that defies anti-theft tagging systems, constitutes a criminal offense even if that bag is empty (Gamman 2012). But if what the article claims was true, this only meant

that it was time for the old kick to progress into phase two of its evolution, in which a shoplifter's underskirt itself becomes the pocket where her loot is stored:

> It is called a 'hoisting kick.' This consists of a regular dress skirt, so far as appearance goes, covered by an apron overskirt, which is short and can be raised easily. In the front of the underskirt is a wide vertical slit which is but the opening to the immense bag which the underskirt consists of, it going around the entire body and down to the heels.

Yet the article proceeds to declare even the hoisting kick surpassed. A short apron draped over a flounced dress, and hiding a pocket within its puffs, is proposed as the third phase in the evolution of the kick (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1). Still, I found no other reference to this style in the archives aside from this one. This might mean that it was very successful – and that the shoplifters who wore it hardly ever got caught. But it might also mean, as it is perhaps more likely, that a flounced dress with a draped apron and puffs to conceal a pocket, was too elaborate or extravagant, or too reliant on fashion trends that might be short-lived, to properly catch on as a shoplifting technology.

It must be noted however, that descriptions of the shoplifter's skirt at the turn of the 20th century are almost as varied as the newspaper articles that mention it are many. And since each article usually describes only one example of it, often without much detail, it can be difficult to establish whether more versions of the shoplifter's skirt existed at this time, or if the differences in these descriptions are simply different ways to describe the same shoplifting technology, which few reporters probably had a chance to examine themselves. The article in the *Iowa County Democrat* is useful in this respect, not only because it describes kick and hoisting kick with enough detail to tell the differences between the two, but because by doing so it acknowledges a distinction between at least two prevailing versions of the shoplifter's skirt in the late 19th century. The one which accommodates a pocket or bag, that according to comparable reports in different newspapers may either depend from the waist (*Derry Journal* 1881, p.6; *The New York Times* 1881, p.3; *Hampshire Telegraph* 1892, p.11; *Islington Gazette* 1906, p.2; *Rock Island Argus* 1907, p.10; *The San Francisco Call* 1910, p.2; *Wicklow News-Letter and County Advertiser* 1911, p.6) or be stitched either to the underskirt or to the inner side of the outer skirt (*Morning Post* 1897, p.2; *The Western Daily Press.* 1904, p.9; *Daily Mirror* 1905, p.6; *The Clarksburg Telegram* 1906, p.6; *Pearson's Weekly* 1910, p.243; *Popular Science Monthly* 1916, p.649), and the one which in itself turns into a pocket or bag. Different newspapers give different account for how this transformation occurs. The underskirt may be gathered up to the waist (*Worcestershire Chronicle* 1903, p.5; *New-York Tribune* 1905, p.5; *The Sun* 1906, p.9), or doubled and sewn at the bottom (*Daily Mirror* 1910, p.5), or the bottom of the underskirt may be sewn to the outer skirt (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*

1895, p.3; *New-York Tribune* 1909, p.8). If not the underskirt, it is the skirt's lining which forms the pocket (*North Bucks Times and County Observer* 1911, p.7).


A bag, sewed in the shoplifter's skirt, filled with all manner of stolen articles

Fig. 4.2: A shoplifter's kick in *Popular Science Monthly* 1916, p.649.

From the dates in brackets above, it should already be clear that the timeline proposed by the article in the *Iowa County Democrat* should be taken with a pinch of salt. Not only was it premature to suggest that the hoisting kick was on its way out already in 1891, when shoplifters continued to wear versions of this style for at least two more decades. But while it might make sense to consider the hoisting kick as an evolution, or more accurately an expansion of the kick, the article is also wrong to suggest that the former effectively replaced the latter. While it is true that from the 1890s onwards, many of the newspaper articles that write about the pocket or bag concealed inside the shoplifter's skirt are published in the United Kingdom – where presumably it was not a criminal offense per se to wear the kick – this is by no means exclusively the case. *The San Francisco Call*, for instance, reports on the arrest in San Jose, supposedly of a Mrs. M. F. Dresser, who was still wearing a version of the kick – a "black bag dangled from the waist inside the outer skirt" – as she attempted to steal a wig, a bag, and a kimono in 1910 (1910, p.2). Whereas in 1916 *Popular Science Monthly*, which was published in New York, printed a photograph of a bag stitched inside a skirt in the context of a two-page spread on shoplifters' ingenuity, titled 'The Mechanics of Shoplifting' (1916, p.649) (Fig. 4.2). Of course, its presence in newspaper reports might itself be taken as indicative of a decline in the actual use of the kick by shoplifters at this time, due to observers having caught on. But if this was the case for the kick, it would have been for the hoisting kick too. While it is useful to determine that more than one version of the shoplifter's skirt existed in the late 19th and early 20th century, it may be pointless to try and place them in a sequence of consecutive phases. Rather than stages in the evolution of the same style, in different cities in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as in Australia, the kick and the hoisting kick – the pocket that a shoplifter's skirt accommodates

and the shoplifter's skirt which itself becomes a pocket – appear to coexist and merge into a plethora of hybrid versions at the turn of the 20th century.

Consider for example the wide slit, covered by the apron, that serves to access the underskirt that becomes a pocket, according to the description of the hoisting kick in the *Iowa County Democrat*. In other newspapers, descriptions of the pocket or bag that is concealed inside the shoplifter's skirt, which hangs from the wearer's waist or is stitched to the underskirt or to the inner side of the outer skirt – descriptions of the kick that is, frequently specify that it too is accessed through a slit in the shoplifter's skirt (*Derry Journal* 1881, p.6; *Wicklow News-Letter and County Advertiser* 1911, p.6). Indeed, a slit is often mentioned in relation to the shoplifter's skirt, even in those articles where it is unclear which version of this technology the slit gives access to. In fact, it would not be a stretch to consider the wide slit – "sometimes big enough to thrust a baby in" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) – as one the most consistent features of the shoplifter's skirt as a whole.

4.2 The Slit

It is perhaps a stretch to read the hyperbole in *The Sun* as a Freudian slip. But I would not be the first to propose that the description of a shoplifter's skirt in an archival document from the late 19th century may be interpreted as sexually charged. Ten years before a journalist in *The Sun* described the slit in the shoplifter's skirt as "big enough to thrust a baby in" (1891, p.26), Leslie Camhi points out that French psychiatrist Legrand du Saulle wrote in similar terms of the double-skirted dresses with diagonal slits, worn by professional female thieves and stuffed full of stolen objects, in his monograph on *Les Hystériques* (Camhi 1993). But the wide slit (Fig. 4.3) is not per se a prerogative of the shoplifter's skirt at the turn of the 20th century. In the 18th century, when tie-on pockets were commonly worn, most women's outer skirts had wide slits to allow the wearer to reach for them:

Fig. 4.3: A woman shows the wide slit in a shoplifter's skirt, in *Popular Science Monthly* 1916, p.648.

> tie pockets … were usually made in pairs connected by a linen tape, tied round the waist, worn with one on each side and independent of the garments under which they were worn. Such pockets were individually very capacious, typically between twelve and twenty inches long and between eight and fifteen inches at the wide base, with a vertical slit for access … There were corresponding openings in hoops and the skirts of petticoats and gowns to allow access through these over-garments (Burman 2002, p.449)

Down to the emphasis on their capaciousness, Burman's description of tie-on pockets in the 18th century much resembles newspapers' accounts of the shoplifter's skirt at the turn of the 20th century, especially of the kind which accommodates a pocket that depends from the wearer's waist. This may be more a direct connection than a coincidence. In *The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives*, Burman and co-author Ariane Fennetaux argue that "tie-on pockets [were] particularly good companions for women who stole," so much so that even in the early 20th century, when they had effectively "disappeared from everyday use, habitual shoplifters continued to use them" (2019, p.139).

When the kick is posited as a direct descendant of tie-on pockets, the sexual subtext that can be inferred from certain descriptions of the slit in the shoplifter's skirt in the late 19th and early 20th century, may be understood in the context of a long-established discourse. On the sexual connotations of 18th-cenutry tie-on pockets, Fennetaux writes:

> Their classification as linen/underwear, but also their situation on the pelvic area, and their very shape, which is rather evocative of female genitalia, explain their strong link with sexuality … when a woman put her hand through slits in her skirt to access her pockets, she signalled almost directly towards her private parts. (2008, p.318)

The suggestion of promiscuity that she draws attention to here might have contributed to their falling out of favour in respectable circles. This begun at the turn of the 19th century, when changing fashions made it impossible, at least for the middle-class women who followed fashionable trends, to continue to wear anything bulky under their now much more streamlined skirts (Carlson 2023). Yet whist women's skirts would soon widen again, throughout the 19th century fashion continually disavowed women's pockets, which came to be perceived as "so antithetical to the feminine ideal that they were imagined to disfigure … the well-dressed female body" (Matthews 2010, p.567). Indeed, according to Victorian sensibilities, only "disfigured women," that is to say sex workers, would "attach to their bodies the equipment of movement and ambition" (ibid.). Even when the ample crinoline was popular – a golden age for the shoplifter's skirt, when "(a) woman could carry off a house and a lot under those immense skirts and never be detected" (Forman 1886, p.3) – no lasting allowance for pockets was made on its smooth, hemispherical surface (Burman 2002; Matthews 2010; Carlson 2023). At the turn of the 20th century, when integrated pockets such as

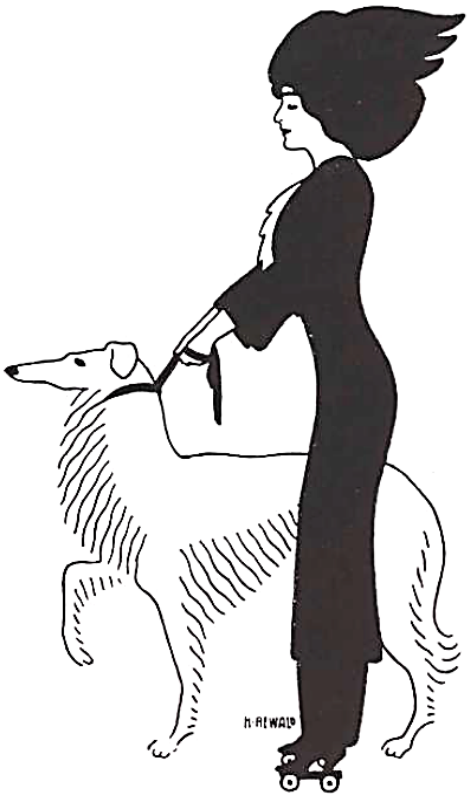
those worn by men started to be noticed in womenswear, the same sexual connotations more or less explicitly informed the criticisms that this style drew. In her detailed analysis of a cartoon published in the satirical magazine *Punch* in 1892, which compares two female archetypes in the streets of London, Janet C. Myers observes that:

> The contrast between the two women's gestures – one holding a parasol and one holding her hands in her pockets – aligns the former with sexual purity and the latter with sexual degeneration, both through the image's subtle allusion to masturbation and to its more obvious allusions to prostitution. (2014, p.27)

It is worth noting that at the time, walking around with hands in one's pockets was considered rude, given the defiance, aloofness, or sexual charisma that this gesture implied, even when men did it – and boys' pockets were sewn shut to prevent the habit from forming (Carlson 2023). While shoplifters might have been among those women who continued to wear tie-on pockets even when they fell out of favour, as late as the early 20th century, it is safe to assume that they would not have been walking around with their hands in them. In the interest of keeping a low profile as they strolled through a shopping district, successful shoplifters would have sought to resemble the first woman in *Punch*'s cartoon than the second. No less because a parasol, or umbrella, could come in handy as an additional receptacle for stolen goods (*The Umpire* 1909; *Elk City Mining News* 1910; *Nottingham Evening Post* 1910). But especially because whilst they might have worn unfashionable tie-on pockets concealed beneath their skirts, if they did not want to draw attention to themselves, they would not have ignored fashionable trends entirely. If at least within the department store as that slice of the public sphere that was women's own precinct, to be "well dressed" (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1; Rose 1912, p.2; *New-York Tribune* 1920, p.4) was to be inconspicuous, a shoplifter would have wanted, as much as possible, to follow the latest trends. This is why, despite its legendary convenience (*Punch, or The London Charivari* 1860), she did not continue to wear the crinoline once it went out of fashion. Indeed, more so than its possession being declared illegal, it was likely changing fashions, as well as store detectives becoming familiar enough with this sartorial technology to know to keep an eye out for it (*New-York Tribune* 1920), that posed the greatest challenge to the shoplifter's skirt in its various versions. Hoop skirt or not, a pocket as capacious as the kick requires a voluminous outer garment. While writing of skirts with slits "big enough to thrust a baby in," *The Sun* does in fact observe that they are no longer as widely used in the early 1890s as they once were, since "modern fashions do not permit of the safe gathering of much bulk about the person of the shoplifter" (1891, p.26). Although the eulogy of the kick and of the hoisting kick reprinted in the *Iowa County Democrat* is premature, because versions of both styles would continue to be worn for a long time thereafter, there is no doubt that as fashions got tighter, the mammoth proportions of the shoplifter's skirt had to be scaled down. Other garments in her wardrobe – for example the leg-of-mutton sleeves that I will examine in

Chapter Five, or the garters with hooks that I will consider in Chapter Six – would come forth to pick up some of the 'bulk' that the kick had to forgo.

4.3 The Twine and The Pocket



Cartoon on the hobble-skirt. Roller-skates and a draught-dog are depicted as the only means of locomotion for a woman hobbled in the fashion of the day. From Ulk, *1910.*

Fig. 4.4 (up): Hobble garters in *The Sketch* 1910, p.101. The same drawing would also be reprinted in *Popular Mechanics* 1911, p.262

Fig. 4.5 (left): A 1910 cartoon of a woman wearing a hobble skirt and roller-skates, reproduced in *Are Clothes Modern?* 1947, p.163

If the shoplifter's skirt had to adapt to prevailing fashions at a given time, there were some popular styles at the turn of the 20th century that made this impossible. Not only technically, for how tight they were or how they restricted the wearer's movements, but because of the attention they drew to themselves. If the shoplifter's reason for adapting her clothes to prevailing fashions was to look inconspicuous in a department store, some styles were conspicuous even at the height of their popularity. In 1911, *The Chickasha Daily* reports the opinion on this matter of an unnamed store detective:

> Ultra-fashionable clothes would ruin their business. What chance would a woman wearing a harem skirt have of getting away with a bolt of lace or a willow plume? There would be so many pairs of eyes fastened on her … It was the same way with hobble skirts. They got

> pretty common, still there were enough people who saw something so funny about the hobble that they had to stop and stare at every one they met to make it risky for a shoplifter to put one on. (1911, p.6)

Wide at the hips and cinched at the ankle, the hobble skirt was notorious for how it reduced a woman's stride to tiny steps. There are even reports of hobble garters (Fig. 4.4), worn underneath the hobble skirt to prevent the wearer from taking a too long step, which might tear or stretch the skirt. Hobble skirts were undeniably the subject of much ridicule (Fig. 4.5), in magazines the likes of *Punch*, but also from prominent feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2002 [1915]). But whether or not anything was ever stolen from a shop by a woman wearing a hobble skirt, it is still relevant for my research to try and understand the origins and the appeal of this skirt style which made long strides impossible – because it relates to the question of women's citizenship, and to their changing role in society at this point in time. In *Fashion Victims*, writing of the many reported falls and injuries caused by hobble skirts, Alison Matthews David notes that the style is likely to have been inspired by the dress of Edith Ogilby Berg, on the day when she became the first American woman to fly as a passenger on an airplane, in 1908 in Le Mans, France. A widely reproduced photograph of this much publicised event shows Mrs. Berg sitting in the open cockpit with her skirt tied below her knees with a strong twine, to avoid it flying up and getting tangled with any mechanical parts (Matthews David 2015). It may sound like a mocking twist of fate, that the first woman to fly would lead to so many finding it difficult to walk. But this might be to give fate too much credit.

Mockery is a common enough reaction to a perceived threat. Satirical representation of women's clothes at the turn of the 20th century, as Myers puts it, "inadvertently reveal deep-seated anxieties" about how their newfound freedoms might challenge conventional gender roles (2014, p.3). Surely more so even than the sexual freedom that their shape and position suggested, it must have been the freedom of movement and the financial freedom her pockets implied, that made the sight of a woman with pockets so unsettling throughout the 19th century. Already in the 18th century, the caricatures that mocked tie-on pockets for their sexual likeness, might have "masked anxiety about this small but significant bit of privacy women had crafted for themselves" or about "the threatening potential of women's mobility" (Carlson 2023, p.70; Fennetaux 2008). At the turn of the 20th century, the integrated pockets that *Punch* ridiculed "helped women negotiate a new relationship to the public world" (Myers 2014, p.4). Women's pockets signalled to their wearers' openness to social relations and to relations of exchange specifically, and it was this particular kind of promiscuity that challenged established hierarchies in the first place. A woman's pockets insinuated that the wearer had become a citizen – if only a consumer citizen.

Of course, a woman's consumer citizenship was not contingent on her having pockets: in the interest of appealing to the broader public, the department stores which relied upon women's purchases in the late 19th and early 20th century, would still most likely have promoted and distributed at the same time the kind of fashionable womenswear that reflected traditional ideals of femininity. Department stores might have aligned themselves with the calls for women's emancipation (Rappaport 2000), but would probably not have sided exclusively with its expression in as visible a challenge to men's privileges as integrated pockets apparently were. Yet, I wrote in Chapter Two that the wearing of up-to-date fashionable garments, even if restrictive and ornamental, could still be considered evidence of a woman's participation in the marketplace. For being so emphatically feminine, moreover, fashionable garments did not let the observer forget that the consumer citizen who wore them was a woman, thus challenging the disembodied ideal and women's traditional exclusion from citizenship (Parkins 2002). But if that's the case, then the sexual symbolism of a woman's pocket might also be understood as more than just a pretext to counter the real threat – the financial freedom and the freedom of movement that pockets attested to. It could be argued that by gesturing at the same time both to women's genitals and to their consumer citizenship, pockets were no less disapproved of because they grounded citizenship in the body, where traditionally it did not belong (Lister 2003; Sheller 2012).

How women's pockets differed from fashionable garments however, is that as sartorial technologies of material participation (Marres 2015), they did not just convey, but also permitted the wearer's freedom of movement and her financial freedom – they did not just gesture or insinuate, attest or signal to women's consumer citizenship, but if they were deep enough, could also technically enable it. In the interest of protecting patriarchal privileges, and the traditional separation of genders between the public and private spheres, it makes sense that male commentators and caricaturists should want to make women with pockets the subject of mockery. And if it was to limit the freedoms they granted to women in public that pockets came to be considered "antithetical to the feminine ideal" (Matthews 2010, p.567), it stands to reason that when the first woman flew, the proponents of traditional gender roles must have felt particularly threatened. The hobble skirt itself, as well as the fun that the media had with it, might have been the result of this perceived threat. The style was popularised by Paul Poiret, a fashion designer who famously boasted to have freed women from corsets, "but I shackled the legs" (quoted in Matthews David 2015, p.135). And while it is true that the satirical press often made fun of the hobble skirt precisely for the way that it restricted the wearer's ability to walk, it would be simplistic to deduce from this that the newspapers were at all invested in women's freedom of movement. Rather, by first 'shackling the legs', and later by ridiculing this style which was originally known as the "aeroplane skirt" (Matthews David 2015, p.136), I want to argue that what was being mocked was Edith Ogilby Berg's makeshift but ingenious attempt to overcome the limitations of her clothing and her gender. At the turn of the 20th century, in the consumer societies of the Western world,

what was perceived as a threat and therefore made fun of, was the idea that simply by means of some strong twine, or the addition of some integrated pockets, women may lay claim to those privileges – freedom of movement, as well as financial and sexual freedom – that for a long-time men's attire had both conveyed and permitted. Noortje Marres writes that "material participation is performatively accomplished, through the deployment of specific technologies, settings and things" (2015, p.23). If "privilege was something that could be stitched into one's trousers" (Carlson 2023, p.110), what caused enough anxiety to call for satire was the idea that by means of their clothes women may gain access to a citizenship practice, while nowhere near equal, at least closer to that enjoyed by men.

However successful, Mrs. Berg's temporary solution for how to fly while wearing a skirt in 1908 is indicative of how incompatible Victorian womenswear still was to the interests, activities and desires of 20th-century women. Although 19th-century inventors, at least in the United States, had sought to adapt women's skirts to make them more comfortable, or to make it more comfortable to walk or sit while wearing one, Mihaela Cornelia Peteu and Sally Helvenston observe that at least until the end of the century, "[i]nventors must have recognized fashion as a force limiting radical changes" (2009, p.55). If "cultures of consumption impinge upon technical design" (Wajcman 2004, p.51), from Peteu and Helvenston Gray's perspective, fashion trends in the late 19th century impinged upon it by slowing down the evolution of women's skirts. They evidence this claim by noting how, when the bustle was fashionable, inventors sought to devise a folding bustle which would make it easier for women to sit while wearing one, instead of removing the bustle entirely. Or how patents for skirt lifters engineered complex systems, which "operated similarly to raising and lowering window shades," for raising the hem of women's skirts to avoid them getting them dirty on rainy days, rather than simply shortening those skirts. Peteu and Helvenston Gray argue that this started to change from the 1890s onwards, when more inventors began to focus on ways to adapt women's skirts to the special requirements of work, maternity or sport, and when they claim that "the trend in augmented and unnatural skirt shapes subsided" (2009, p.55). Still, when we consider the 1910s fashion for hobble skirts, a certainly unnatural shape which seemed to make it more difficult for women to walk than even a long skirt worn without a skirt lifter would have, it is clear that progress is not always as linear as that.

4.4 The Hollow Bustle

If by means of their clothes women could performatively accomplish their consumer citizenship, it is important to remember what an exclusive version of citizenship consumer citizenship still was at the turn of the 20th century (Roberts 1998; Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017). A woman's consumer citizenship might not have been contingent on her having pockets, but neither was her having pockets a sufficient condition for it. Pockets might hint to the wearer's consumer citizenship

whether or not she ever made any purchase, and be perceived as disruptive or threatening for it (Myers 2014) – but despite the approval of Married Women's Property Acts in the United States as well as the United Kingdom throughout the 19th century, the women who actually had both the means to purchase beyond their needs and complete control over their finances were still few by the turn of the century. The same article in the *Iowa County Democrat* that provides a timeline for the evolution of the kick, appears to suggest that this lack of control might be the reason why some supposedly wealthy women steal:

> Physiologists … contend that there is such a thing as kleptomania … Although this theory would seem to be sustained by the fact that wealthy women have frequently been caught shoplifting, store detectives say that inquiries have revealed the fact that such women were not given the allowance of money by their husbands that would enable them to dress as well as they wished to. (1891, p.1)

Similarly, a 1905 article in *Vogue* observes that:

> One important fact has heretofore been overlooked in regard to thieving on the part of women of good position and that is, large numbers of this class are not allowed incomes by their husbands at all commensurate with the social requirements of their position. (1905, p.i)

This passage reads, at first glance, as a very elitist justification for theft. But if we understand 'the social requirements of their position' as civic duty, a more generous reading might interpret it as a criticism of the fact that in the early 20th century in the United States, married women could still be good citizens only by way of their spouses (Cohen 2017). A citizenship practice that is limited to those who can afford to acquire by lawful exchange, and must rely on their husbands' allowance to do so, the luxuries on whose ownership their identity as consumer citizens depends (Bowlby 2010), is not an inclusive citizenship practice. It is in this context that women's shoplifting may begin to be understood as a feminist act of citizenship (Isin 2008), itself enabled by "specific technologies, settings and things" (Marres 2015, p.23). The shoplifter's skirt might not be considered conducive of a citizenship practice when citizenship is traditionally understood, but in affording the wearer a chance to overcome, or challenge, at least some of the limitations of consumer citizenship at the turn of the 20th century, we may consider it conducive of an expanded understanding of citizenship, that redefines it as a more inclusive practice. And if beyond its functionality, the sexual symbolism of the pocket grounds women's consumer citizenship in the body, thereby challenging the disembodied ideal of the citizen, it could be argued that beyond the fact that it technically allows the wearer to reach inside it, the sexual symbolism of the slit, in archival description of shoplifters' skirts, grounds in the body this expanded understanding of

citizenship, which like Mimi Sheller's "citizenship from below signals … the subaltern, but also the lower body, the vulgar, the sexual" (2012, p.30).

When women's shoplifting at this time in history is understood as a feminist act of citizenship, enabled by specific sartorial technologies, to dismiss fashion altogether as a limiting force may be to rush to conclusions too soon. This might have been the case for clothing inventions more broadly, as Peteu and Helvenston Gray aruge, and undoubtedly, the evolution of the fashionable silhouette from the ample crinoline of the 1860s to the tight hobble skirt of the 1910s would have been unwelcome by those who used their skirts as receptacles for stolen goods. Yet fashion could still be helpful to the shoplifter, and not exclusively as a disguise. Inventions such as the ones mentioned in Peteu and Helvenston Gray's paper, that might have shied away from radical change but sought to adapt fashionable skirts for comfort or convenience, give us some clue as to how shoplifters might themselves have adapted those skirts – or adopted those inventions. Indeed, the inventions that sought to make it easier to walk or sit while wearing fashionable skirts might also have made it easier to steal by means of those skirts, all while looking the part of a fashionable lady in a department store. It might even be argued that uncomfortable or inconvenient fashions were a necessary condition for the development of inventions that shoplifters might have misworn to acquire what they wanted without paying for it, and thereby, whether or not they intended to do so (Isin 2008), to challenge the premise, and the exclusivity, of consumer citizenship. Technical objects are scripted with the uses that they are meant for: a bustle should support the back of a woman's skirt; a skirt lifter should raise its hem for ease of walking and protection from dirt. But a script is not deterministic: it can questioned, de-scripted (Akrich 1992). Or rather, it is the flexibility of specific sartorial technologies that allows them to perform differently in different circumstances. In the rest of this chapter, I will consider selected examples of clothing inventions from the late 19th and early 20th century, related to women's skirts, that might have lent themselves to shoplifting even when shoplifting was not their intended purpose.

The earliest mention I could find in the archives of something being stolen by way of a bustle is in an 1885 issue of the *Manchester Evening News*, which notes that the story was originally published in *The New York Times*. It is the improbable tale of a woman from Paris – a city where the unprincipled but well-dressed female protagonists of improbable tales published in British and American newspapers are often from (see for example: *The Leeds Intelligencer* 1863, p.3) – who is said to have stolen an ornamental clock, not from a shop but from a hotel, and stored it in her bustle. The clock was only discovered because it inconveniently struck twelve while she was busy asserting her innocence in court. "The strokes came from the neighbourhood of the bustle, and as the lady could not prove that nature had provided her with striking apparatus she was searched and the missing clock discovered". This 'Striking Incident' the author hopes, will alert dressmakers to "the carrying capacity of the bustle". The article concludes with an auspicious prediction:

> Women notoriously suffer from a dearth of pockets, and yet they have never – except in the felonious lady of Paris – made any attempt to convert the bustle into a pocket. This, however, cannot last, and the day will soon come when every bustle will contain, if not a clock, some other article or articles useful to the sex (*Manchester Evening News* 1885, p.4)

Some inventors might have listened to the outspoken invitation in this story, which was reprinted internationally. Two years later, on April 17, 1887, the *Saint Paul's Daily Globe* reports on a travelling saleswoman from Dakota – she called herself "Miss Swayback" – who had been selling very special bustles downtown the day before (Fig. 4.6).

> The bustles were of simple construction, consisting of broad steel bands, bent in the form of the baskets usually carried by fishermen on their excursions, covered with oil cloth. This basket or bustle was covered on top by a lid that opened and shut on hinges like the lid of an ordinary hamper, and to it bands were attached with which it could be fastened around the wearer's waist, the bustle resting in its proper position. Over this the skirts could be draped and the effect of an ordinary bustle given.

Fig. 4.6: 'Miss Swayback"s 'Accommodation Bustle', in the *St. Paul Daily Globe* 1887a, p.11

To the *Saint Paul's Daily Globe*'s reporter, Miss Swayback allegedly confided that "she had sold a great many of the bustles to women in the East whose profession was shoplifting" (*St. Paul Daily Globe* 1887a, p.11). In December that year, the same newspaper would publish an article on 'The Methods of Shoplifters', featuring an interview with "the superintendent of a large dry-goods establishment," who observes that:

> The contrivances for carrying stolen goods on the person are models of ingenuity. A long bag sewed to the inside of the dress, with a pocket two feet wide, is the most common receptacle, but a large, hollow bustle, easy of access, is much used. (*St. Paul Daily Globe* 1887b, p.4)

Meanwhile in New York, on September 1st, inventor Lena Smith had filed the application for a patent she would be granted the following year (L. Smith 1888). The years of 1887 and 1888 were the high peak of bustle patenting in the United States (Peteu and Helvenston Gray 2009), and Smith's invention wasn't all that different from the bustle sold in St. Paul by Miss Swayback, except that it had a flap instead of a lid, which could be buttoned closed. The patent claims that as well as supporting the top of the wearer's skirt at the back, as bustles ought to do, Smith's invention "may also be used as a sack or pocket in which the wearer may stow away many things inconvenient to carry in the hands – such as a gum rain-mantle and the like" (Smith 1888). Eventually, some dressmakers started to include "a lone pocket in the folds of the cantilevered bustle" (Carlson 2023, p.113). This pocket, however, was difficult to reach without some "struggle and contortion" (p.114), when the bustle was worn. Even if the bustle itself had not fallen out of fashion in the 1890s, this inconvenience might ultimately have made the hollow bustle less suitable for shoplifting than it was for hiding clocks stolen from hotels – or for smuggling, when one considers that a pocket in a bustle which was difficult for the wearer to reach, might also have been difficult for custom inspectors to spot (Abdul-Jabbar 2017; Calahan and Zachary 2023).

4.5 The Belt With Hooks

Among the various examples of clothing inventions analysed in Peteu and Helvenston Gray's paper, the other one I want to consider now are skirt lifters. A search for 'skirt lifter' or 'skirt elevator' in the POP dataset results in 67 patents issued between 1881 and 1920, compared to 25 patents for the same search words issued between 1841 and 1880. Although the differences between these inventions are often insisted upon, most likely because in order to be granted a patent each of these inventors would have had to convince a patent officer of their invention's novelty, most skirt lifters either consist in, or make use of, the wearer's belt to support the raising of the hem of her skirt (Fig. 4.7). From the belt hang straps, tapes, cords or chains with hooks or clamps at their lower ends, which on those occasions when it needs lifting, will be linked to corresponding fasteners on the inner side of the wearer's skirt. Sometimes inside pockets are provided to store the straps, tapes or chains when the skirt lifter is not being used (Lucas 1897), other times there are rings or spring hooks on the belt to receive the loose ends of the chains (Schendel 1912).

Although I could find no record in newspaper archives of the skirt lifter per se, as an invention for raising the hem of women's skirts on rainy days, ever having been used to shoplift, it is easy to imagine how technologies of this kind, with prehensile straps or chains depending from the waist and worn underneath their outer skirts, might have helped the women who stole from department stores. The fact that they were called 'lifters' should have been enough of a warning. Indeed, in 1904, the Australian *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* relays a story first published in *The Scotsman*, about a shoplifter who was caught wearing "the fishhook device":

Suspended from her belt beneath her loose and flaring skirts were five medium sized fishhooks. These hooks dangled level with the knee, and were spaced just far enough apart to keep them from becoming entangled. To the innerside of the shoplifter's underskirt a wide band of oil silk had been sewn. This, with similar bands round the knees, saved both the thief and her skirts from being hooked, and permitting the hooks themselves to hang free. (1904, p.6)

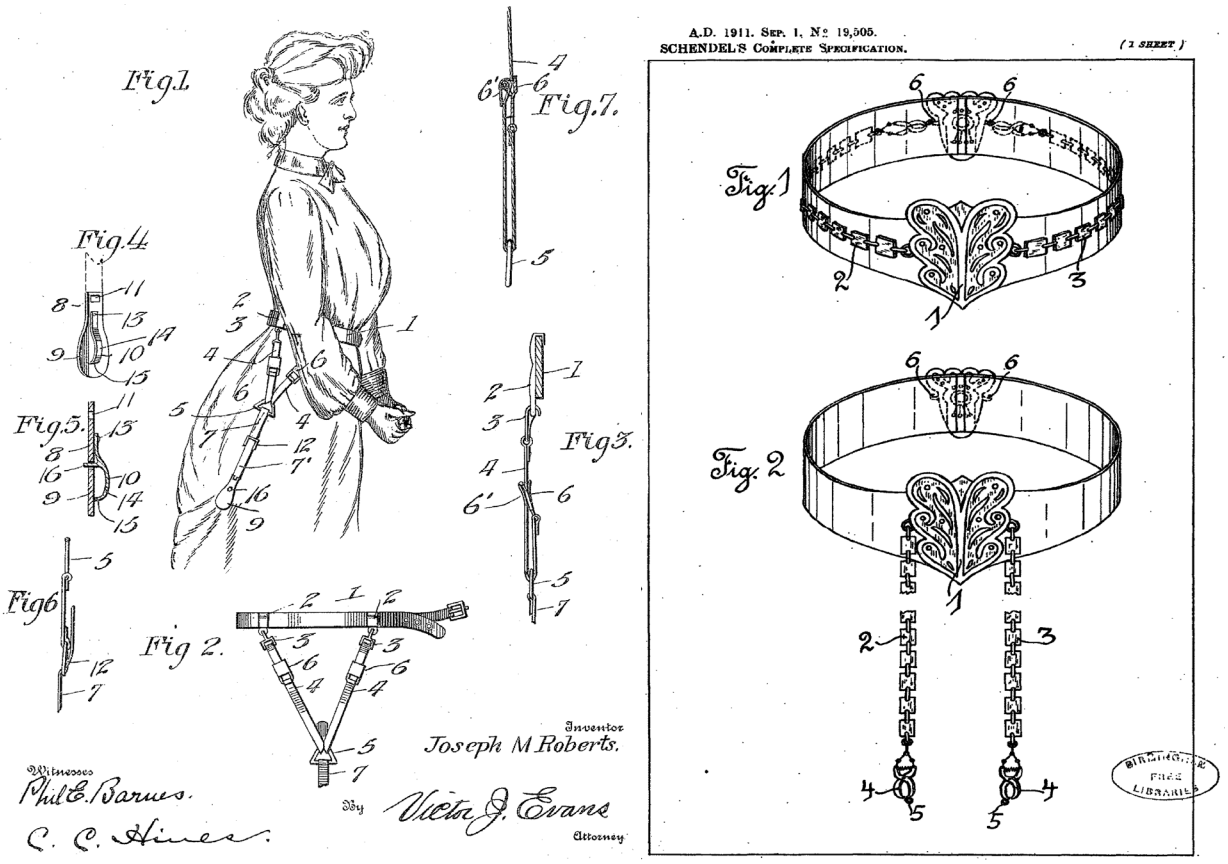


Fig. 4.7: Two skirt lifters that raise the wearer's skirt by way of her belt.
Joseph M. Roberts' 'Skirt-Supporter', US808576A, 1905 (left) and
Olga Schendel's 'Skirt-lifter', GB191119505A, 1912 (right).

Similarly in 1907, over the course of a comprehensive, illustrated overview of shoplifters' "devices for concealing articles they steal," which includes a deep pocket inside the skirt, designed so as to be invisible from the outside even when full, the Baltimore's *Sun* also informs its readers of the shoplifter's skirt in which:

> Suspended from the belt under the skirt are hooks. These can be reached through a false pocket in the skirt. A great amount of merchandise can be hung on them. In fact, there is a tale of one daring woman who had six skirts hung on hooks around her waist under the outer skirt. None of them showed in the contour of her figure, and the only reason that she

> was detected was because in an unlucky moment she tripped and fell to her knees. One of the skirts became loosened and slipped to the ground as she rose (1907, p.15)

If this woman was caught because she fell, in 1912, *Women's Wear* reports of a professional shoplifter who had hung as much as five sealskin coats from hooks attached to her belt, and was only caught because a detective recognised her (1912). Many more women might have stolen from department stores by way of similar sartorial technologies, and if they were not as unlucky as these two, we might never know anything about them. The sartorial technologies that these articles write about might or might not have been, or might or might not have been inspired by, skirt lifters. But if skirt lifters were popular, or at least commercialised at this time in history when women's skirts were long, they might have lent themselves to a "queer use," which in Sara Ahmed's definition would "require a certain willingness to be perverse, to deviate from the straight path, the right path. The word *perversion* can refer not only to deviations from what is true or right but to *the improper use of something*" (2019, p.201). A deviation, or a diversion, from the straight and right path, or from the path set out for them, is also how commodities in Arjun Appadurai's understanding, can threaten the reproduction of social and political systems (2013). When these perspectives are applied to the case of women's shoplifting, posited as a feminist act of citizenship in the late 19th and early 20th century, they support the argument that it is the improper use of particular sartorial technologies, such as skirt lifters, which enables this practice that defies the exchange process whose logic the capitalist system as a whole, and women's consumer citizenship more specifically, rely upon.

4.6 The Drawstring Fail-Safe

If not a new phase in its evolution, since it did not altogether replace previous versions of it, a game changer in the history of the kick, as a structural improvement which could be applied to either the style in which a pocket or bag is concealed inside the shoplifter's skirt, or to the style in which the shoplifter's skirt itself becomes the pocket or bag where stolen goods are stored, was the introduction of drawstrings. It did not further expand the kick's capaciousness, make it easier to walk or run away while wearing it, or better hide its contents. But what the introduction of drawstrings did was to provide shoplifters with a helpful fail-safe to avoid arrest in case of discovery. The earliest mention of it I could find in newspaper archives comes from Australia, from an 1894 article in the *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*. The author does not identify himself, though his gender is easily guessed from the tone of his writing, and as one goes on reading, it becomes clear that his profession must be either that of a store manager or of a store detective. He writes, for example, of the shoplifters who "come in here," hence situating himself in the store. Of all the pockets concealed inside their skirts, he notes that:

> The cutest pocket is a long piece of cloth fastened with pins at each side. Through the lower edge is a drawstring which may be wound about the pins when in use. But the instant I discover that pocket the wearer pulls the string and the good tumble to the floor under the skirts, and I have absolutely no evidence against her, since neither pocket nor goods are found on her person. (*Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* 1894, p.36)

Such a pocket, which is described as 'cutest' most likely in the sense with which the term 'cute' first appeared, as a shortened form of 'acute' or 'shrewd', could be taken apart by pulling a string. The opportunity for the wearer to vanish this sartorial technology at will, for this sartorial technology to be reabsorbed, back into the wearer's body, or more specifically into her skirt, would also have resolved the problem, at least in the United States, of it being a criminal offense to be found in possession of the kick. Indeed, by the early 20th century, the drawstring fail-safe in the shoplifter's skirt is being noticed in New York, where it improves however not the version of the shoplifter's skirt which accommodates a pocket, but that which the article in the *Iowa County Democrat* had described as the hoisting kick. At first, a drawstring is combined with the version of this style in which the shoplifter's underskirt turns into a pocket by being gathered up to the waist (*New-York Tribune* 1905; *The Sun* 1906). No more pins are needed in this instance. As the chief detective of a department store describes it:

> The skirt is so fastened to the waist that when the shoplifter wearing it is caught she can release the bottom of it by pulling a string, and the goods taken will fall to the floor. If this can be done unnoticed by the detective, of course nothing is found on the prisoner when searched.

He recalls the case of a shoplifter who:

> among the other things she had stolen was a child's toy bank. Now, you know those little banks weigh considerable and have awfully hard, sharp corners. Well, when she pulled the string to get rid of the stolen articles after I caught her, that bank … landed squarely on her pet corn. My, didn't that woman howl! (*New-York Tribune* 1905, p.3)

Whether true or now, this supposedly 'humorous' story can be read as a parable: the shoplifter who eludes and defies financial transactions, is here bested at last by a toy bank. The pain she reportedly felt might have been interpreted, by the detective who caught her, by the *New-York Tribune*, or by the *New-York Tribune*'s reader, as a fitting substitute for all the punishments that a sartorial technology of this kind might have helped her to avoid, since "unless the goods are found on the prisoner nothing is proved" (*The Sun* 1906, p.9).

Eventually, the drawstring fail-safe also improves the version of the hoisting kick in which the shoplifter's underskirt turns into a pocket by being sewn at the bottom to the inner side of her outer skirt. The drawstrings substitute the seam between the two. A 1909 article, also in the *New-York Tribune*, calls it a shoplifter's "kit" instead of a kick, but it is clear from the description that it is the same technology they are writing about:

> The very latest wrinkle in shoplifting is an improvement on the regular 'kit'. … instead of a tight seam at the bottom joining the skirts there is an adjustment of draw strings. When a woman thinks she is being watched she steps into a corner, often with only her feet concealed, and pulls a ribbon end which is concealed under her belt. The draw strings give way, leaving the pouch wide open, and the woman walks off like a dumped coal car, leaving the appropriated articles on the floor. (*New-York Tribune* 1909, p.8)

It is interesting to note how this passage accounts for the process by which this sartorial technology gets reabsorbed into the wearer's body: while it is a human woman who thinks, and walks, it is the same woman who is compared to a 'dumped coal car' rather than her dress. The line between a shoplifter's body and her clothes, or rather a shoplifter's body and the sartorial technology she wears, blurs (Haraway 1991; Sampson 2020).

The drawstring fail-safe might be self-explanatory. Until then, precisely because of how capacious the kick was, it would have been difficult for shoplifters to recover and dispose of the things they hid in their skirts, if they suspected that their theft had been observed. It is easy to imagine that eventually they would have come up with a solution to fix this design fault. But it should also be noted that the drawstring fail-safe was introduced at a time when, as Peteu and Helvenston Gray observe, at least in the United States inventors were coming up with ways to adapt women's skirts to the special requirements of work, maternity or sport (2009). Drawstrings were often involved, in particular in those inventions that sought to adapt women's skirts to the special requirements of cycling, which became very popular around 1887 and would remain so until the end of the century, in both the United States and the United Kingdom (Crane 1999; Khan 2000; Shephard 2012; Hallenbeck 2016; Jungnickel 2018a). Convertibility was of the essence, since respectable women could not be seen wearing bifurcated garments when off their bikes, and drawstrings could be relied upon to play an important role in the transformation of a woman's skirt into rider's bloomers, and vice versa (Helvenston Gray and Peteu 2005). Writing about the pattern catalogues, such as the *Delineator*, which gave women access to patented designs, Sarah Hallenbeck writes that readers and riders "could select from among patterns and further modify them in terms of cut and fabric in order to suit their own purposes unanticipated by the *Delineator*'s pattern designers" (2016, p.50). While Hallenbeck is referring here to unanticipated purposes still within the context of cycling, it is not difficult to imagine that if patterns for inventions that made frequent use of drawstrings

Fig. 4.8: Fannie St. Clair's 'Combined Skirt and Protector', US365450A, 1887.

were published and circulated, they might have eventually reached a shoplifter, who might have then selected and modified those patterns to equip her shoplifter's skirt with a failsafe.

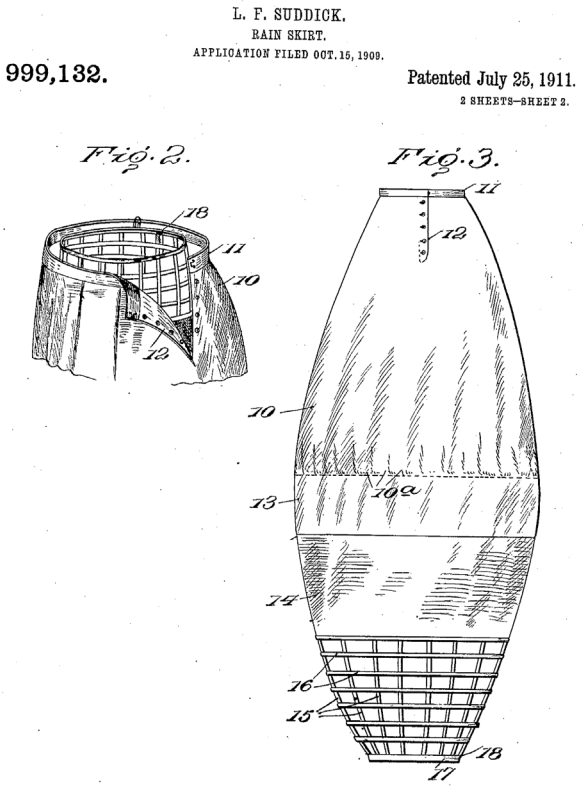
In the POP dataset, a search for 'drawstring' or 'draw-string' gives 69 results for patents issued between 1881 and 1920, compared to only 10 patents issued between 1841 and 1880. These results show that drawstrings were not only useful for cycling skirts. Skirt protectors, for example, also often relied on drawstrings – even when they were not referred to as such in their patents. For instance, in American inventor Fannie St. Clair's 'Combined Skirt and Protector', patented in 1887, it is by means of a "sliding cord" that a gossamer extension to an ordinary skirt or petticoat, turned inside out and folded over it, is tightened and tied into its final position to protect the wearer's skirt or petticoat from rain or mud (St. Clair 1887) (Fig. 4.8). Whereas in British inventor Leonia Mabee's 'Improvements in Water-proof or similar Garments', patented in 1899, it is a drawstring which secures, around the wearer's waist and underneath her clothes, the flap that on days of inclement weather is unfastened from her outer skirt to enclose her underskirt in a protective pocket (Mabee 1899).

4.7 The Skirt Protector

Although they were usually patented under their own classification – as 'lifters' or 'elevators' – skirt lifters for all intents and purposes, were a variety of skirt protectors. But where lifters contented themselves with protecting the hem of women's skirts on rainy days, other protectors, like St. Clair's and Mabee's, reached further up. In the late 19th and early 20th century, skirt protectors came in many forms and identified themselves differently. A search in the POP dataset, for the terms 'skirt', 'dress' or 'garment', followed by 'protector' or 'protecting', leads to 285 results for patents issued between 1881 and 1920, compared to 27 results for the previous 40-year period.

Demand for waterproof garments grew as it became more socially accepted for women to participate in outdoor sports (Shephard 2012), but also as colonial exploitation, specifically the "Brazilian rubber boom" of the late 19th century, made waterproof materials cheaper (Ruberg 2022, p.117). This cheapness would eventually contribute to rubber being recast as a vulgar material (Charpy 2012), but it was most likely the rubber boom which fuelled the technological innovation that had allowed for a gum rain-mantle to be pliable and light enough that it could be folded and stored into a bustle's pocket, as Lena Smith's patent advises the wearer of her invention to do (1888). Out of the many varieties of skirt protectors that I have come across in the dataset, I want to focus on the one which, as in St. Clair's and Mabee's inventions, though not necessarily always by way of drawstrings, either encases the wearer's skirt in a protective pocket, or turns the skirt itself into a pocket for the purpose of protecting its front. This variety of skirt protectors might reach from hem to waist, as Mabee's invention does, or hem to knees or lower thighs, as the drawing in St. Clair's patent suggests hers does, although the patent's description does not specify it (Fig. 4.8). The reason why I would like to focus on it is because of the similarities this variety of skirt protectors bears with the descriptions of shoplifters' skirts that I have considered at the beginning of this chapter. To the point that, if few reporters probably had a chance to examine firsthand the shoplifters' skirts of which they wrote, patents for skirt protectors of this variety from around the same time can shed some light on their construction and functionality, beyond what those reporters might have known. These patents can stimulate and support, with references to inventions which might have been popular, or at least publicised at the turn of the 20th century, speculation about those shoplifters' skirts that are missing from the archives because the shoplifters who wore them did not get caught. Indeed, although I could find no mention in newspaper archives of skirt protectors ever having been used by shoplifters, Louise E. Dew makes this connection in a 1904 fashion piece for *The Savannah Morning News*. Whilst the fashionable "sheath skirt forbids a suggestion of protuberance," she reports that "the emancipated woman is rebelling at her pocketless gowns" and proceeds to list a number of acceptable compromises. Among them:

> the stationery pocket … neatly stitched on to the jersey or sateen petticoat. … has been ubiquitously nicknamed the "shop lifters' friend," because of its convenience, but despite this unpleasant appellation, the stationary pocket is a great comfort to the circumspect woman, as well as to the one who breaks the commandment which admonishes her not to covet the belongings of another. If the day is threatening, milady need not burden herself with rubbers until the rain appears. Then it is an easy matter unobtrusively to turn up her dress skirt and take the rubbers out of her petticoat pocket. … the wearer will experience no inconvenience from her extra luggage if the bag is placed low on the petticoat. (1904, p.22)


L. F. SUDDICK.
RAIN SKIRT.
APPLICATION FILED OCT. 15, 1909.

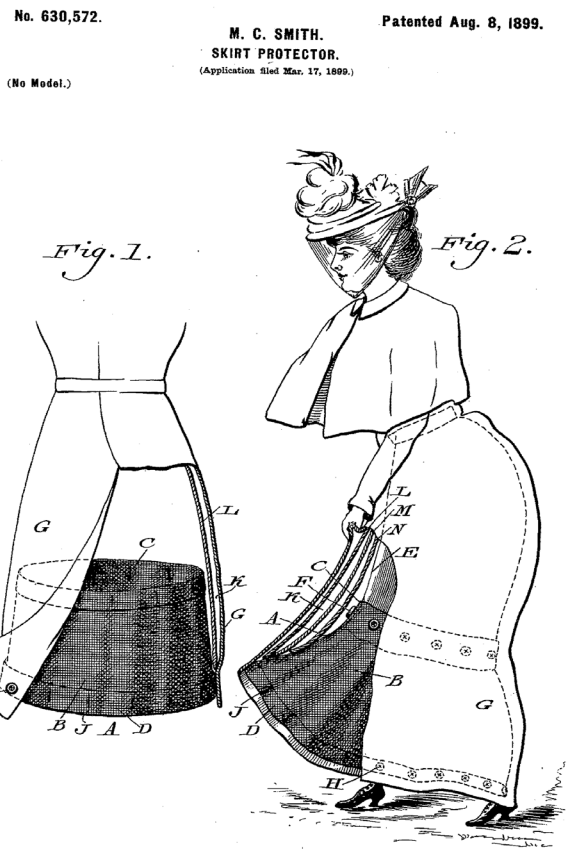
999,132. Patented July 25, 1911.

2 SHEETS—SHEET 2.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.9: Two skirt protectors that form a pocket out of two skirts, reaching from hem to waist. Louise F. Suddick's 'Rain-Skirt', US808576A, 1911 (left) and Mary C. Smith's 'Skirt-Protector', GB191119505A, 1899 (below).


No. 630,572. Patented Aug. 8, 1899.

M. C. SMITH.
SKIRT PROTECTOR.
(Application filed Mar. 17, 1899.)

(No Model.)

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

A Handkerchief Trick.

Fig. 4.10: A special skirt-pocket is used for a 'Handkerchief Trick', in *Pearson's Weekly*, 1910, p.343 (left).

Moreover, in her analysis of patents for waterproof clothing issued in the United States between 1880 and 1895, Arlesa J. Shepard observes that the least noticeable protective garments were, the better: “designs were created to follow the current silhouette or provide an inconspicuous means of protecting the garment … inventors sought to develop less visible devices to protect the skirts” (2012, p.196). The same objective, with arguably much higher stakes, was shared by the shoplifters who wore kicks and hoisting kicks. Like the bloomers that turned into skirts by way of drawstrings, inconspicuous waterproof clothing answered to women’s wish to participate in outdoor sports but not look any less fashionable or respectable for it – but this reduced visibility might have served different purposes for different wearers. “Far from deterministic,” as Bruce Braun and Sarah Whatmore remind us, “technological artifacts temporalize, opening us to a future that we cannot fully appropriate” (2010, p.xxi).

It is easy to picture how a skirt protector like Mabee’s, which reached from hem to waist, could have either resembled or inspired a shoplifter’s skirt, or lent itself to a purpose other than that which its patent declares. There are two more examples for skirt protectors of this kind that I want to mention. Patented in Texas in 1911, Louise F. Suddick’s ‘Rain-Skirt’ is perhaps the most straightforward. It consists of a waterproof slightly longer, outer skirt, and a slightly shorter inner skirt. The bottoms of these two skirts are sewn together, “to form a pocket for the reception of the underskirts” (Suddick 1911). American inventor Mary C. Smith’s 1899 ‘Skirt-Protector’ had aimed for a similar effect, but with an additional piece of waterproof fabric. It was not permanently sewn but could be buttoned to both the shorter inner skirt and the longer outer skirt, “whereby a species of pocket or compartment is formed in which an intermediate skirt is contained” (M. C. Smith 1899). This solution might seem more convenient, because the buttons allow it to be unfastened if the weather conditions improve. Suddick’s patent however argues that those skirt protectors which require fastening are more time consuming, less impermeable, as well as more dangerous if for example, the wearer’s shoe catches between the fastenings while she enters or exits a car (Fig. 4.9). Either way, both Smith’s and Suddick’s inventions, as well as Mabee’s, form a pocket out of two skirts, in the same way that some shoplifters’ skirts turn into “a pocket formed by sewing the [bottom] of an underskirt to the outer skirt” (*New-York Tribune* 1909, p.8) or rely on “a double lining fastened firmly to the outside at the bottom and secured at the waist” (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 1895, p.3). These skirt protectors’ double pockets are also as wide as the circumference of the wearer’s waist, in the same way that the shoplifter’s hoisting kick goes “around the entire body and down to the heels” (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891, p.1), becoming “a pocket extending all round the garment” (*Marylebone Mercury* 1907, p.5).

It is less immediate to picture how a skirt turned into a pocket, but coming up only to the knees, which would require the wearer to bend in order to reach inside, could be useful to the shoplifter who, in the interest of looking inconspicuous, would most likely have been wearing such a skirt

underneath an outer garment too. Yet in addition to “the stationary pocket” or “shop lifters’ friend … placed low on the petticoat” that Dew describes in her article (1904, p.22), I have come across at least two, possibly three more descriptions of the kind of shoplifter’s skirt which accommodates a pocket stitched either to the underskirt, or to the inner side of the outer skirt, that situate this pocket close to the hem. *The Clarksburg Telegram* writes in 1906 of the shoplifters who “have large pockets sewed on the inside of their skirts near the bottom to be used as a receptical for their booty” (1906, p.8), and in 1910 *Pearson’s Weekly* describes a shoplifting trick which involves an handkerchief, as well as a “special skirt-pocket” which the accompanying diagram (Fig. 4.10) positions close to the hem:

> the shoplifter whisks some material from the counter, and lets it drop to the ground. She then stands over it, and presently drops her handkerchief. Then, stooping down, ostensibly to pick up her handkerchief, she deftly slips the stolen material into a special pocket which runs around on the inside of her skirt (*Pearson’s Weekly* 1910, p.243)

The year before in London, Mrs. Clara Blennerhasset had attempted a similar trick at Selfridge’s. Although *The Umpire* does not specify whether the pocket in question was on the inside or the outside of her skirt, Mrs. Blennerhasset was caught as she picked up twelve handkerchiefs from a counter and hid them “in a pocket in the bottom of her dress”. She explained that, having selected the handkerchiefs she wanted, she realised she did not have enough money with her to pay for them. As she lived nearby, she was just going home to get the money, and took the handkerchiefs with her to avoid having to select them again (*The Umpire* 1909, p.9).

4.8 Petticoat, 1908

If worn underneath an outer skirt, or as an underskirt, St. Clair’s invention would have provided the shoplifter who wore it for a purpose other than the protection of the skirt from rain or mud, with a pocket in a similar position to at least that described in *Pearson’s Weekly*, all around the inside of her skirt. Another invention which would have done this is Lena Sittig’s ‘Petticoat’, patented in New York in 1908 – coincidentally, the same year that Edith Ogilby Berg flew in Le Mans. Instead of a drawstring, the outer wall of the pocket is supported in this case by adjustable straps that connect to the waistband. The patent describes the skirt protector as:

> a petticoat with a continuous exterior pocket along its lower portion, the portion of the petticoat which forms the outer wall being unconnected to the skirt except by detachable supporting devices so arranged that the outer wall of the pocket may be suspended from the waistband of the petticoat or the waistband of the skirt of the wearer according to

> whether the skirt is worn entirely exterior to the petticoat or partially protected within the same. (Sittig 1908)

Like much waterproof clothing patented in the United States around this time, Sittig's protector resembles a shoplifter's skirt in that it is designed to be invisible: worn underneath the wearer's skirt and only adjusted to encase it when the weather conditions require it (Shepard 2012). Its pocket intentionally reaches only "sufficiently low to bring its upper edge below the knees," and the patent justifies this choice by explaining that it relieves the wearer's knees "from a clumsy and burdensome load" (Sittig 1908) (Fig. 4.11). This is a something that a shoplifter would have appreciated, when she kicked the contents of her petticoat around while hurrying away. But how much weight or volume would an invention like Sittig's truly have been able to hold? The stationary pocket that Dew describes is said to be useful for carrying rubbers with no inconvenience to the wearer (1904, p.22), but out of the three newspaper descriptions I have noted above, of shoplifters' skirts with pockets close to the hem, the only one that mentions what was being stolen is the account in *The Umpire*, of how Mrs. Blennerhasset hid twelve handkerchiefs in the pocket at the bottom of her skirt (1909, p.9). Was this simply a matter of preference, or should we consider Mrs. Blennerhasset's choice of relatively small and lightweight items indicative of how much weight or volume a shoplifter wearing a skirt with a pocket close to the hem could reasonably expect to get away with – even if Mrs. Blennerhasset did not, in fact, get away with it? Had fashions in the early 20th century finally got too tight for the legendary capaciousness of the shoplifter's skirt? Or had this capaciousness always been no more than a journalistic hyperbole, which could never apply to the version of the kick that accommodates a pocket close to the hem, and perhaps only ever applied to the skirts of those shoplifters who got caught, precisely because they attempted to steal too much? And if the outer wall of the pocket at the bottom of Mrs. Blennerhasset's skirt had been suspended from her waistband by way of detachable supporting devices such as those that Sittig's invention uses, would it have made any difference to how much weight or volume Mrs. Blennerhasset could expect to steal? Would it have made any difference, even, to her getting caught? Would a shoplifter's skirt inspired by, or resembling Sittig's petticoat, still be invisible when loaded with stolen things? Would the continuous pocket along its lower portion be accessible enough when the petticoat was worn underneath an outer skirt, for a shoplifter to be able to load the things she stole inside it without being seen? And would the wearer actually be able to hurry anywhere afterwards, even if she was not?

It is in order to try and answer questions such as these, questions about the "performative flexibility" (Marres 2015, p.74) of Sittig's invention, if and when it was worn by shoplifters – questions that archival research alone cannot answer, that I turn to the sewing machine. I call my replica of Sittig's petticoat a performative replica, because I want to acknowledge that research methods always are (Coleman, Page, and Palmer 2019), and that as I draw attention to the affordances of

Sittig's invention, that shoplifters in the early 20th century might have benefitted from, I benefit from those affordances myself, when I read between the lines of the instructions in its patent to make a replica of Sittig's invention that might have lent itself toward shoplifting in the early 20th century, more readily than Sittig's original invention ever did. This is inevitable, because whether or not shoplifting ever was one of the "unforeseen routines" (Michael 2016, p.650) that Sittig's invention lent itself to, it is not unforeseen in the case of my performative replica of it. Like the successful shoplifters' skirts that might once have repurposed, or might have taken inspiration from Sittig's petticoat, my performative replica is made with shoplifting in mind – at least whenever I reimagine the passages in the making process that Sittig's patent skips. With my replica, I endeavour to give shape at once to what's missing from different archives: to what Sittig's patent does not specify, to the unlawful inventions that could not be patented, and to the skirts that successful shoplifters, those who were not written about in the newspapers, might have worn. At the same time, I call it a performative replica also to acknowledge that as much as this replica might stray away from the use that its inventor had in sight for this invention, it might also challenge even my own intentions and predictions.

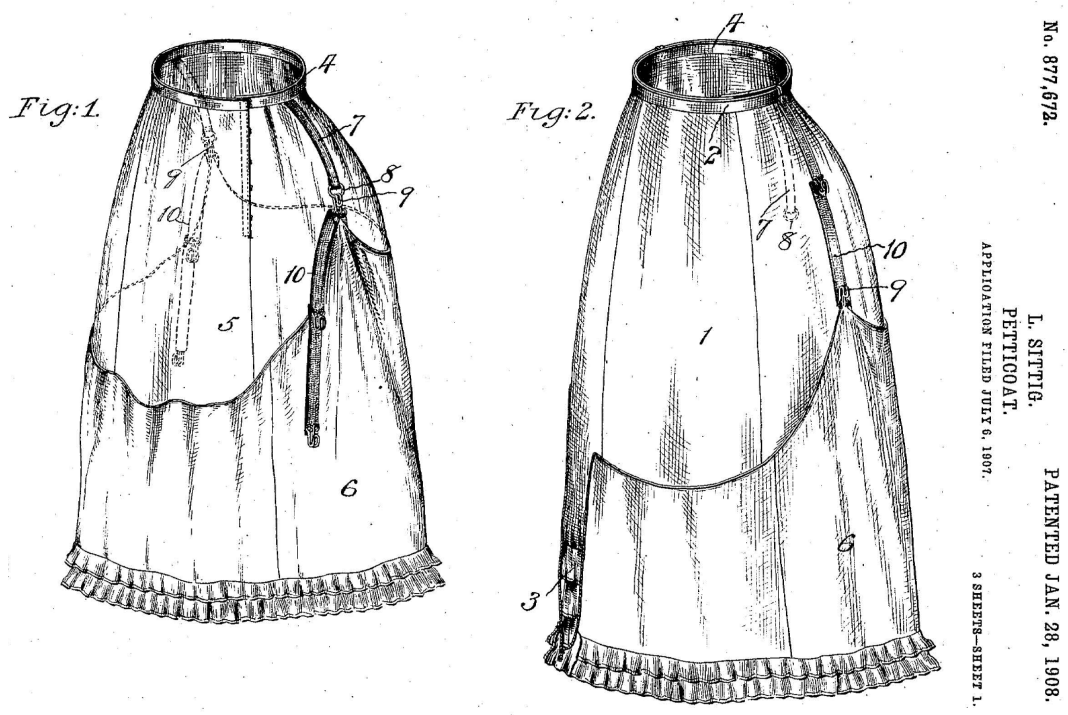


Fig. 4.11: In Lena Sittig's patent, Fig.1 represents her petticoat. Fig. 2 represents her petticoat protecting a skirt whose bottom has been placed inside the petticoat's pocket.

The making of a performative replica of Sittig's invention begins with a careful reading of its patent – a careful reading of the script which is de-scripted if and when a skirt protector lends itself to the purpose of shoplifting (Akrich 1992; Gamman 2012). A first observation is that unlike any of the

examples I have considered so far, Sittig's patent calls her invention a 'Petticoat', rather than a skirt protector. This suggests that Sittig's invention is not something to be worn just in order to protect one's skirt: rather, it is the underskirt itself, and it protects the outer skirt only when necessary. This tones down the novelty of Sittig's invention, and might seem counterproductive in a patent, but it might be a selling point elsewhere. If skirt protectors were worn by the women who wished to participate in outdoor sports, at the time when they wished to do so, at the turn of the 20th century petticoats were worn by all women, at all times. Its patent presents Sittig's invention as an everyday item, to be "worn under the skirt in ordinary conditions," and only adjusted to serve as a skirt protector on those occasions "[w]hen it is desired to protect the bottom of the skirt from rain or mud," an option that surely all women would have welcomed, whether they intended to participate in outdoor sports or not (Sittig 1908).

Sittig would have known something about marketing strategies. This was by no means her first invention, and she might have wanted to widen her customer base. Her expertise is acknowledged when the patent states that the petticoat improves upon two of her previous inventions: a 'Combined Cloak and Skirt-Protector' (Sittig 1893) and a 'Skirt-Protecting Garment', whose patent claims that it is intended to protect specifically the skirts of "wheel women" – that is, women who ride bicycles (Sittig 1894). Neither of these were her first inventions either. In June 1892, Sittig had been granted a patent for another 'Skirt-Protecting Garment' (Sittig 1892), and a New York correspondent for the *Pittsburg Dispatch* had written about her already established reputation as an inventor:

> The very latest bicycle suit is the invention of a bright, pretty woman, Mrs. Lena Sittig, living at Jefferson avenue, Brooklyn; she is also the inventor of the "duck's back waterproof," which is just now creating such a stir. Her suit has been tried by lovers of the wheel and declared to be a great success. (Dimmick 1892, p.13)

In her paper on the patenting activity of 19th-century women inventors in the United States, Zorina B. Khan mentions Sittig as an inventor whose patents responded to market demand (2000), and Peteu and Helvenston Gray name her as one who was able "to capitalize financially" from her work (2005, p.37) – referencing in a footnote the 'Skirted Trousers' Sittig patented in January 1895, which looked like a skirt but allowed the legs of the wearer to bend freely when on a bicycle (Sittig 1895). It is likely this invention that a report from *The New York Times*, reproduced in *The Topeka State Journal* later that year, refers to, when on the occasion of her "selection for chairman of the New York and Brooklyn committee of the exhibit of women's inventions at the Atlanta exposition," it observes that:

> [Sittig's] latest and best known invention, that of the bicycle skirt, is now being considered by its clever designer for adaptation to a much more liberal use. It may help considerably in the solution of the much discussed dress reform question. (1895a, p.6)

Sittig's 1908 petticoat seems more conservative than her 1895 skirted trousers. The patent for the skirted trousers imagines an active wearer, who shall be protected against exposure while "riding a bicycle, climbing ladders, or walking in a strong wind" (Sittig 1895). Comparatively, the petticoat is intended to be worn "in ordinary conditions," and would be invisible most of the time (Sittig 1908). This change in tone might have been motivated by Sittig's wish to sell her latest design also to those women who were less active or progressive than the ones who had been wearing her inventions up until then. Indeed, Sittig's skirted trousers were intended to fit the wearer "after the manner of Turkish trousers" (Sittig 1895), which is to say loose in the leg but gathered at the waist and ankle. If in the Middle East, where it originated, this loose style might have wanted to preserve women's modesty, Turkish trousers, which were also referred to as harem pants, harem skirt, or bloomers after women's rights activist Amelia Bloomer, came to be associated in the West with women's emancipation (*MacGuffin* 2019; Cumming, Cunnington, and Cunnington 2010). But beside more conservative women, at least when compared to her skirted trousers, there's another group who might have welcomed the low-profile ingenuity of Sittig's petticoat: the shoplifters who might have wanted to wear it, or to wear an underskirt similar to Sittig's petticoat, in order to steal from department stores. Because after all, "[w]hat chance would a woman wearing a harem skirt have of getting away with a bolt of lace or a willow plume?" (*The Chickasha Daily Express* 1911, p.6). If we are to consider whether either of these inventions could ever have been worn by shoplifters, or whether shoplifters could ever have worn inventions resembling either of these, I would argue that Sittig's skirted trousers were the harem skirt to her petticoat's hoisting kick.

For my first performative replica of Sittig's petticoat, I decided not to make the petticoat in its entirety, but only the M-shaped pocket as shown in Fig. 5 and 6 in Sittig's patent (Fig. 4.12):

> In the form shown in Figs. 5 and 6, the inner wall of the pocket … is cut away leaving the inner wall in substantial conformity with the outer wall of the pocket …In both forms, the pocket, as it appears when viewed from the front, presents the general appearance of a letter M, the outer wall of the pocket extending upwardly at the sides of the skirt and downwardly in a graceful curve at the front and back (Sittig 1908)

I did this in part because I thought that if a shorter outer wall of the petticoat's pocket was expected to relieve the wearer's knees from unnecessary weight, a shorter inner wall as well, as pictured in these drawings, might further contribute to their ease of movement. Fig. 5 and 6 in Sittig's patent also reminded me of Burman's description of the 18th-century tie-on pockets, that I have proposed above as potential ancestors of the shoplifter's skirt: "connected by a linen tape, tied round the

waist … independent of the garments under which they were worn" and "very capacious" (2002, p.449). I wanted to understand whether Sittig's M-shaped pocket could function as a receptacle in the same way. Because Sittig's patent does not specify which fabrics to use, I turned to the patent for Suddick's rain-skirt for suggestions. It argues for "the outer skirt to be made of rubber gossamer, water-proof, oiled silk, cravenette, or any other material that easily resists moisture; the inner skirt to be made preferably of some light thin material" (Suddick 1911). I chose a thick canvas for the pocket's outer wall, whose weight I imagined to be similar enough to the weight of the waterproof material that a skirt protector could have been made of in the early 20th century, and which would be less likely to give away the shape of the objects that a shoplifter might place inside her pocket than a thinner material would have. I chose a thin linen for the inner wall, to limit the pocket's weight overall. I used cotton tape for the straps and a wide elastic for the waistband, and tied the straps to it with ribbons instead of hooks, to make its height easier to adjust so that Sittig's M-shaped pocket could remain invisible when worn underneath outer skirts of different lengths (Fig. 4.13). I tried it on underneath a longer, lightweight black skirt, a shorter, woollen brown one, and a long and heavy grey skirt with pleats.

When wearing it underneath the long black skirt, it proved more difficult than I expected to place an object inside the pocket. I tried to do it by stooping down, performing a version of the 'Handkerchief Trick' described in *Pearson's Weekly* (1910, p.243). But after rising the outer skirt slightly, the two walls of the pocket had to be pried apart with the same hand, and without a higher inner wall, what I believed to have placed inside the pocket I had sometimes placed beyond it, between my feet. Perhaps this is a question of practice, but I could hardly do it as quickly or "deftly" (*Pearson's Weekly* 1910, p.243) as a shoplifter in a department store would most likely have wanted to. Eventually I placed both the brown and the grey skirts inside the pocket – Sittig's M-shaped pocket was intended, after all, "for the reception of a skirt" (Sittig 1908), and I thought that I could, in this instance, follow the script at once as I misinterpreted it on purpose. I was pleased to note that my movements were not impaired, and that the black skirt I wore on top of it still hid the pocket and all of its contents as I walked. It looked bulky, but not suspiciously so. I was reminded of the professional shoplifters in early 20th-century London, who "grew in size as they added layers of clothing and filled out their drawers" (McDonald 2015, p.161-2; *Perthshire Advertiser* 1910). I noticed however that the cotton straps were pulling down the elastic around my waist, and resolved to make a second performative replica of Sittig's invention, with a stronger waistband and the whole petticoat, as shown in Fig. 1 in her patent (Fig. 4.11). Hopefully, this would distribute the weight of the objects placed in the pocket more equally between the skirt itself, the waistband, and the straps, as well as make it easier to place them in the pocket while the petticoat is worn underneath an outer skirt.

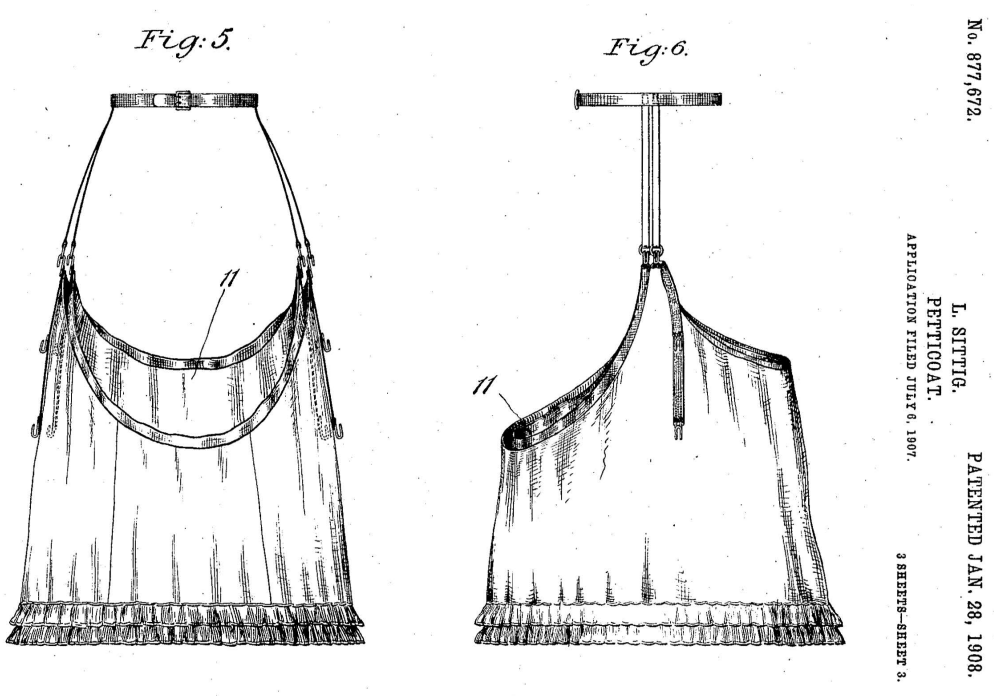


Fig. 4.12: The M-shaped pocket in Lena Sittig's 'Petticoat', US877672A, 1908.

Fig. 4.13: A performative replica of the M-shaped pocket in Lena Sittig's 'Petticoat' protects a black skirt.

Fig. 4.14: I cut the body of my performative replica of Lena Sittig's 'Petticoat' from sand-coloured cotton, following the pattern for a maxi skirt.

Fig. 4.15 (down): I try to determine the length of the petticoat's straps and the best position of hooks and eyes. The capaciousness of the pocket is particularly evident in this picture.

Fig. 4.16 (up): A performative replica of Lena Sittig's 'Petticoat' protects a black skirt. Here the depending straps are attached to a linen belt.

I used a thicker white cotton for the pocket and a thinner, sand-coloured cotton for the petticoat, that I made following a maxi skirt sewing pattern (Fig. 4.14). To its waistband, I attached depending straps furnished with eyes, that could be connected to the hooks on the straps "leading from the upwardly projected portions of the outer wall of the pocket". What this replica loses in adaptability, compared to the first in which the straps are tied with ribbons, it gains in stability – and more hooks can be added to the straps at a later date if more adaptation is necessary. Multiple hooks are in fact what the patent suggests: "the bottom of the petticoat may be held in different positions by the engagement of different sets of hooks 9 on the straps 10" (Sittig 1908). For now, I considered the position of its hooks and eyes to ensure that my performative replica of Sittig's petticoat would be invisible when worn underneath the black skirt (Fig. 4.15). When the wearer's outer skirt is placed inside the petticoat's pocket for protection, Sittig's patent instructs that the pocket's straps should be connected to straps depending from the skirt's waistband. The lightweight black skirt I had been using so far has an elasticated waistband that did not look as if it would be up for the task of holding the pocket's weight without sliding down. I attached depending straps to a linen belt instead, with eyes in a position that, when connected to the hooks on the petticoat's pocket's upwardly projected straps, would ensure that the skirt was fully protected (Fig. 4.16).

When I wore it underneath the same outer skirt, I found it much easier to place objects inside the pocket of this second performative replica of Sittig's invention, compared to the first. The pocket having a higher inner wall meant that the objects could not slide past it and between my feet if I tried to perform the 'Handkerchief Trick' as quickly as a shoplifter would have had to perform it in a department store. Perhaps because the sand-coloured cotton was lightweight enough, or perhaps because the maxi skirt pattern was spacious enough, the body of the petticoat – or the inner wall of the pocket – did not make walking any more difficult than when I wore the M-shaped pocket on its own, even if it covered my knees. Not even when the petticoat's pocket was loaded with objects (Fig. 4.17), although some kicking proved necessary if those objects were particularly heavy. When the petticoat's pocket was loaded with objects, my performative replica of Sittig's invention was not any more visible when worn underneath a long outer skirt, than it was when the pocket was empty. Plenty of objects could fit inside this "continuous pocket … formed entirely around the petticoat" (Sittig 1908): perhaps not "forty-eight different articles" at once (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 1895, p.5), but quite easily half-a-dozen blouses (*Marylebone Mercury* 1907). The making and wearing of this performative replica of Sittig's invention gives credit at least to some of the newspaper accounts on the legendary capaciousness of the shoplifter's skirt, not despite but because the spacious pocket in Sittig's petticoat was not designed as a receptacle for stolen goods – although this purpose was in my mind when I interpreted Sittig's patent for the making of my replica. One can imagine that a skirt's pocket which was designed by a shoplifter specifically for this task would have been even more capacious. But even the woman who had not designed a special skirt for it, and perhaps had not even entered a store with shoplifting in mind,

even the woman who might have worn Sittig's petticoat, or an invention similar to it, to protect her outer skirt from rain or mud – even the less active or progressive woman who might have been attracted to begin with, by the familiarity of a 'Petticoat' – might have felt persuaded, under particular conditions, to take advantage of the affordances of the enormous pocket in their underskirt, and hide in it objects for sale that she had not paid for. Even the woman who might have purchased Sittig's petticoat with her husband's allowance, might have found an unanticipated purpose for it, on sunny days if nothing else. If it was by means of her pockets that a shopper could performatively accomplish her consumer citizenship, and by means of her convertible bloomers that a female cyclist "created new landscapes upon which to challenge conventions, change behaviours and expand possibilities of active mobile citizens" (Jungnickel 2022, p.14), it might have been by means of a misworn skirt protector, that a shoplifter at the turn of the 20th century could perform a feminist act of citizenship, perhaps an act of citizenship from below (Sheller 2012), which challenged the limitations of consumer citizenship at the same time as it defied the transaction which was its premise.

Fig. 4.17: Two small books, a skirt, and a ball of twine inside the pocket of my performative replica of Lena Sittig's 'Petticoat'. I took this picture while I was wearing it.

Conclusion to Chapter Four

I started this chapter on the role that the shoplifter's skirt might have played in her practice at the turn of the 20th century, observing how its capaciousness sets it aside from other sartorial technologies that she might have worn. From an analysis of selected accounts of shoplifters' skirts in this time period, gathered in anglophone newspaper archives, I identified two prevailing versions of this technology: the one that accommodates a pocket or bag, and the one that turns into a pocket or bag. These are sometimes referred to respectively as the kick and the hoisting kick. Aside from its largeness, I noted that one of the most consistent features of the shoplifter's skirt is the wide slit that allows the wearer to slip stolen objects inside it, or inside the pocket or bag that it accommodates. When newspaper descriptions of the wide slit in the shoplifter's skirt of the late 19th or early 20th century, are compared to dress historian Barbara Burman's description of the wide slit that in the 18th century, allowed the wearer to reach for the tie-on pockets she wore under her skirt (2002), a possible ancestor for the kick is individuated and a more comprehensive historical perspective is gained. Tie-on pockets fell out of favour in respectable circles throughout the 19th century, and when at the turn of the 20th century integrated pockets were becoming more common in womenswear, they were similarly disapproved of. As well as the slits by way of which women's pockets were reached, their shape and position supposedly hinted to the wearer's sexuality, her promiscuity, or sex work. At the same time and more crucially, I argued that the financial freedom and the freedom of movement that women's pockets not just conveyed but also technically permitted, is likely to have worried those whose privileges were being questioned by women's changing role in society. A woman's pockets may turn her into a consumer citizen: a consumer citizen who further threatened traditional, disembodied understandings of citizenship (Lister 2003; Sheller 2012) precisely because her citizenship practice was permitted and conveyed by pockets that, for being sexually suggestive, emphasised the fact that she was a woman.

But if consumer citizenship was still an exclusive version of citizenship, I proposed that by shoplifting women could challenge, and arguably overcome, at least some of its limitations – it is in this sense that the actions of the women who stole from department stores at the turn of the 20th century can be posited as feminist acts of citizenship, whether or not these shoplifters conceived of their thefts as such at the time. And like the pockets that permitted a woman's participation in the marketplace, when women's shoplifting is posited as an act of citizenship, it can be argued that it was the shoplifter's skirt that technically enabled, or at least facilitated this practice. A successful shoplifter at this point in time would probably not have worn the integrated pockets that the New Woman favoured (Myers 2014), at least not on the side of her skirt that others could see. She might have resented her husband's insufficient allowance, but similarly to how militant suffragettes actively avoided wearing the kind of clothes that openly challenged gender differences (Crane 1999), I considered that she would most likely have worn what

respectable ladies wore, in order not to draw attention to herself and to her unlawful practice. But fashion was not always an obstacle to the shoplifter's practice, nor exclusively a disguise: I argued that it could also be useful to her. An analysis of selected clothing inventions that, at the turn of the 20th century, sought to adapt popular skirt styles for comfort or convenience without altering too much their outward appearance, gives us clues as to how the same sartorial technologies might have lent themselves to the purpose of stealing from department stores. The hollow bustle is an example of this (*Manchester Evening News* 1885; *St. Paul Daily Globe* 1887a; *St. Paul Daily Globe* 1887b). Prehensile straps or chains furnished with hooks, depending from the wearer's waist and worn underneath her outer skirt, such as those described in patents for skirt lifters (J. M. Roberts 1905; Schendel 1912) could also have been useful to the shoplifter. Similarly, at around the same time that the skirts of the female bicycle riders were being fitted out with drawstrings to convert them into bloomers, a drawstring fail-safe emerges as a game-changing improvement to the shoplifter's skirt.

But from my research I concluded that the inventions in the POP dataset which at this point in time most resemble shoplifters' skirts, are a particular variety of skirt protectors. Lena Sittig's 1908 'Petticoat' is an example of this variety, in which the wearer's underskirt turns into a pocket, and that pocket encases her outer skirt for the purpose of protecting it in bad weather. Sittig's invention is designed to be invisible at all times, except on those occasions when the outer wall of the pocket is detached from the waistband of the wearer's underskirt and attached to the waistband of her outer skirt (1908). The making and wearing of two performative replicas of Sittig's invention show that even if it was not intended to be used as a receptacle for anything but the wearer's outer skirt, a petticoat's pocket of this kind would have been able to hold objects of considerable weight or volume, and that it would not have been any more visible for it when worn entirely underneath an outer skirt. It shows that a petticoat's pocket of this kind, even when worn entirely underneath an outer skirt, would have been accessible enough for the wearer to place objects inside it – by stooping down rather than through a slit – and that even when holding objects of considerable weight or volume, it would not have impaired her ability to flee the scene as soon as she had done that. The making and wearing of two performative replicas of Sittig's invention lend credibility to the newspapers' accounts of the capaciousness of the shoplifter's skirt at this time, and suggest that skirt protectors of this variety might have played a role in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. When women's shoplifting at this time is posited as a citizenship practice, the miswearing of skirt protectors for a purpose different from the one that they were invented for, may be understood as material participation.

In the next chapter, I will consider what role the shoplifter's sleeve might have played in her practice at the same time.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE SHOPLIFTER'S SLEEVE

My research on the role that sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, continues in this chapter with the shoplifter's sleeve. The chapter begins with an acknowledgement of the difficulty of tracing a timeline for the evolution of the shoplifter's sleeve at this point in time, on the basis of newspaper reports that are rarely unbiased towards women, their place in the public sphere, or their clothes. No less because the sleeves of successful shoplifters are likely to be missing from these reports. Yet the shoplifters' sleeves described in newspaper reports help me to imagine those that are missing from them, and I propose that the shoplifters who might have read these reports at the time when they were published, might have been similarly inspired to imagine improved versions of those sleeves. I propose, in other words, that the same reports that denounced it would have contributed to the evolution of the shoplifter's sleeve, which would in turn have played an evolving role in the thefts of the women who wore it, as feminist acts of citizenship. I go on to consider the shoplifter's sleeve most common components according to newspaper reports: a catch, pin, spring-clip, clasp or trap to gather from department stores' counters the object that the wearer of the sleeve intends to steal, and a piece of elastic sewn on the one end to the catch, pin, spring-clip, trap or clasp, and on the other to her cuff, elbow, shoulder or armpit, to quickly retrieve and conceal the stolen object. I draw a comparison between these components and those of some sleeve holders in the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset and on Espacenet, which were patented at around the same time that these reports were published. The making and wearing of a performative replica of an elasticated sleeve holder, patented in 1907, allow me to speculate about the reason why shoplifting technologies of this kind might have failed and ended up in newspaper archives. Still, magic manuals from the late 19th century, offering instructions on how to disappear specific objects inside one's sleeve by means of an elastic and tin cup, are helpful to understand the kind of object a shoplifter wearing an elasticated sleeve holder might have succeeded in stealing – and they would have been equally helpful to the shoplifter who might have attended magic shows, or come across either these manuals at the time when they were published, or the mechanical aids that they describe.

After 1910, I reflect on the impact of tighter sleeve fashions on the shoplifter's sleeve. In being enabled, facilitated, or performed by way of shoplifters' sleeves whose specific contribution changed as women's fashion changed, I argue that women's shoplifting as a feminist act of citizenship at the turn of the 20th century challenged the disembodied ideal of the citizen. I discuss the coming of large bags, specifically knitting bags, to replace wide sleeves, and the use of sleeves

stuffed with false arms by professional shoplifters, sensationalised in the press. Lastly, I consider a few patents and news stories about invisible sleeve pockets, and reflect on how the inventions they outline might have lent themselves to shoplifting. The making and wearing of a performative replica of a sleeve with a compartment for the hand of the wearer's companion, patented in 1915, contribute to my understanding of the capaciousness of sartorial technologies of this kind, and allow me to speculate about the reason why they might have succeeded and be missing from newspaper accounts of shoplifting methods at the turn of the 20th century.

5.1 Ladies' Sleeves

Fig. 5.1: Gordon Grant's illustration in *Puck*, 1910.

To contextualise and set the scene for this chapter's analysis, I want to refer to a double-page colour centrefold, titled 'Ladies' Day at the Club' and captioned "Talk About Your Shoplifters!". It shows a dining room, the club's, where smiling women, grouped in pairs, are leisurely helping themselves to the tableware, while in a bubble insert on the top left corner, four men with perplexed expressions examine a long list of presumably missing items at 'The House Committee's Inventory'. Signed by artist Gordon Grant, the illustration features in the September 14, 1910 issue of the satirical magazine *Puck*, published in New York (Grant 1910) (Fig. 5.1). I will return over the

course of this chapter, to 1910 as a pivotal date in the history of the shoplifter's sleeve – but for now, I would like to consider how the club's scene testifies to the popular stereotype which, as a mediatic phenomenon, the kleptomania epidemic perpetrated: that women are thieves at heart, and that when they are among themselves, in public and faced with temptations, their natural tendency to steal is out of control. 'Ladies' Day at the Club' trusts on its readership's familiarity with this stereotype, whose widespread diffusion it further contributes to. The women in Grant's illustration are all white, well-dressed, and stealing almost as a second thought, with neither desperation nor nervousness. Although it doesn't take place in a shop or a department store, the subtitle refers to the characters as shoplifters: this suggests that by the time when this centrefold was published, a shoplifter was not simply someone who happened to steal from a shop, but had become a moniker by which to address a lifestyle if not a subculture, with defining characteristics: elegance, confidence, conviviality. Already by the 1890s in fact, Elaine Abelson writes of "the shoplifter-kleptomaniac" as a "recognisable stereotype [which] relied on an understanding of the middle-class woman as someone who had an innate infirmity" (1989, p.8). As satire, 'Ladies' Day at the Club' intends at once to ridicule its subjects, and to exorcise any truth that there might be to its representation of their behaviour when unsupervised. Not unlike women's fashions, if to a lesser extent, the female shoplifter throughout history has often been the subject of caricatures. Not unlike women's pockets, or the aeroplane skirt, it could be argued that it's the threat she poses that calls for it.

The reader of *Puck* would have understood that the women in the image were middle class, in part from the title and setting. At the turn of the 20th century clubs were exclusive environments, most likely as much in the United States as they were in the United Kingdom (Rappaport 2000). For it to have been a 'Ladies' Day', moreover, this club would not have been a women's club, nor a mixed-sex club, but a men's club which allowed in not women, but ladies, only on designated dates. But the reader of *Puck* in 1910 would have understood that the women in the image were middle class, first and foremost from the way that Grant dressed them. With matching outfits and hats, accessorised with white gloves, these women fit the mould of the archetypal shoplifter I discussed in Chapter One, as a member "of the classes not ashamed to call themselves genteel" (*Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser* 1884, p.2). It is precisely for these class connotations, however, that in real life fashionable womenswear could also be worn tactically (Parkins 2002; De Certeau 1988), as a disguise. This insight was shared by the British suffragette engaged in acts of civil disobedience (Rappaport 2000; Parkins 2002), the smuggling American dressmaker (Abdul-Jabbar 2017) and of course the professional shoplifter (Meier 2011; McDonald 2015; Davies 2021). It was under the cover of this disguise, as a first line of defence, that sartorial technologies such as the shoplifter's sleeve, by which I mean a sleeve whose foremost purpose was to permit or facilitate the wearer's stealing from department stores, could hide.

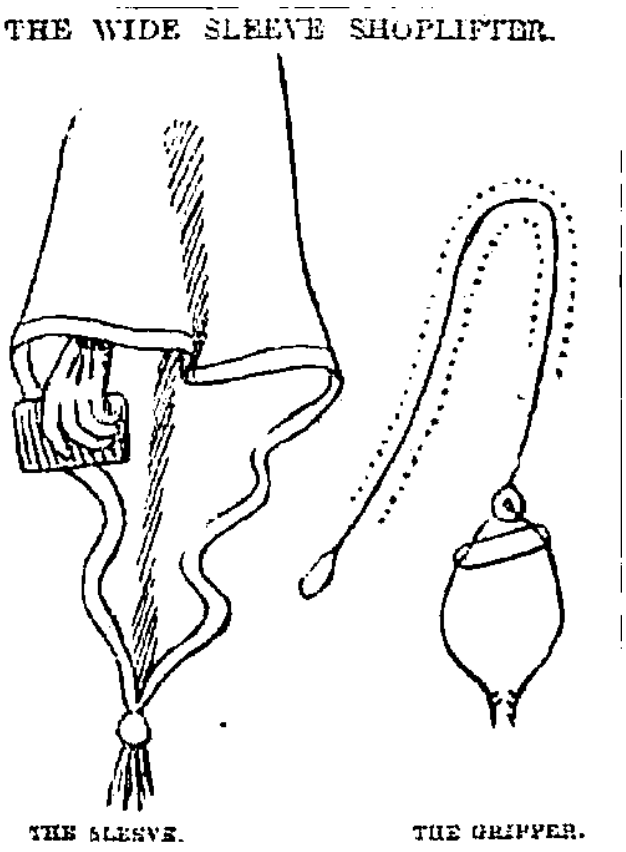


Fig. 5.2: Bell sleeve and grippers in the *Edinburgh Evening News* 1903, p.4

The same shoplifter's sleeve could also function as a disguise and a sartorial technology at once. The bell sleeve, for example, was a fashionable style of sleeve in the early 1900s, which could also serve as a convenient repository for stolen goods. This is demonstrated in Grant's illustration: on the right side of the image, a woman stands wearing a black and yellow dress and a matching feathered hat. Her dress has very wide, long bell sleeves, and up the folds of her left one she is about to stow away a round silver tray. We might consider a bell sleeve the flip side of a gigot sleeve: where the gigot sleeve is widest at the shoulder and gradually tightens towards the wrist, the bell sleeve fits tight from the shoulder to the mid-forearm, and widens at the wrist. The heyday of the gigot sleeve notably were the mid-1890s, but in the first decade of the 20th century, in the United States at least, bell sleeves might have been more popular than they ever would be again. A search for 'bell sleeve' or 'bell sleeves' in The Vogue Archive finds 399 results from 1900 to 1909, over a quarter of a total of 1431 results from 1892 to 2023. Whilst the fact that *Vogue* was a weekly publication until 1909 might have some impact on these numbers, they are nonetheless indicative of how fashionable this style of sleeves was in the early 20th century. In 1910, Grant was not the first to conceive of bell sleeves as potentially helpful to shoplifters – nor were his assumptions entirely unfounded. Across the ocean a few years prior, an article in the *Edinburgh Evening News* warned shopkeepers to beware of 'The Wide Sleeve Shoplifter'. The bell sleeve here works in combination with a rubber cord or tube, and an air ball that when squeezed tightens a set of hidden grippers (Fig. 5.2). "The lady with the bell sleeve," covers with its flounce the article on a shop counter that she aims to steal, then pulls the tube or squeezes the air ball so that "[t]he cord tightens the toothed fangs of the grippers on the article, and a little pulling up of the contrivance takes the article and grippers up the mouth of the sleeve and out of sight" (*Edinburgh Evening News* 1903, p.4).

A timeline tracing the evolution of the shoplifter's sleeve crafted only on the basis of newspaper reports, cannot be considered exhaustive. Not just because such a timeline would be informed for

the most part by the times when it failed, when a shoplifter's sleeve was discovered or gave itself away. But also because, as will become clear over the course of this chapter, unusually elaborate inventions are written about in newspapers more often than simpler ones, despite presumably being less commonly used, and because as a story gets reprinted its details might change, the proportions of a shoplifter's sleeve increase. Yet neither can the assemblage of bell sleeve, cord and grippers that the *Edinburgh Evening News* writes about, be understood in isolation: this particular shoplifter's sleeve ought to be considered alongside and in relation to comparable sartorial technologies involving prehensile accessories, that adapted themselves to various styles of women's sleeves as fashions changed in the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, what I describe in this chapter as the shoplifter's sleeve is best conceived of as a fluid object with replaceable components (De Laet and Mol 2000), that at the turn of the 20th century, in or on different styles of women's sleeves, either work independently from one another or come together for the purpose of stealing – to either capture, receive, or hide stolen goods, or to provide cover and distract onlookers from the theft that the wearer of the sleeve is about to commit. The shoplifter's sleeve is posited as an accomplice whose specific contribution changes as sleeve styles change, but also in response to failure, either her own or that of others which a prospective shoplifter might learn about from newspaper reports, as well as according to her ability to take advantage of the material culture of her time.

5.2 The Catch

In anglophone newspapers' accounts of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, a recurrent character and the shoplifter's foe, is the female store detective (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 1895; *St. Austell Star* 1905; *Newark Evening Star and Newark Advertiser* 1910; *New-York Tribune* 1914). No less fashionable than professional shoplifters, these female store detectives "employed as spies upon their own sex" (*Hampshire Telegraph* 1892, p.11) also had to disguise themselves as potential customers in department stores (Fig. 5.3). In this respect, they had a significant advantage over their male colleagues, who "simply stood out at a bargain counter" (Abelson 1989, p.131). It is for this reason that female store detectives were necessary, to the point that by 1899, the *Western Mail* reports that "about one hundred women are engaged in detective work in New York and its neighbourhood" (1899, p.9). Undoubtedly, like the female custom inspectors who had been hired, since 1861, to search female tourists suspected of smuggling European goods into the United States, female store detectives were also better suited than their male colleagues to search suspected female shoplifters "without risking their character" (Abdul-Jabbar 2017). Female store detectives, however, would have been toeing a fine line: if the reason why department stores were problematised was that they carved a space for women into a public sphere that had been regarded up until then as an exclusively masculine domain (Felski

1995; Rappaport 2000), for women to be hired to do detective work, a decidedly masculine occupation, would have been a cause of concern as much as it was deemed necessary. A reporter struggles with this paradox in the conclusion of a lengthy article on 'The Female Detective', published in 1890 in *The Sully County Watchman*. "[A] woman may be respectable and yet be a detective" they concede, but nevertheless must add that the more experienced male detectives, "would not advise an honest woman to select the calling as a livelihood" (1890, p.5). It does not occur to this reporter that male detectives may wish to dissuade women from detective work for the threat they posed to their employment opportunities, especially considering how much more effective than their male colleagues they were proving to be. Indeed by 1911, the British *Bedford Record* rather bluntly observes that "[i]t has been found by experience that for this sort of work the male detective is comparatively useless" (1911, p.2).

Fig. 5.3: Charlotte Mineau plays a store detective in Charlie Chaplin's *The Floorwalker* (1916). Note the badge on her glove.

It is a female store detective who, quoted in the article in *The Sully County Watchman*, introduces its readers to the shoplifter's sleeve. Hannah Fleischaur is training to succeed her sister after she got married, as the on-site detective at Ridley's department store in New York. Having already detected "at least 100 cases of shoplifting," Miss Fleischaur tells the reporter, among others, of

the time when she saw a woman “catching whole cards of buttons on her sleeve up under her dolman”:

> she had a sort of catch fastened on her sleeve which would hook through the thread which passes from button to button of the back of the card, and in that way she was scooping in dozens when we caught her. (*The Sully County Watchman* 1890, p.5)

In the late 19th-century in womenswear, a dolman was a mantle or cape cut in one piece with flowing sleeves. From Miss Fleischaur’s retelling, it sounds as if the catch was on the outer side of the sleeve of a garment that this shoplifter wore underneath her dolman, and that the dolman conveniently concealed. The sleeve of another shoplifter caught by a female detective is described in the *New-York Tribune* in 1905. In this story buttons are not the loot, but the scapegoat. The chief of the detective bureau in an unnamed big department store, interviewed in the article, recalls that the shoplifter in question:

> had a black headed pin fastened in her jacket sleeve, so that the point came out of the cloth just under a button. Her game was to get up to the handkerchief counter … hook the pin in one and walk away with it. If it was noticed, her excuse was a plausible one: ‘Why it must have caught on my button! How stupid of me! I hope you won’t think I was trying to steal it!’ … But the other day one of our women detectives pricked her finger on the pin, and the game was up. (*New-York Tribune* 1905, p.3)

The combination of a dolman’s sleeve with a catch, or a jacket’s sleeve with a pin, can also be compared to the fur coat’s cuffs with a spring described in the *Dundee Evening Post* in 1903. Among other remarkable inventions concealed in the clothes of a woman arrested in London, the newspaper reports that “[t]he cuffs of her rich fur coat were contrived so as to close with a spring upon being pressed upon the counter, and in so doing pick up and hold such trifles as rings, brooches, &tc.” (1903, p.8). Although the Scottish *Dundee Evening Post* claims that this happened in London, the following month the same story is reprinted in the American *Savannah Morning News*, allegedly via the *Chicago Chronicle* – here the arrest, vaguely enough, is said to have happened “in an Eastern city” (*The Savannah Morning News* 1903, p.5). The fact that the same shoplifting stories were often so widely reprinted diminishes the credibility of these stories, whose original sources might already have been difficult to trace by the second or third time that they were published. At the same time, their being so widely reprinted is testament to the fact that women’s shoplifting was a matter of public concern at this point in time – but also to the politics behind these editorial decisions. The stereotype was recognisable for a reason: on the pages of these newspapers, as much as in popular literature, “the kleptomaniac … represented the social and moral collapse resulting from women’s immersion in the mires of the economy” (Rappaport 2000, p.53). But just as it both condemned and perpetrated the shoplifter-kleptomaniac stereotype,

the press might also have been both condemned and perpetrated particular sartorial technologies, such as the shoplifter's sleeve. In 1913, an article on 'The Art of the Shoplifter' published in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, would observe once again that "the fur sleeve with a secret spring opening" which is now located "near the elbow is a very successful device" (1913, p.8).

When the story of the shoplifter with a spring in her fur coat's cuffs, is reprinted *The Savannah Morning News*, the author follows the quote above, detailing how the mechanism works, with a peculiar analogy: "[i]t seemed that these remarkable cuffs devoured trifles with about the same ease that an elephant devours peanuts or the Australian carnivorous tree devours birds, beasts and men" (1903, p.5). This kind of language echoes that which, according to Erika Rappaport's analysis, women's magazines used to discuss shopping expeditions through "the metaphors of imperial exploration" (2000, p.130). But if in women's magazines this language, which draws upon "those activities which defined upper-class masculine subjectivity: warfare, travel, exploration, hunting" (p.131), might have sought to elevate shopping as a patriotic activity, and to draw a comparison between middle-class women's consumer citizenship and men's colonial enterprises, in using it to discuss shoplifting instead, *The Savannah Morning News* might "inadvertently reveal deep-seated anxieties" (Myers 2014, p.3) with regards to the consequences that women's "immersion in the mires of the economy" (Rappaport 2000, p.53) might have. Its portrayal of the shoplifter's sleeve as devouring of men, suggests that the author might be especially anxious about the consequences that this immersion might have for men's established privileges. But this analogy is also interesting because fur coats, in shoplifting stories, are usually mentioned as either evidence of the wearer's social position, or of her pretence to it (Meier 2011). Whereas in this animistic retelling of the story, it is the fur coat itself, or more specifically its sleeves that are "at the center of this episode" (Pinch 1998, p.132), and that "manifest traces of independence or aliveness" (Bennett 2010, p.xvi), perhaps retrieving some of the agency of the animal that they come from.

A demonstrative photograph published in *The Illustrated London News* in 1906 might be depicting if not the same, a similar invention. There's not much detail in the image, and like the shoplifter or shoplifters whose stories are reported in the *Dundee Evening Post* and *Savannah Morning News*, and later the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, the model in the photograph is wearing what looks like a long-haired fur coat, which is not conducive to its detection. This was, presumably, the point: if such a technology was to work, it would have been well concealed. Still, the caption calls it a "spring-clip cuff," and a little ring or hook is visible in the image underneath the sleeve, in the act of picking up what might have been a leaf-shaped brooch. The model is also holding something like a ring with her thumb, which might or might not be connected to the hook on her cuff on the inner side of her wrist, in such a way that would be invisible if she was wearing gloves (*The Illustrated London News* 1906, p.15) (Fig. 5.4). A technology of this kind is described the following

year, in an overview of shoplifting methods published by the Baltimore's *Sun*. A more precise instrument in comparison to the ones described above, it requires "sleight of hand" and for the device to be connected to the shoplifter's finger:

> a little fixture that can be put upon the cuff of a sleeve … is operated by a rubber band connected with the woman's finger, and will pick up any small article it touches. A little sleight of hand completes the successful transference of the small article into the sleeve of the operator. (*The Sun* 1907, p.15)

The Baltimore's *Sun* does not specify that this technology should be put upon the cuff of a fur coat's sleeve, and indeed, by 1909 *The Irish News and Belfast Morning News* writes about a shoplifter who "wore starched cuffs and … had a kind of trap in her stiff cuffs which she could open and shut at will" (1909, p.7). The specification that she could open and shut this trap at will might suggest that this was not just a cuff which would close "upon being pressed upon the counter" (*Dundee Evening Post* 1903, p.8; *The Savannah Morning News* 1903, p.5) but one which, perhaps by way of a rubber band, could be even more exact in its operations, and discreet even without the cover of long-haired fur.

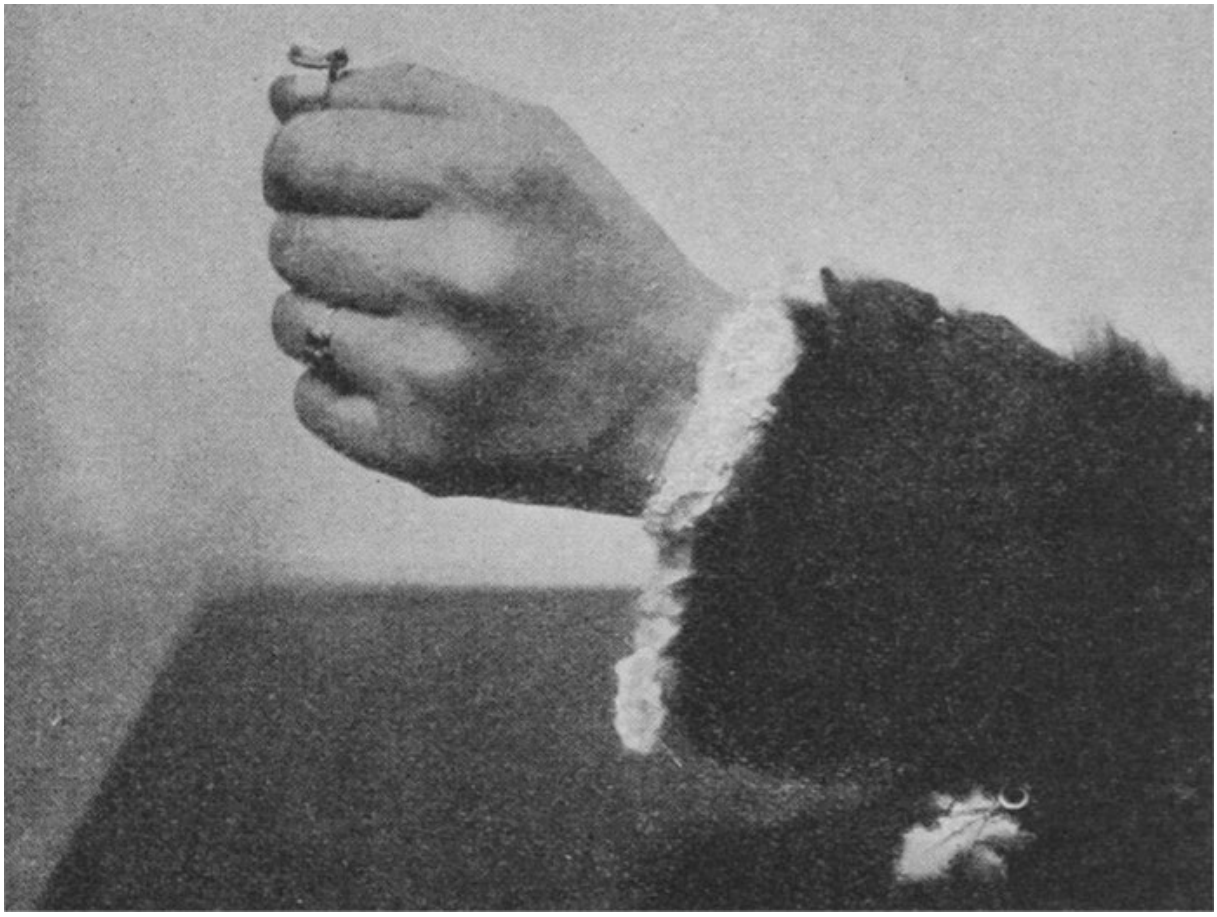


Fig. 5.4: A shoplifter's "spring-clip cuff," in *The Illustrated London News* 1906, p.15

Although she might have, a shoplifter in the late 19th or early 20th century did not need to come up from scratch with "ingenious little mechanical devices" (*The Sun* 1907, p.15) such as these. Shoplifting techniques and technologies can be considered "subjugated knowledges" (Gamman 1999, e.g. 8, 68) or "knowledges from below," terms that Foucault himself explained in his lectures as, among other examples, "the knowledge of the delinquent" (2003, p.7). Intuition, word of mouth, trial and error, the error of others whose misfortunes one might have read about in the newspapers – would all have contributed to the development of the shoplifter's sleeve, from the one with a pin that risked pricking female store detectives and giving itself away, to the one with a fixture operated by a rubber band that could be tightened and released with a movement of the thumb. And to the development of the latter, most likely, into inventions that we might never know anything about. Not that this development would have to have been, in any way, linear: changing fashions, and detectives' familiarity with one or another invention might have fastened or slowed down its pace in different regions, and even a shoplifter who took care to examine the press for accounts of discovered shoplifting technologies, would not have had at the time the level of access to them that I do today, with international online archives and keyword searches at my fingertips. Still, there is no doubt that the shoplifter's sleeve that the Baltimore's *Sun* describes in 1907 is a more considered and precise invention than the one described only two years prior in the *New-York Tribune*, by a reporter who still placed great emphasis on the shoplifter's ability to act innocent, in the rather likely eventuality that her theft was discovered.

When shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century is posited as a consequence, an alternative to, or a subversion of women's consumer citizenship, and shoplifting technologies are understood as knowledges from below, the acts of citizenship that these technologies enabled and performed (Jungnickel 2021) may likewise be considered feminist acts of citizenship from below (Sheller 2012). If at the turn of the 20th century women's consumer citizenship was exclusive to those who could afford, and were "allowed incomes by their husbands" (*Vogue: New York* 1905, p.i; *Iowa County Democrat* 1891; Cohen 2017) sufficient to purchase their place into the citizenry, it could be argued that on the contrary, women's shoplifting as a feminist act of citizenship "exercised in evolving everyday practices" (Sheller 2012, p.34), defied not just the law but also class and gender hierarchies. The female shoplifter did not wait for women to be welcomed in, but rather infiltrated the public sphere. Her sleeve, in its many variations, as an assemblage with replaceable components, might be thought of as one such evolving everyday practice.

5.3 The Elastic

As well as from newspaper reports, it is reasonable to imagine that this evolution would have been inspired by, and borrowed from, the material culture of the time when it occurred. A shoplifter's cuff such as the one that the Baltimore's *Sun* writes about might seem quite elaborate to the 21st-

century reader, yet its essential components are remarkably similar to those of the sleeve holder, a technology a lot more people would have recognised in the late 19th and early 20th century. Designs for sleeve holders, or sleeve grips, abound in POP's dataset, but they appear to have been especially popular at the turn of the 20th century. A search for 'sleeve holder' finds 85 results for patents issued between 1881 and 1920, compared to 53 results for patents issued between 1921 and 1960, and only one patent issued between 1841 and 1880, for what was actually a corset's component (Bergen 1877). Although they have largely disappeared from daily use, the problem these inventions sought to resolve is one that most people, still today, are likely to have experienced. This is how American inventor Daniel G. Butts explains the purpose of his sleeve holder in its patent:

> …in placing the over-garment on the under-garment invariably slips up upon the forearm, sometimes as far as the elbow. The outer garments are then extremely uncomfortable to the wearer … If, before putting on the outer garment, my improved sleeve-holding device is attached to the under-garment at one end and the other end of said device held in the hand, the above difficulty will be remedied. (1890)

While this was their prescribed purpose, sleeve holders could also be misused. An 1892 article titled 'Pitiful Pocketless Woman', in the *Los Angeles Herald*, tells the story of someone who wore one to make up for her lack of pockets.

> she counted her handkerchiefs, and found that she had lost six inside of two weeks … She had been in the habit of tucking her square of linen of lace under the edge of her basque [bodice], and could not think of any other place which would be equally eligible. At last she had an idea. She took one of these clasps such as are used for holding up sleeves of hose, and fastened that under her basque. Then she clasped this to her kerchief, and walked serene in the consciousness that she was invulnerable to loss.

I will return to the misuse of hose, or sock suspenders, more thoroughly in the next chapter. Although I could not locate, in anglophone newspapers' archives, any account of sleeve holders or sleeve grips ever having been misworn to shoplift – as indeed there wouldn't be, if they were effective – the technical drawing in Butts' patent, as well as, for example, the one in American inventor Orlando S. Kepler's patent for another sleeve holder that also achieves its goal because it connects the sleeve's cuff to the wearer's fingers (1898) (Fig. 5.5), can be helpful to understand how the shoplifter's sleeve described in the Baltimore's *Sun* might have worked. What the drawings don't show, however, is that neither of these inventions is designed to connect the sleeve's cuff to the wearer's fingers by way of elastic materials. Rather, Butt's sleeve holder is intended to be made out of "a thin narrow strip of metal" (1890). This limits the chances that this invention might have been misworn by shoplifters, if they ever came across it, for a purpose other

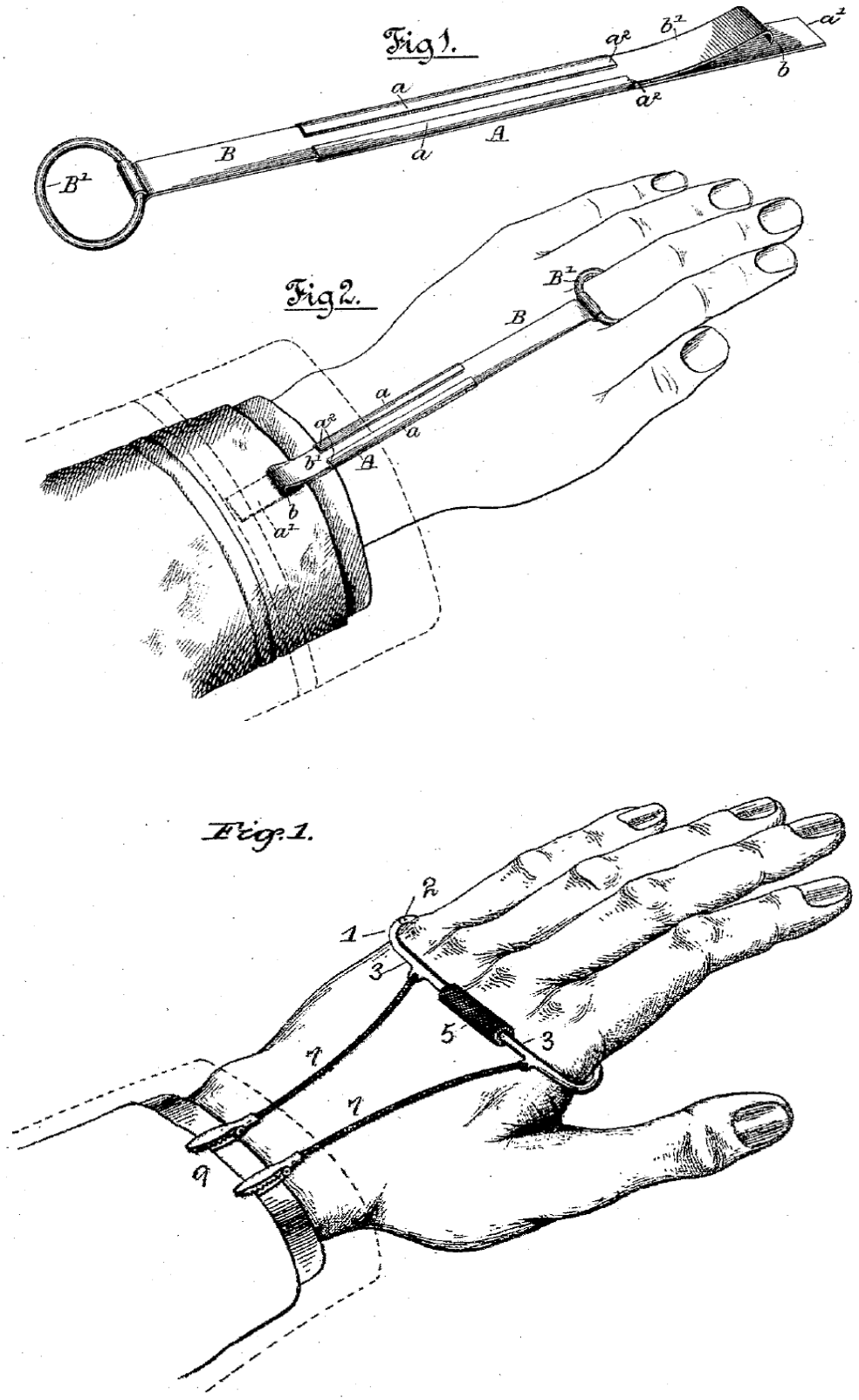


Fig. 5.5: Two sleeve holders that hold down the sleeve by connecting its cuff to the wearer's fingers.
Daniel G. Butts' 'Sleeve-Holder', US419635A, 1890 (above) and
Orlando S. Kepler's 'Sleeve Holder', US597883A, 1898 (below).

than the one which its patent declares (Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015), at least not without adaptation. Because what makes the shoplifter's sleeve described in the Baltimore's *Sun*, and possibly photographed in in *The Illustrated London News*, a more precise and considered sartorial technology when compared to those described in the *New-York Tribune* and *The Sully County Watchman*, is the introduction of a rubber band. In fact, the Baltimore's *Sun*'s shoplifter sleeve might be interpreted as a later development of the shoplifters' sleeves in the *New-York Tribune* and *The Sully County Watchman*, as much as it might be interpreted as a more contained, perhaps less conspicuous, elastic version of the one described in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, which already in 1903, had comprised of a bell sleeve, an air ball and a set of grippers, all held together by a rubber tube or cord. Similarly to the cheap and pliable waterproof materials I discussed in the previous chapter, rubber bands, tubes or cords were a byproduct of the technological innovation (Charpy 2012) that throughout the 19th century was fuelled by colonial exploitation (Ruberg 2022).

Fig. 5.6: Advertisement for the Vassar sleeve holder, manufactured by Slayton & Whiting. Image from Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images.

In 1891, American inventor Henry L. Hoyt would come to patent a sleeve holder that connects the wearer's sleeve to his finger by way of "[a] strip of elastic material". Although it is patented as a sleeve holder, Hoyt's invention is in fact an elasticated sleeve: the elastic strip runs between the lining and the sleeve's cloth, and is permanently sewn to the shoulder's seam. The patent's text does not discuss this, but it is clear from the technical drawing that when it is not pulled down by the wearer's thumb, the elastic strip remains concealed above their cuff. The drawing also leaves no doubt that the imagined wearer of Hoyt's elasticated sleeve is a man in formal attire (1891). Searching for sleeve holders in the Bridgeman Education archive, I did come across an advertisement for a sleeve holder shown on a woman's body, dated simply to the 19th century – although the tight sleeves and elongated bodice that the woman is wearing suggest that this sleeve holder might have been on sale only in the late 1890s (Fig. 5.6). If it ever was patented, I could find no patent for the Vassar sleeve holder manufactured by Slayton & Whiting in the POP dataset or on Espacenet, even though Slayton & Whiting were granted one, in 1885, for a 'Clasp for Garment Supporters' that still exists on Espacenet (Whiting 1885). The earliest patent I could

find for a sleeve holder addressed specifically to womenswear, was granted in the United States to Herminia M. M. Barnes of Ludlow, England, in 1907. Unlike the Vassar sleeve holder, which appears to have been made of metal, her invention consists of:

> an elastic tape having a ring or other equivalent device secured at each end thereof, with one end of the tape passing through one of the rings to form a loop by which the sleeve is embraced about the arm and the other ring serving as a means to be passed over the thumb or finger for maintaining the holder in operative position (1907)

Although it also includes a "ribbon-loop" to release the elastic once it has served its purpose, Barnes' patent adds that "[i]f desired, instead of removing the holder from the sleeve after use it may be tucked in the sleeve of the outer garment and held therein concealed until the outer garment is removed" (1907) (Fig. 5.7).

It could be argued that sleeve holders like Hoyt's and Barnes', sewn or wrapped around the wearer's sleeve at the elbow or the shoulder "and held therein concealed" if desired (Barnes 1907), would have lent themselves to the purpose of shoplifting, by virtue of the affordances associated with them (Michael 2016), with little need for any adaptation. Not only would an elastic strip have allowed the flexibility, or the "sleight of hand" (*The Sun* 1907, p.15), that a metal grip did not – the fact that when released from her fingers the elastic tape jumped back inside the wearer's sleeve, above the cuff, could mean that an object hooked onto that tape would have jumped back inside the shoplifter's sleeve together with it. Although it is not presented as a sleeve holder, an article on 'Shop Lifting in England' in a 1904 issue of the Irish *Enniscorthy Guardian*, describes a woman's "very ingenious device" that does exactly this:

> The principle of the whole affair was the balloon sleeve but she … used to wear inside her sleeve a piece of elastic, one end fastened at her shoulder and the other bearing a little hook or clasp … she would pull down her hook, fix it to the selected article, and it would be drawn up by the elastic. (1904, p.9)

In the United States, an account of the same or a very similar shoplifting technology would be published in 1910, in the same article in *Pearson's Weekly* where the 'Handkerchief Trick' that I have discussed in the previous chapter is also described. This time instead of a balloon sleeve, it involves "the wide sleeve of an ulster":

> a piece of elastic is fastened to the dress, under the arm-pit, on the one end of which a clip is sewn. The shop-thief, holding the clip open between finger and thumb, brings it into contact with the coveted article on the counter … releases her hold, and allows the elastic to jump back up her sleeve, with the stolen material attached (1910, p.243)

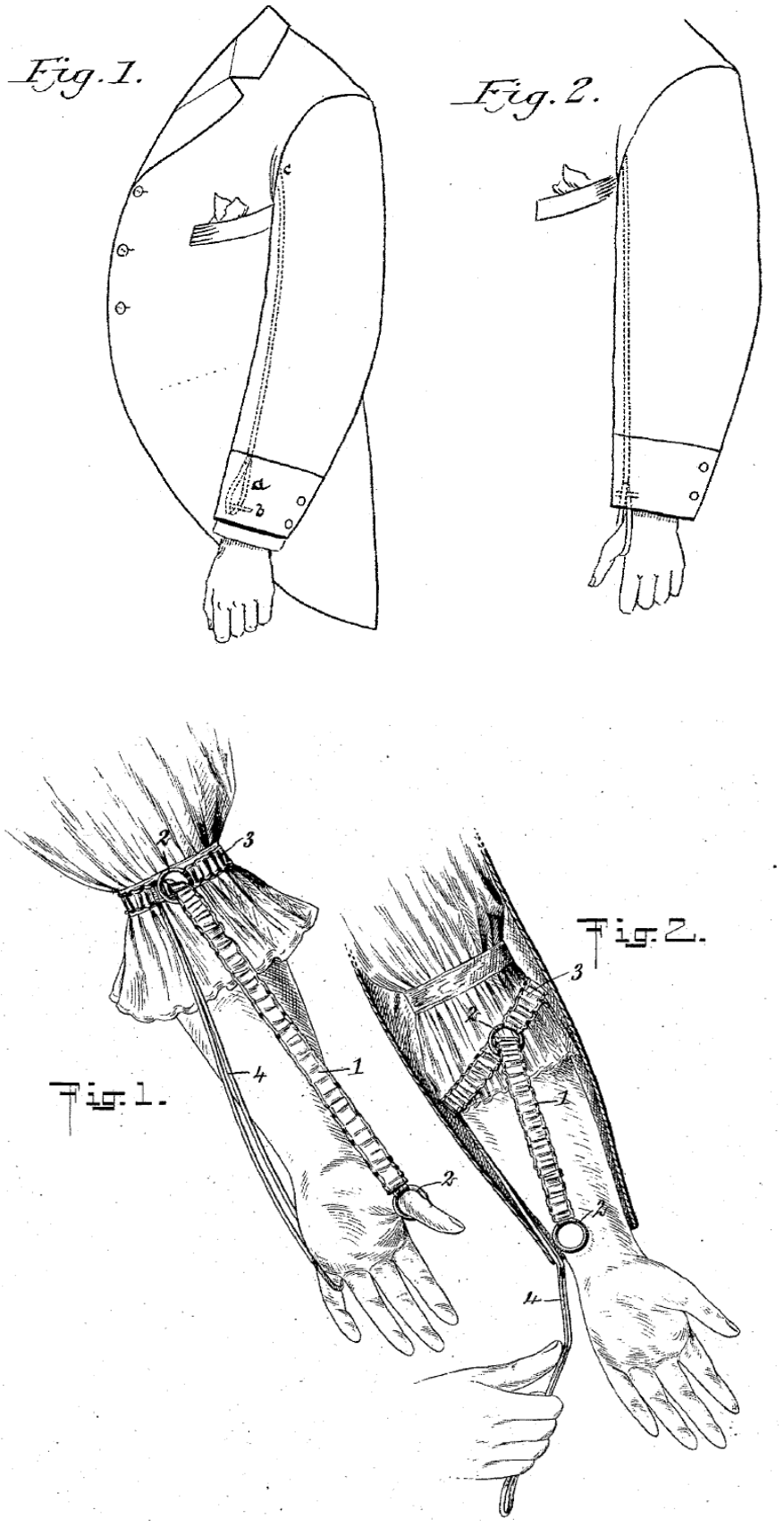


Fig. 5.7: Two sleeve holders that use elastics.
Henry L. Hoyt's 'Sleeve Holder', US462555A, 1891 (above) and
Herminia M. M. Barnes' 'Sleeve Holder', US850721A, 1907 (below).

At the turn of the 20th century, the ulster was a belted and caped overcoat. It came in different styles, but the one that the shoplifter wears in the diagram in *Pearson's Weekly* (Fig. 5.8) would have been the Raglan, whose "deciding feature was the distinctive sleeve and collar cut … the sleeve was cut up to the neck on the shoulder … Such a cut creates greater depth of the underarm, useful for accommodating bulky sweaters and jackets underneath" (Rumball 2022, p.6). Such depth of the underarm might have been equally useful, as the diagram shows, for accommodating a stolen blouse.

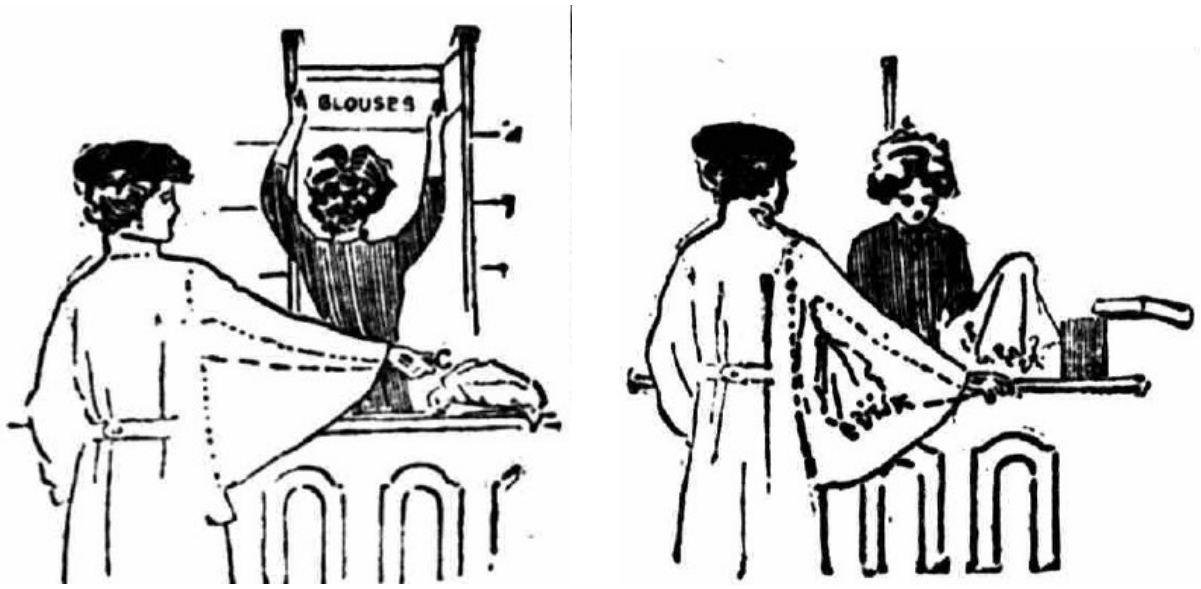


Fig. 5.8: A shoplifter pairs the wide sleeve of a Raglan-style ulster coat with a clip and an elastic fastened under the armpit, in *Pearson's Weekly* 1910, p.243

A shoplifter wearing an ulster is also mentioned in the 1890 article on female store detectives published in *The Sully County Watchman*. She was arrested by Mrs. Stanley, who worked at Macy's in New York. Although its cut is not specified, this shoplifter's ulster is said to have been made of sealskin, and allegedly worth at least 8500 dollars, while the wearer was caught trying to steal a 9-cent feather. Neither Mrs. Stanley's estimation of the worth of this shoplifter's ulster, the assumption that the it had been lawfully acquired, nor the conclusion that this meant that the wearer was, in fact, "a woman of wealth and good family" (1890, p.5) should be taken for granted. The following year, for instance, the *Iowa County Democrat* would reprint the story, originally from the *New York Herald*, of a woman who "was caught stealing a nineteen-cent knife … who wore five or six thousand dollars worth of diamonds. But she turned out to be a professional thief" (1891, p.1). Similarly in the United Kingdom, professional criminal Mary Carr of the Forty Thieves showed up to her own trial at the Southwark Police Court in 1896, wearing "seven diamond rings, valued by one journalist at over £300, at a time when a working man's wage was less than £2 a week" (McDonald 2015, p.61). But if that ulster was that expensive, if it had been in fact been bought,

and by the same woman who endeavoured to steal a 9-cent feather by way of its sealskin sleeves, this would only have made this attempted theft all the more outrageous, or confusing, for *The Sully County Watchman*'s readership, and therefore all the more newsworthy. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the shoplifting cases which were perhaps most widely reported were those of middle- or even upper-class women attempting to steal inexpensive trifles. Their apparent senselessness might have served as evidence of the danger that department stores posed to women's already fragile nervous system, even though kleptomania could at times be best explained by women's lack of autonomy and control over their finances (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891; *Vogue: New York* 1905). But I want to propose that part of the reason why these cases might have caused particular outrage or confusion, might also be that the notion that these women may go through the risk of getting caught stealing, for seemingly such little reward, threatened to uproot the principles of conspicuous consumption (Veblen 2009 [1899]), according to which consumer citizens were supposed to purchase and wear, or if they could not afford them at least aspire to purchase and wear, the kind of expensive goods which observers would be able to interpret as signs of their wealth (Bowlby 2010). In risking the same, but for trifles rather than luxuries, at least at the moment of their attempted thefts, these middle- or even upper-class shoplifters might have seemed to disregard the logic that the capitalist system relies upon (Camhi 1993; Gamman 1999).

As well as by sleeve holders of the variety that relied on elastic strips to connect the wearer's sleeve to his or her fingers, the shoplifter who stole by way of a piece of elastic hidden inside her sleeve might also have been inspired by magicians' sleeves. I was introduced to Beatrice Asthon-Lelliott's study on magicians' clothes in the late 19th century while presenting my research at a conference on 'Pockets, Pouches, and Secret Drawers' at the Institute of Modern Languages Research in December 2021. Magic shows were a popular form of entertainment at the time, and male magicians could earn fame. Women, unsurprisingly, were however "encouraged to engage with conjuring only within the confines of the home for private displays of conservative tricks" (Ashton-Lelliott 2024, p.129). Yet according to the late 19th-century manuals that I was able to access through Project Gutenberg and The Internet Archive, the magician's sleeve was frequently equipped with elastics and hooks, clips or clasps remarkably similar to those described in the *Enniscorthy Guardian* or *Pearson's Weekly*. In *More Magic*, published in 1890 as a supplement to his already comprehensive 1876 treatise on *Modern Magic*, under the pseudonym of Professor Hoffmann, British lawyer and amateur magician Angelo Lewis writes of inventions such as the "card-vanisher" (1890, p.133) or the "Buatier pull" (p.209) (Fig. 5.9). The card vanisher is made of tin, secured to a piece of silk cord that is itself secured to an elastic sewn to the back of the magician's vest. When the magician's arm is fully extended, the vanisher hangs within his sleeve, just above the wrist. The invisibility of this technology inside the magician's sleeve is as much of the essence to the success of his trick, as that of the elastic with a hook inside the shoplifter's sleeve is essential to the success of her theft. The Buatier pull, meanwhile, is introduced as the

best mechanical aid to vanish a handkerchief. It is a cylindrical cup, also made of tin, and functions just like the card vanisher, but instead of being sewn to the back of the magician's vest, the silk extension goes all the way down into the opposite sleeve. The pull is named after its inventor, renowned performer Buatier De Kolta, who famously used it to vanish a canary. In *Modern Magic* Hoffmann had presented technologies not unlike these two, that were already being used at the time to vanish rings or gloves (2018 [1876], p.225, 325).

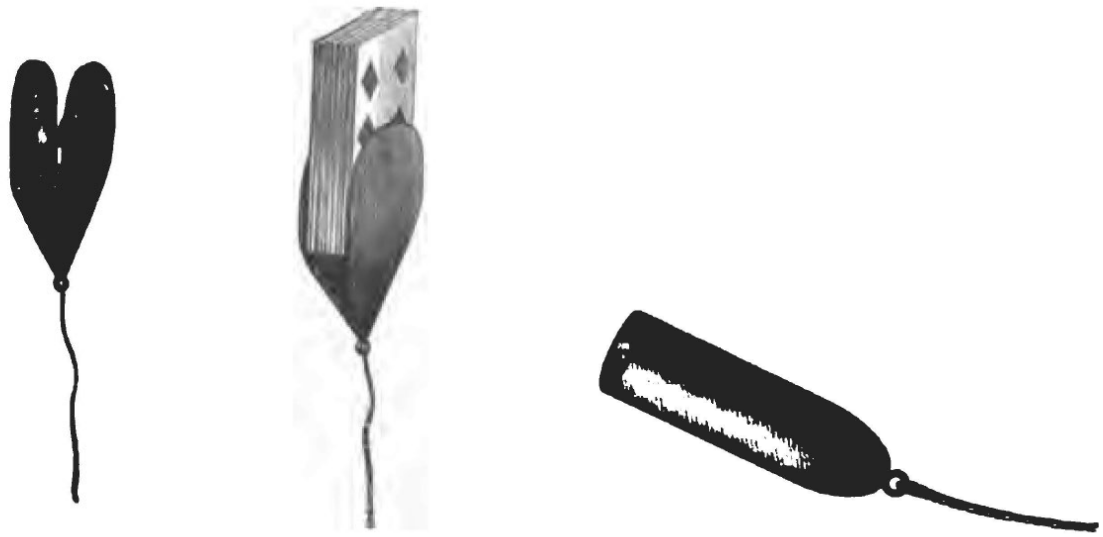


Fig. 5.9: The "card-vanisher" (left) and the "Buatier pull" (right) in Professor Hoffmann's *More Magic*, 1890, p.134, 210.

Hoffmann follows his recounting of Buatier's accomplishment with the canary, with a reflective paragraph on the magician's sleeve:

> It is a curious fact, and illustrates the proverbial irony of fate, that one of the latest and most artistic of conjuring devices should be a practical realisation of the "up his sleeve" theory, which has in all ages been accepted by the vulgar as the explanation of the great bulk of magical disappearances, though in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the sleeve had absolutely nothing to do with the matter. … The innocent sleeve, unjustly credited with a thousand uncommitted sins, has at length turned upon its maligners, and no doubt laughs in itself to think how neatly it outwits them. (1890, p.211)

The same could certainly be said about the shoplifter's sleeve. When it came to shoplifting techniques, in the late 19th century, "sleeve work" was considered one of the simplest. It required little skill and was "practiced largely by beginners" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26). Yet it can be argued that technologies such as the ones discussed so far, involving air balls, spring-clips, rubber bands or elastics, elevate the shoplifter's sleeve to an invention as deserving of praise as Buatier's invention

gets from Professor Hoffmann. And just like the innocent sleeve which is anthropomorphised in Hoffmann's reflection, the sleeves of law-abiding women were also often unjustly maligned: the woman who, for her lack of pockets, kept her handkerchief up her sleeve, could be mistaken for having stolen it (*Los Angeles Herald* 1892). In fact, what Hoffmann writes of the magician's sleeve could apply to women themselves at the turn of the 20th century. 'Ladies' Day at the Club' credits them with a thousand thefts, and requires no written explanation because, unlike a newspaper's account of the latest shoplifting technology, its humour relies on the fact that women's proclivity for stealing is no breaking news for the reader of *Puck* (Grant 1910). The stereotype is well worn. But while it was of course unjust, and misogynistic, to portray all women as thieves, the ingenuity of the shoplifters' sleeves that newspapers write about is evidence that at least some women were in fact turning against their maligners – caricaturists, reporters, all those who could not accept, or felt threatened by, the department store as a feminine domain in the public sphere, and ultimately the state who did not recognise them as citizens equal to men – and it suggests that many more women might have outwitted them so thoroughly, that no trace of their thefts is left in the archives. While the magician's sleeve laughs (Hoffmann 1890), the shoplifter's sleeve devours (*The Savannah Morning News* 1903).

5.4 Sleeve Holder, 1907

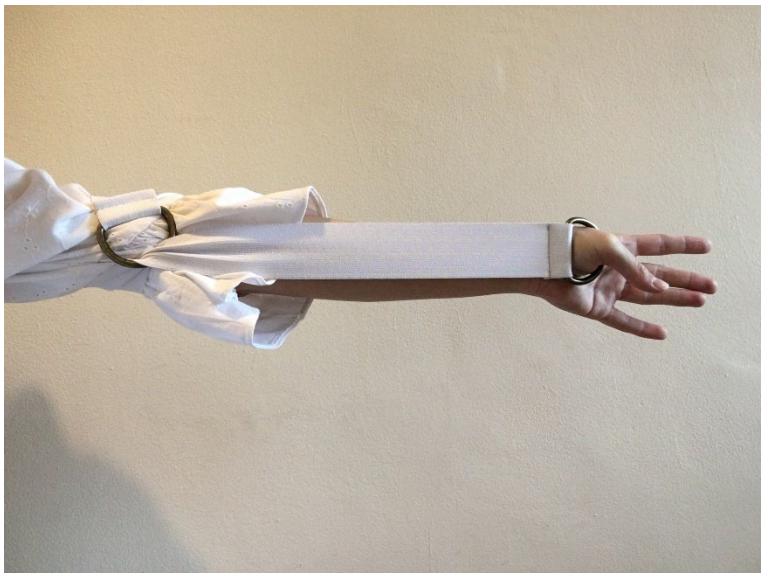


Fig. 5.10: I determined where the D-shaped ring at the cuff's end of the tape should rest, and cut it. In this performative replica of Barnes' invention, the ring is close enough to my left thumb that I can reach for it one-handed.

The patent for Herminia M. M. Barnes' sleeve holder (Fig. 5.7, below) does not consider how her invention might allow, or encourage, any use other than "maintaining short or elbow sleeves in place when putting on an outer garment" (1907). But by following its instruction to make a

performative replica of the invention it describes; a researcher might gain insight into what a patent does not say. To make and wear a performative replica of Barnes' sleeve holder is to give shape to the gaps in the document. And by giving shape to the gaps in Barnes' patent I hope to get a sense in turn, of what's missing from newspaper reports of shoplifting technologies at the turn of the 20th century. I hope to get a sense, that is, of the sartorial technologies worn by the successful shoplifters who escaped surveillance. Barnes' sleeve holder is by its own admission, a "simple" invention. It consists of an elastic tape to be wrapped around the wearer's short sleeve, with "a ring or equivalent device secured at each end thereof". Although Barnes' patent recommends that the "thumb-ring" should be "preferably of such diameter that it cannot pass through the loop-ring, thereby preventing the loop from sliding from the tape" (1907), I chose to use rings of the same size, but D-shaped. Unlike the O-shaped rings shown in the patent's drawing, D-shaped rings allow me to undo the elastic loop if I need to, during the making process – by turning one ring around and pressing it inside the other – while still preventing it from untying itself when the sleeve holder is worn. The patent notes that the elastic tape can be "of any desired width," and although the drawing shows a narrower tape, I opted for a wider one to fit the D-shaped rings I had selected. Having sewn one of the rings to one end of the elastic tape, I wrapped it around my arm, just above the elbow, and held the other end of the tape loose in my hand to determine the right place to cut it. I wanted the curve of the D-shaped ring sewn to the cuff's end of the elastic tape to rest just above my wrist: where it would be "concealed" (Barnes 1907) by the cuff of an outer garment, but still close enough to my thumb that I could reach for it one-handed (Fig. 5.10). After cutting the elastic tape and securing the second ring, I tested my performative replica of Barnes' invention by wrapping it around the left sleeve of a short-sleeved dress I wore. I held the tape tight by wearing the ring on my thumb, and when I put on a jacket, I immediately noticed its effectiveness. While my dress' right sleeve did "ruffle up on the arm, and thereby feel generally uncomfortable," (Barnes 1907) my left sleeve stayed in place, and when I released the holder by sliding the ring off my thumb, it disappeared inside the jacket's sleeve. There did not seem to be any need for an additional ribbon-loop to withdraw the holder once it had served its purpose: were it not for the rather weighty D-shaped rings I chose, I would hardly have noticed its presence until I removed my jacket again.

But would Barnes' sleeve holder be as effective if worn for the purpose of shoplifting? Would an object tied to the ring at the cuff's end of the elastic tape jump back inside the shoplifter's sleeve together with it? I tested this first, with a golden necklace that I tied to the ring one-handed. The jacket I had worn on top of my short-sleeved dress is a contemporary jacket, but while not as wide as bell sleeves' would be, its cuffs were not especially narrow around my wrist. Yet however many times I tried, when the ring jumped back inside my jacket's sleeve, part of the necklace always dangled out of the cuff (Fig. 11). Our agency takes places through our clothes (Rocamora and Smelik 2016), or through the sartorial technologies we wear, but as we move through space by

way of our clothes, or sartorial technologies, we also encounter “the agencies of material minutiae which surround us” (Sampson 2020, p.104). The golden necklace did not let itself be stolen by my performative replica of Barnes’ sleeve holder. If I wrapped it not just above my elbow but around my armpit or shoulder, the way that the shoplifters whose stories are told in the *Enniscorthy Guardian* (1904) and *Pearson’s Weekly* (1910) supposedly did, the problem of the dangling necklace was resolved. But to do this I had to wear the D-shaped ring on my thumb up until the moment when I wrapped the necklace around it, because I was no longer able to retrieve it one-handed from my sleeve, since it now rested not just above my wrist but much further up. Even if I had used a smaller and less conspicuous ring, in a department store at the turn of the 20th century, this would have increased the chances of the invention being noticed by a sales assistant or a store detective. Even if a shoplifter had used actual jewellery, the elastic attached to it could give the invention away – that is unless she carefully laid her hand on the counter in a position that would conceal it. Still, the presence of those shoplifters’ stories in the *Enniscorthy Guardian* and *Pearson’s Weekly* implies that someone eventually did notice, either the elastic itself or the hook, clasp or clip attached to it.

Now, Henry Hoyt’s invention, in which an elastic strip is sewn to a jacket’s shoulder’s seam, more closely resembles those worn by the *Enniscorthy Guardian*’s and *Pearson’s Weekly*’s shoplifters in this sense. Yet even Hoyt’s sleeve holder requires a second loop, “secured firmly to the sleeve on the inside near the end” for keeping the elastic strip reachable (1891) (Fig. 5.7, above), and this second loop would have caused a stolen necklace to also dangle out of the cuff of the shoplifter who might misworn Hoyt’s invention to steal. I wondered how magicians got around this issue at the turn of the 20th century, and returned to Hoffmann’s texts to find out. I realised that the items which could disappear inside a conjurer’s sleeve, that had seemed so diverse to me at first reading, actually ought to have been carefully chosen – and they were certainly not a whole blouse. The card-vanisher is designed to rest just above the magician’s wrist, but since playing cards are relatively compact, the risk of them dangling out of the cuff is low. When the Buatier pull is used to disappear a handkerchief, the handkerchief is not simply tied to it, but gradually worked inside the cup (Fig. 5.9), a procedure that the conjurer covers for by rubbing his hands together (Hoffmann 1890). When a wedding ring is vanished, it is not the ring he borrowed from someone in the audience, which he hides in his pocket, but the magician’s own wedding ring, that is permanently tied to the elastic and disappears up his sleeve. Even so, it only goes as far as “a couple of inches short of the edge of the cuff” (Hoffmann 2018 [1876], p. 225). In other words, the magician’s own ring, tied to the elastic in his sleeve, disappears inside it in the same way that the “finger-ring” in Barnes’ invention does (1907), when nothing else is tied to it. The glove that is vanished is also the conjurer’s own glove. This is supposed to be the first trick of a show: the glove is permanently tied to the elastic while the conjurer wears it, and as he takes it off when he gets on stage, it disappears up his sleeve – neither glove nor elastic will need to be retrieved for the

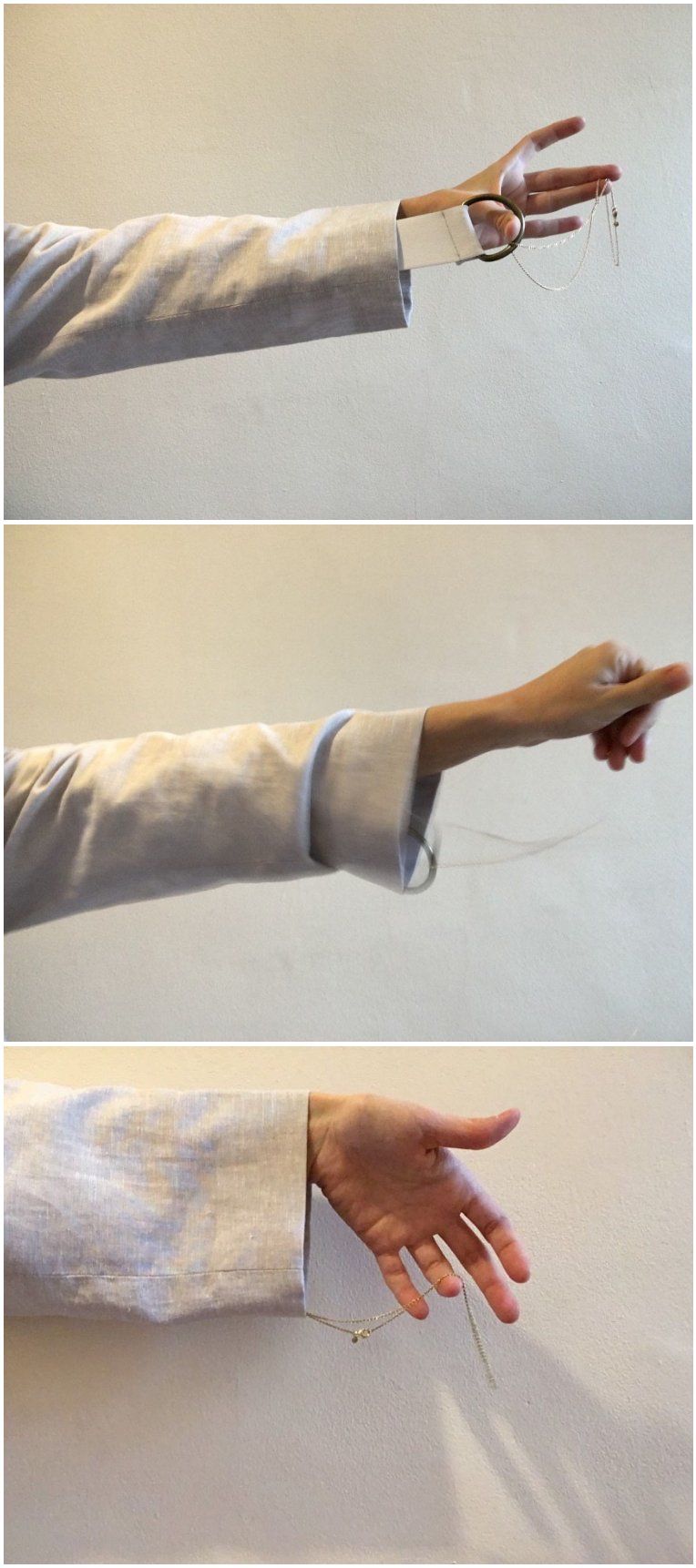


Fig. 5.11: A necklace tied to the D-shaped ring at the cuff's end of my performative replica of Barnes' sleeve holder. While the ring jumped back inside the cuff, the necklace kept dangling out of it.

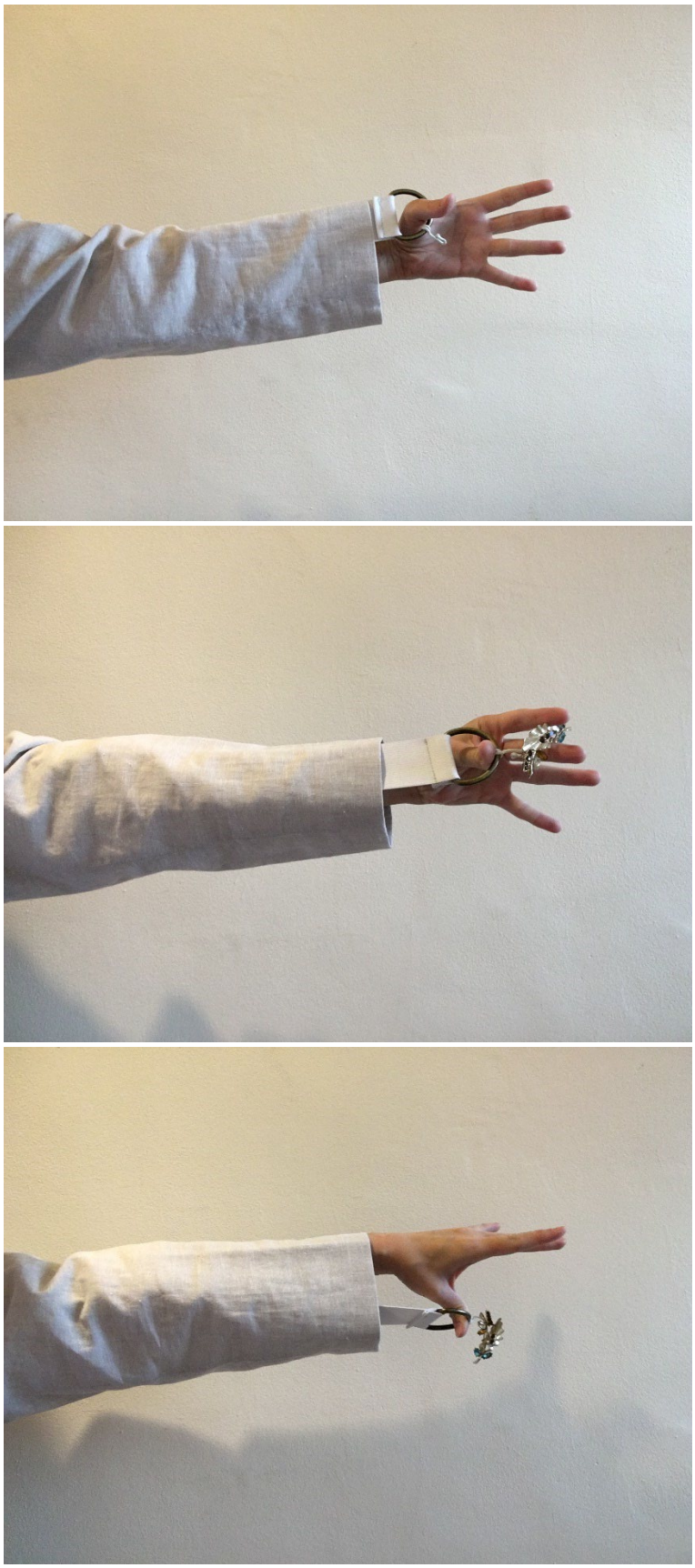


Fig. 5.12: My performative replica of Barnes' invention, adapted with a little hook, and a leaf-shaped brooch hooked on to it. When released, it vanished inside the cuff.

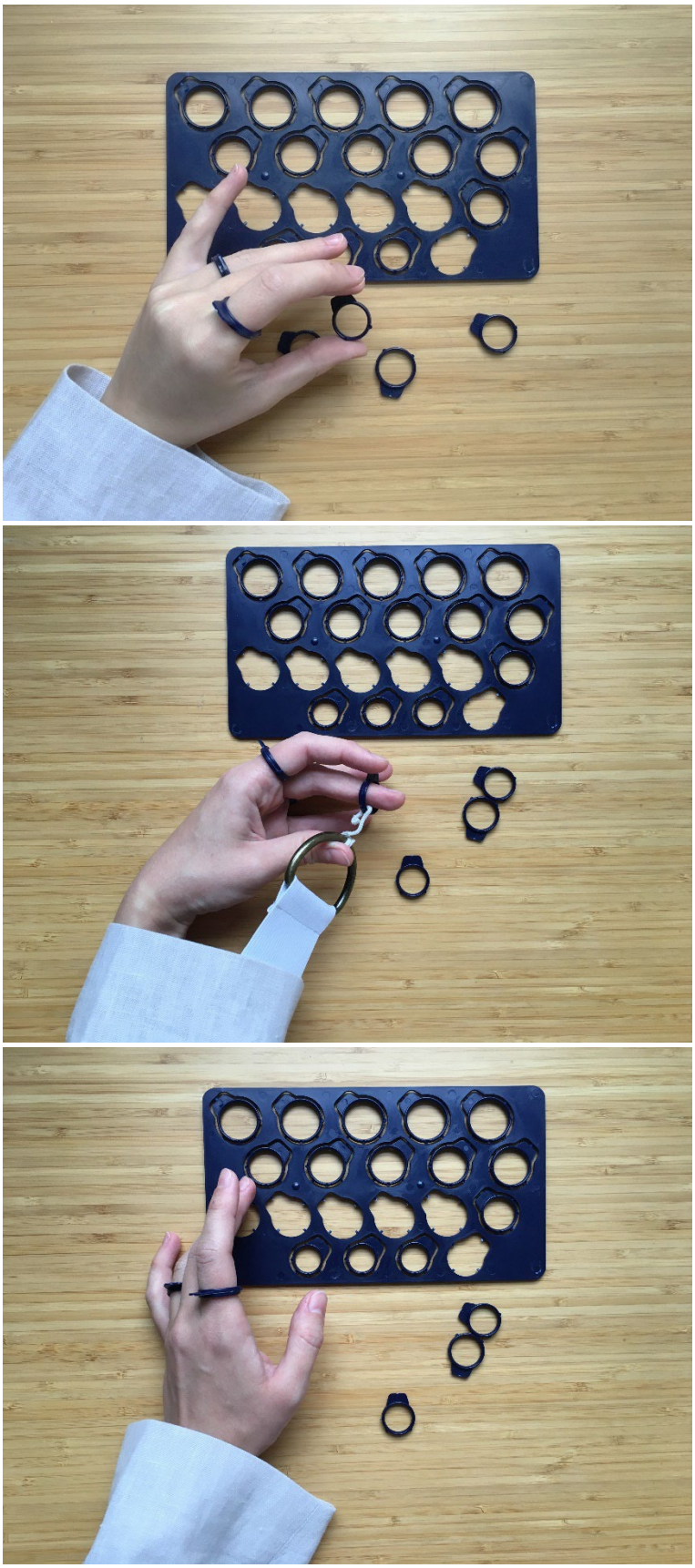


Fig. 5.13: A plastic ring hooked to a little hook tied to the D-shaped ring at the cuff's end of the elastic tape in my performative replica of Barnes' sleeve holder, disappears inside my sleeve when the D-shaped ring is released from my thumb.

duration of the performance. Yet Hoffmann still warns the aspiring magician that he must "take care to straighten his arm before letting it slip, as otherwise … the glove will, instead of disappearing with a flash, dangle ignominiously from the coat-cuff" (2018 [1876], p. 325).

If a shoplifter in the late 19th or early 20th century, from the moment she entered the shop up until the moment of her theft, did not want to wear around her thumb the ring, or hold on to the clip, hook or clasp sewn to the cuff's end of the elastic wrapped around her elbow, armpit or shoulder – and risk this way for it to be discovered, she would have wanted it to rest within reach, just above her wrist. And if the ring or clip, hook or clasp she intended to tie stolen goods to rested in a reachable position just above her wrist, it would have been easier for the shoplifter to steal a ring than a glove, a pack of cards – or something equally compact – than a necklace. I tested my performative replica of Barnes' sleeve holder again: this time, I secured a little hook to the curve of the D-shaped ring sewn at the cuff's end of the elastic tape, and hooked to it a leaf-shaped brooch. When I released the ring from my thumb, the brooch jumped back inside my sleeve, together with the tape (Fig. 5.12). This assemblage of elastic tape, D-shaped ring and hook, like an additional arm, hand, and finger sharing space inside my jacket's sleeve, exemplified Llewellyn Negrin's understanding of the clothes we wear as prosthetic extensions of our bodies (2016). To test it one more time, I pretended to be a shoplifter at a jewellery counter, asking a sales assistant for many similar rings to be shown to me. I used a plastic ring sizer with detachable rings for this. While trying on a couple of them, I used the same hand to hook another to the little hook tied to the D-shaped ring that I pulled out from my sleeve's cuff with my thumb. When I released it, both the D-shaped ring and the plastic one jumped back at once inside my cuff (Fig. 5.13).

5.5 Expansion and Deflation

Although shoplifters were still being drawn wearing bell sleeves or Raglan-style ulsters in 1910 (Grant 1910; *Pearson's Weekly* 1910), wide sleeves in womenswear were coming to an end alongside the first decade of the 20th century. In the mid-1900s, women's sleeves had widened again, after having shrunken to slim and tight in the late 1890s, in response to the gigot sleeve reaching its fullest proportions halfway through that decade. The shoplifters who wore fashionable womenswear as a distraction or a disguise, would also have taken advantage of their sleeves' width when it was in style. Indeed, in anglophone newspapers' archives, accounts of shoplifters' sleeves follow the ebb and flow of prevailing fashions. In 1895, *The Times* from Owosso, Michigan, tersely reports that "[f]ashionable sleeves have been found useful as well as ornamental. Two female shoplifters of Boston were found with their capacious leeves stuffed with plunder" (1895, p.9). This is to say that fashionable gigot sleeves could contribute to an 1895 shoplifting act, not just as a disguise but as sartorial technologies too. Nearly a decade later, the *Enniscorthy Guardian*'s article mentioned above, with regards to the balloon sleeve working alongside elastic

and hook, observes once again how "[t]he fashion of wide sleeves has materially assisted feminine criminals, for wide sleeves are ideal receptacles for their booty" (1904, p.9). In 1906, it is a jeweller's manager in Oxford Street, London, interviewed in *The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury*, who denounces how:

> The fashion of wide sleeves … has been helpful to shoplifters. Only a few days ago one of my assistants saw a woman slip a valuable bracelet up a sleeve, and she would not admit the 'mistake' until the man, after the manner of a conjurer, produced the bracelet, which was reposing in the bend of her elbow. (1906, p.3)

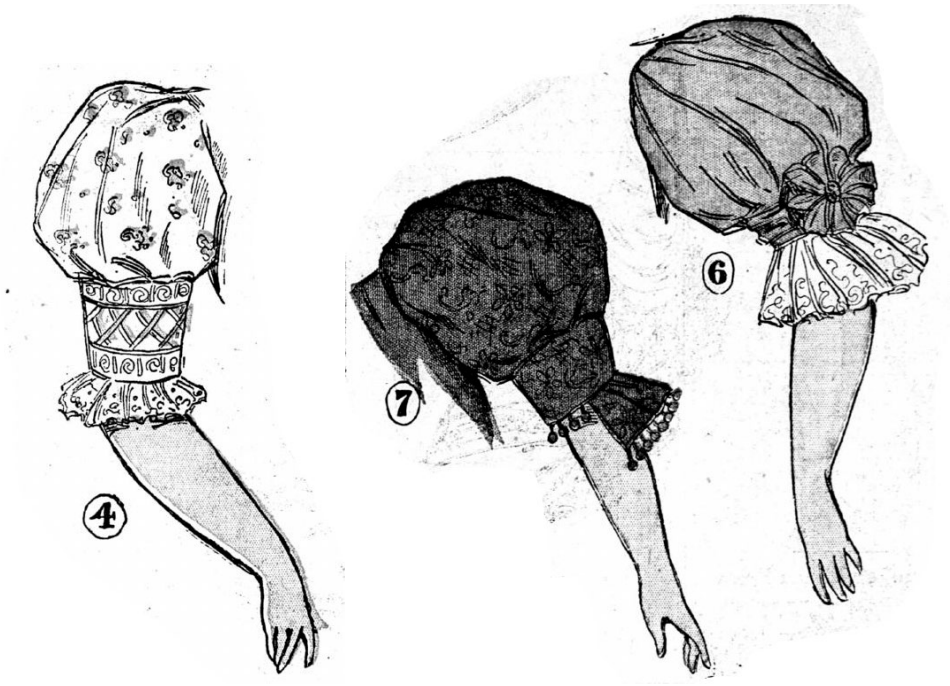


Fig. 5.14: A selection of puffed elbow sleeves in *The Minneapolis Journal* 1906, p.4.

Interestingly, it is not the shoplifter but the manager's assistant who is being likened to a magician here: what she vanished by the wideness of her sleeve, he makes reappear, or conjures – with probably less grace than the comparison awards him. On the same year, also in London, her fashionable sleeves had already played a part in the alleged theft, and defence, of a Mrs Esther Benjamin. Mrs Benjamin, who was married but whose husband lived and worked in South Africa, is introduced by the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* as "an owner of property" which is indicative not just of her wealth and class position, but also of how unusual it was for a woman to be owning property in 1906. She was accused of shoplifting a belt worth 1 shilling, 11.5 pence from the Swan and Edgar shop in Piccadilly Circus. "It must have caught on my sleeve" she is quoted to have said to the manager and shop-walker who brought her back after she attempted to leave, and again to the detective-sergeant who took her into custody: "[i]t must have clung to my sleeve"

(*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 1906, p.23). Her explanation suspiciously echoes the "Why it must have caught on my button!" excuse of the shoplifter whose story was reported by the *New-York Tribune* the year before (1905, p.3). Still, perhaps in her favour, the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* confirms that "[t]he sleeves of her seal skin coat were very wide" (1906, p.23). Even the elbow sleeves that Barnes' invention wanted to hold in place – themselves a notable sleeve trend of the decade: a search for 'elbow sleeve' or 'elbow sleeves' in The Vogue Archive finds 250 results in 1902 alone – were puffed by the mid-1900s, resembling perhaps a more diminutive version of the gigot sleeves of the mid-1890s (Fig. 5.14).

In both the United Kingdom and the United States, at the turn of the 20th century, women's "queer use" (Ahmed 2019, e.g. 44, 199) of fashionable sleeves as receptacles for stolen goods in the mid-1890s and the mid-1900s can be regarded as a way around, or a challenge to, a system of patriarchal capitalism in which they had no political power, and in which even their citizenship had to be bought – often by way of their husbands' allowance. If they stole them by way of their fashionable sleeves, not just middle-class women but anyone who looked the part, could acquire the handkerchiefs or blouses, bracelets and feathers that they might not have been able to afford otherwise, or that their husbands would not have approved of, but whose acquisition their consumer citizenship supposedly depended upon (Roberts 1998; Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017) – or they could at least avoid paying the tariffs on imported luxuries that they would not yet have been able to vote against (Abdul-Jabbar 2017). The items they stole would not have turned these women into consumer citizens: the act of purchase was a fundamental phase of that metamorphosis. But by stealing them, I want to argue that they constituted themselves as social subjects otherwise: in defiance of ethics, and of the law that did not recognise them as equal to men, they practiced citizenship but from below (Sheller 2012).

It is impossible to know today, if the attempted theft of a woman like Mrs Esther Benjamin was carried out in the name of women's rights and autonomy. Perhaps this is unlikely. Yet if not her own, all successful thefts undermined the exchange process (Camhi 1993; Gamman 1999) whether or not they were carried out at the time "in the name of anything" (Isin 2008, p.38). Whether intentionally or not, the women who succeeded in stealing from department stores in the late 19th and early 20th century can be understood to have performed acts of citizenship. In fact, even the women like Mrs Benjamin, who were unsuccessful, might be understood to have done so, if newspaper reports about their failed thefts contributed to the diffusion of shoplifting technologies and techniques, of shoplifters' knowledges from below (Foucault 2003). Moreover, in performing these acts of citizenship while wearing fashionable womenswear, successful or unsuccessful wide-sleeved shoplifters challenged the disembodied ideal, and with it the very premise of women's exclusion from a citizenship equal to that enjoyed by men.

Even so, it was probably not because of the threat posed by shoplifters' use of their voluminous sleeves, and rather to do with reinforcing the "limiting social mobility, marking social rank and discrimination" (Appadurai 2013, p.32) in a marketplace where class distinctions that had been blurring (Rappaport 2000; Cohen 2017), or yet more simply in the interest of profit and to satisfy a consumer society's desire for newness, that fashions changed again in the early 1910s. Like the gigot sleeves already had deflated in the late 1890s, the wide or puffed sleeves that were back in fashion were about to contract once more. A search for 'bell sleeve' or 'bell sleeves' in The Vogue Archive finds 225 records from 1910 to 1919, 114 fewer results than for the previous decade. The woman in the black and yellow dress in Grant's 1910 club's scene already is the only one in the picture wearing wide sleeves – and in dressing her so, Grant might have been motivated less by a desire to reflect contemporary sleeve trends than by artistic licence. The narrow sleeves of the 1910s lacked the folds of bell or balloon sleeves, dolman or ulster sleeves to hide stolen goods. A fur coat's sleeve might still have been able to fit a secret spring opening (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph* 1913), but the elasticated version of the shoplifter's sleeve would have been challenged by cuffs that might not have been wide enough for even small objects to squeeze in alongside the wearer's wrist (Fig. 5.15). A 1910 article in the 'Ladies' Page' of the *Dublin Daily Express*, accounts for the impact this change of fashion might have on shoplifters' activities:

Fig. 5.15: A sleeve that "fits tightly as a glove" in a 1913 issue of *Vogue*, p.55.

> Women are unfortunately the greatest offenders. Probably the possibilities of the feminine toilette make detection less easy … In these days of tight sleeves and narrow skirts the way of the shop thief is certainly less easy than it was five years ago. (1910, p.7)

Tight sleeves and silhouettes would keep being popular from then onwards. In the United States, an issue of *The Ogden Standard* dated January 12, 1918, similarly acknowledges that:

> Shoplifting has flourished in times of many fashions. At its best probably at the time of great breadth of skirt and sleeve, when suspicious bulkiness of apparel was the thing to be expected, the business fell upon lean ways with the coming of the shorter, tighter and

lower from the top mode of dress. But even then the trade did not entirely languish. (1918, p.19)

Fig. 5.16: A shoplifter with a repurposed knitting bag in The Ogden Standard 1918, p.19 (below).

Fig. 5.18: A caricature by Fox Fontaine, in Women's Wear 1917, p.15 (above).

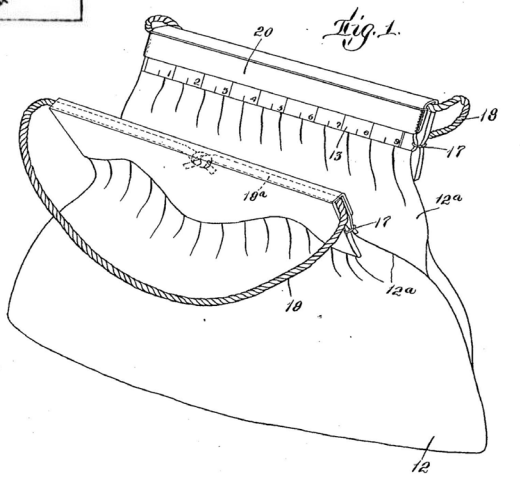


Fig. 5.17: Frances W. Capen's 'Knitting Bag', US1286225A, 1918 (right).

Indeed, it did not. 'Ladies' Day at the Club' already attests to it. On the foreground in Grant's illustration, on the opposite side of the picture from the woman with the bell sleeves, another character is wearing tight sleeves and using her bag, with a metal frame and a kissing lock, to appropriate a set of salt and pepper shakers. Behind her, two women with narrow sleeves are sitting at a round table, opposite to a man. While he talks to the waiter, the woman dressed in blue drops a saucer into the open bag of her accomplice, dressed in brown. In fact, both the *Dublin Daily Express* and *The Ogden Standard* go on to emphasise the role that bags were coming to play in the 1910s as alternative recipients for stolen goods. The former points to the "large paper bag, such as that in which many innocent shoppers carry home untrimmed hats" (1910, p.7), while

the latter allocates a full page, complete with demonstrative photographs, to the shoplifting done by way of “these laundry-bags-made-popular-by-being-called-knitting-bags” (1918, p.19) (Fig. 5.16). Unlike crochet, knitting had not been much of a pastime for American women up until World War I, when a trend of knitting for soldiers took root (Mayer 1914; Reed 2021). The popularity of knitting bags was a side effect of this trend (*Vogue* 1917) (Fig. 5.17), significant especially when one considers that back in 1892, when a “pitiful, pocketless woman” could be suspected of stealing the handkerchief she kept up her sleeve for lack of convenient storage, the shopping bag as a solution was still deemed “[a]wkward and unattractive” (*Los Angeles Herald* 1892, p.8) enough that even a repurposed sleeve holder or sock suspender was preferred. It is no surprise that shoplifters took advantage of the sudden popularity of large knitting bags in the late 1910s (*Women’s Wear* 1917a; *Women’s Wear* 1917b; *Nyack Evening Journal* 1918; *The Ogden Standard* 1918), much as they had taken advantage of fashionable wide sleeves in the mid-1890s and mid-1900s (Fig. 5.18).

5.6 The Third Arm

As well as large bags, another alternative to the shoplifter’s sleeve with a catch, or with an elastic and a catch, was the shoplifter’s sleeve stuffed with a false arm. When I described the experience of wearing my performative replica of Barnes’ sleeve holder, as an assemblage of tape, ring and hook, I compared it to an additional arm, not in the way it looked, but for its function. The shoplifter’s false arm was rather the opposite of this: it did not function like one, but looked like an additional arm in order to confuse and distract onlookers. The earliest mention of female shoplifters using false or third arms that I came across in my research, is a joke in the ‘Humorous’ column of an 1883 issue of *The Douglas Independent*. Likely confusing shoplifters and pickpockets, it warns men not to accept hugs from unknown women in the streets, since they might have ulterior motives (1883, p.4). It is taken more seriously by 1900, when the *Evening Star* reprints an article first published in the *Philadelphia Times*. The story takes place in a department store in Denver, where valuable silks have been disappearing for a while. A detective apprehends a suspect and takes her to a room where she is searched, and the valuable piece of silk is found on her person:

> But this was not the most remarkable discovery. It was found that the woman had three arms. One of them was wax. … It was so constructed that it was always visible. She generally clasped the supposed left hand with her right, when not otherwise occupied, and thus it was possible to make the clerk believe that she saw every movement of the woman’s hands. … Then the real left hand would dart out from under the cloak, seize a piece of silk and secrete it

Fig. 5.21: While a false arm hangs in the sleeve of her coat, a shoplifter's left arm hides something in a bag under her waist, in the *Chicago Eagle* 1908, p. 8 (right).

Fig. 5.19: Three-Handed Annie steals a silver teapot using her false right hand as a distraction, in the *Evening Star* 1912, p.2 (above).

Fig. 5.20: A shoplifter's third arm, ungloved in the *New-York Tribune* 1909, p.8 (right).

Oddly, the woman was asked to leave town, but not arrested. Even after discovering her third arm, detectives "were afraid to make an arrest, fearing failure of conviction" (*Evening Star* 1900, p.14). The news reached the Irish *Freeman's Journal*, which introduces its readers to the shoplifter's third arm as "the latest product of smartness in the United States". The technology described is the same, with minor alterations: in this account, it is not the left hand that is made of wax but the right one, and the wax hand is not held by the shoplifter's opposite hand, but placed inside a muff.

The stolen goods end up in secret pockets. This report, and perhaps its flattering tone – the shoplifter with a third arm is both "ingenious and enterprising" (1900, p.4) – might have contributed to export this invention across the ocean. The jeweller's manager in London's Oxford Street, whose assistant had conjured a valuable bracelet from a shoplifter's sleeve in 1906, recalls in the same interview how, at some unspecified time in the past:

> A woman with a false arm … was stopped by a neighbouring jeweller of mine. This person had a wooden forearm, the gloved hand of which rested in a muff. The real hand 'operated' through a slit in her coat. (*The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury* 1906, p.3)

Admittedly, some details might have been lost, or exaggerated, already by the time that a story from Denver first got reported in the *Philadelphia Times*, and then again in the *Evening Star*. *The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury*'s report of the jeweller's manager's recollection of his neighbour's story reads a lot like hearsay. Perhaps more so, because out of all the shoplifting technologies that I have encountered in the archives, the sleeve stuffed with a third arm seems to me to be the least intuitive. Could a wax or wooden arm, stiff and heavy, ever pass for a woman's own limb? Would it not attract attention to itself, and thereby defeat the shoplifter's efforts to look inconspicuous? It would not have been cheap or easy to make or buy, in the first place, and would probably have hindered her movements or balance to some extent. Would it not risk giving itself away, if anyone came close enough to touch it in a busy store? Would her actual arm, hidden underneath her coat, really not show at all, while sweeping the contents of counters into the shoplifter's pockets? Even in "days of tight sleeves" (*Dublin Daily Express* 1910, p.7), in the late 1890s and again in the 1910s, were there really no easier, cheaper, or more comfortable ways to steal than carrying around a third arm in her sleeve, as well as whatever she might have managed to steal while using it as a distraction?

Answers to some of these questions are provided in a 1912 report written by Jack Rose, the alias of Jacob Rosenzweig, a successful American criminal turned informant. Titled 'Secrets of the Shoplifters of New York', the article is part of a longer series, 'My Life in the Underworld', published in the *Evening Star*. Here, among others, he tells the story of professional shoplifter "'Three-Handed Annie' … the wife of a man who had formerly worked at the trade of making artificial limbs and surgical bandages". Rose quotes Three-Handed Annie herself, who allegedly explained to him some of the issues that came up in the process of making and wearing her false arm, and how they were resolved:

> this thing Jim and I have invented has taken us nearly two years to perfect … I thought I could just hang a false arm and hand up my sleeve and keep the other hand free to work with, hidden under my coat, but you bet it wasn't so easy as it looked.

> … we found we would have to pad out the left shoulder to make up for the false arm that hung from the right shoulder. Then we had to fill out the whole left side of my body to make up for the thickness of my right arm that was hid under my jacket. The only way to fix up my figure was to get a corset arranged with a one-sided sort of make-up, so that when I put it on and put a waist over it, the left side of my body would look like the right side …
>
> when this was all fixed up I had to have a new outside coat made to fit over my padded shoulders and help cover up the lines of my faked-up figure so that it would not look queer. (1912, p.2)

In this account, Three-Handed Annie uses the word 'queer' as it used to be used at the time, to describe something that "is noticeable because it is odd" (Ahmed 2019, p.197). But Sara Ahmed's use of "queer use," to describe a way of using things "in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended" (p.199), also applies to this story, in which a shoplifter goes to great length to make sure that her queer use of an artificial limb will not be noticed. Her hard work paid off. Three-Handed Annie, who by the time of Rose's writing has moved out of New York and leads an honest life, had been highly successful. She "would flop out across the counter that false arm and right hand with a white kid glove on it, almost touching the clerk," hold things up or move them around with her left hand, and steal them with her right from underneath her coat (Rose 1912, p.2) (Fig. 5.19).

The drawing of this scene that accompanies Rose's story in *The Evening Star*, might have been partly inspired by the photograph of a shoplifter's third arm, "ungloved to show its mechanism," published three years before by the *New-York Tribune*, as part of an illustrated overview of shoplifting methods (1909, p.8) (Fig. 5.20). A detail from the same photograph would be reprinted once again in 1916, in the same article in *Popular Science Monthly* where the shoplifter's skirt, and the wide slit in it, are also photographed. This article, which claims that "the subtle third arm [has been] used for over a century" by shoplifters, refers in particular to the case of a woman with a false arm in her sleeve, arrested in Philadelphia after being caught in the act of stealing "imported laces" (1916, p.649). *Popular Science Monthly* gives no more details on the case, and it is possible that they might actually be referring to the case of the shoplifter whose story was reported in the *Philadelphia Times*, but that had been caught in Denver, and was not arrested. The "attempted theft of lace" by a shoplifter with a third arm in Denver, is also reported by the *Chicago Eagle*, in 1908. She is described as an attractive woman wearing a loose silk coat, and unlike Three-Handed Annie's, this shoplifter's false arm is located in her left sleeve. In the accompanying diagram, her actual left hand is shown in the act of placing something "in a big bag which is strapped over her shoulder and hangs below her waist". Although she was seen and had to abandon the silk, in this account the shoplifter escaped and was never searched (*Chicago Eagle* 1908, p.8) (Fig. 5.21).

A sleeve stuffed with a third arm might seem unnecessarily complex as a shoplifting technology. Yet either despite or because of it, in the late 19th and early 20th century, it does recur in newspaper articles describing shoplifters' methods, especially in the United States. Some of it might have been unsubstantiated gossip, other accounts might have been the same story recycled and repackaged for different audiences and different times. But detailed descriptions such as that attributed to Three-Handed Annie in the *Evening Star* (Rose 1912, p.2), suggest that a few professional shoplifters might indeed have perfected this invention. Sensational reports of their "ingenious and enterprising" character (*Freeman's Journal* 1900, p.4) may well have prompted others to follow in their steps.

5.7 The Invisible Pocket

But large bags and sleeves stuffed with false arms – or more accurately, bags and the hidden pockets in which real arms could deposit stolen goods, while sleeves stuffed with false arms distracted onlookers – were not necessarily the only means by which to redistribute the capaciousness of the shoplifter's sleeve, at times when women's sleeves were narrow. Already when fashionable sleeves were wide, the same overview of shoplifting methods in the Baltimore's *Sun* which accounts for the cuff with a rubber band connected to the wearer's finger, also mentions that "[t]he utility of a big sleeve can be readily seen. When a cunning pocket is added one may well admit that it can be made a very convenient hiding place for stolen articles" (1907, p.15). Narrow sleeve might not have been repurposed as a receptacle for a stolen blouse, but small pockets or slits concealed on the inside, or on the inner side of narrow sleeves in the 1910s, would most likely have still been big enough for a card of buttons or a valuable bracelet. A few inventions of this kind are discussed in anglophone newspapers in the 1910s, but presented only as innocuous novelties in womenswear. In 1912, Florida's *Lakeland Evening Telegram* reports on "the latest fashion note from Paris," a sleeve's pocket for a lady's fan:

> The pocket is usually inserted in the sleeve just below the elbow, the aperture being cleverly concealed with lace or chiffon, so that its presence is not even suspected until the fair wearer suddenly produces a miniature embroidered fan, apparently out of her arm.

The article does not entertain the possibility that such a pocket might be found useful not just for producing, but for vanishing fashion accessories. It does, however, acknowledge how some wearers already are keeping in their sleeves' pockets more than just the fans they were invented for – and predicts that when fashions will change and sleeves enlarge once again, sleeves' pockets will become yet more capacious:

> Although originally intended only to hold the fan, as in China, the sleeve pocket has been found so convenient that it is also used to hold a lace handkerchief, and there is no doubt that its dimensions will increase when sleeves assume large proportions. (*The Lakeland Evening Telegram* 1912, p.6)

In England, the *Penrith Observer* takes note, in 1916, of:

> a most ingeniously hidden pocket in a new costume designed by a Frenchwoman in London. The pocket was on the sleeve … stitched in the inner side of the upper left arm. The pocket was closed at the top with small clasps. One could look at the sleeve many times and not detect this little four-inch pocket (1916, p.6)

Sleeves' pockets might have been unusual, but they were not unheard of at the turn of the 20th century. Like other pockets in womenswear, they might have been often obscured or omitted from fashion plates and reports, but the 1876 illustration of a lady's ulster that Hannah Rumball examines in her paper on the shifting connotations of this particular overcoat, clearly shows one (2022, p.16). The measure of the originality of the sleeves' pockets discussed in *The Lakeland Evening Telegram* and the *Penrith Observer*, is most likely their invisibility – not in these newspapers' descriptions of them, but on the actual garments. Their inventors might, of course, have designed invisible pockets to protect the wearer's possessions. Or they might have wanted to appease the taste of those who, in the 1910s, may still have considered visible pockets unsightly in womenswear (Matthews 2010), and women's participation in the marketplace an activity which, if it could not be avoided, should draw as little attention to itself as possible – even though the subtitle of the article in *The Lakeland Evening Telegram* suggests that this "Innovation Favored by Paris Seems to Presage Return of Such Receptacles to Fashion" (1912, p.6). But "the type of force, causality, efficacy, and obstinacy non-human actants possess in the world" (Latour 2005, p.76) exceeds their inventors' intentions. Whether they were invisible for safety, tradition or taste, just like a pocket intended for a fan might end up being used to hold a lace handkerchief, it is not difficult to imagine, as the Baltimore's *Sun* does, the convenience of concealed pockets such as these for shoplifters in jewellery stores or at handkerchief counters. After all, the fur coat's sleeve with a spring opening was still being deemed a very successful shoplifting technology in 1913, and the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* writes that this spring opening is located near the elbow of the wearer – just like the sleeve's pocket for a lady's fan described in the *Lakeland Evening Telegram* the previous year. After reading these reports, some shoplifters might have followed in the lead of the Frenchwoman in London, and sewn a pocket just like that on their own sleeves.

No record of the sleeve's pocket for a lady's fan, nor of that designed by the Frenchwoman in London, survives today in POP's dataset. But patents for similar inventions do. In 1914, both Robert Alfred Roberts and Edward Court, both of them in the United Kingdom, separately patented

concealed handkerchief pockets to be positioned inside sleeves, near the cuff. Both pockets are intended specifically for menswear, yet Roberts' patent recognises that his invention could fit either men's or women's sleeves, on either arm or both. His invention is claimed as:

> an invisible pocket or receptacle … for the reception of a handkerchief, and with the mouth or opening of the receptacle actually and entirely within the sleeve so that both the receptacle and its mouth (opening or entrance) shall be quite invisible from the outside (R. A. Roberts 1914) (Fig. 5.22)

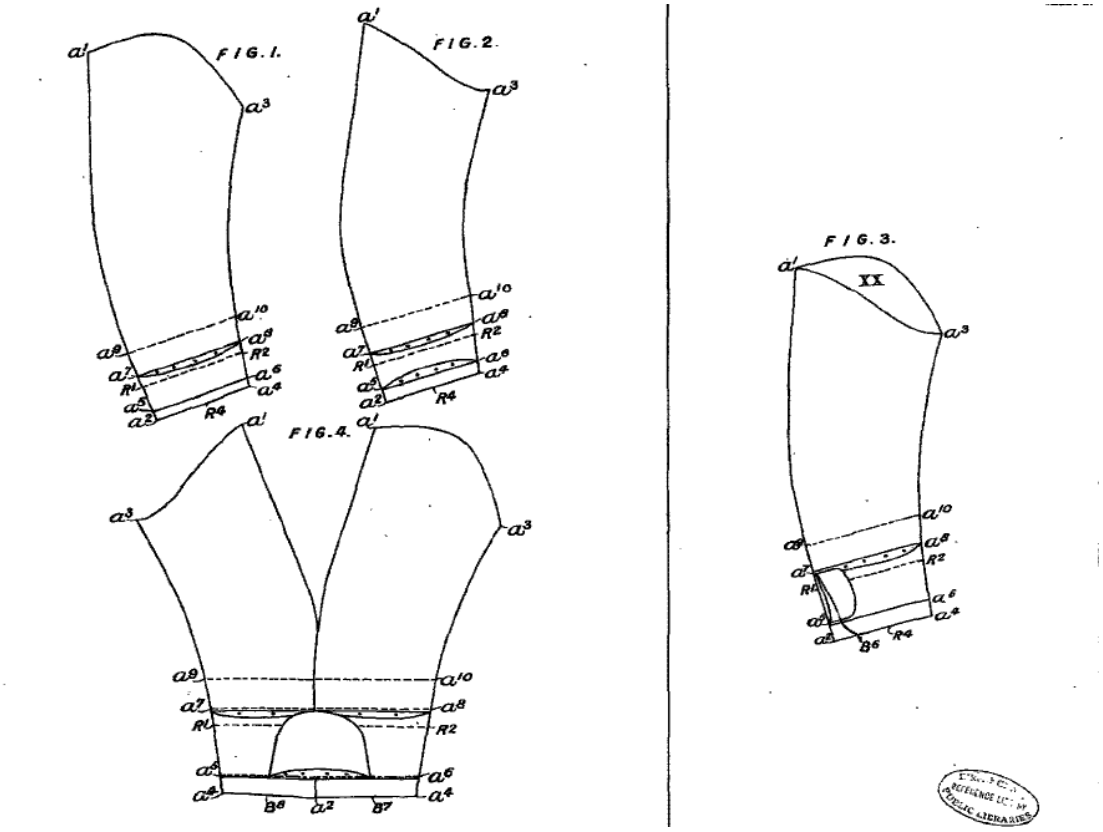


Fig. 5.22: Robert Alfred Roberts' 'Improvements in Pockets for Coats and the like', 1914, GB191406129A.

Not unlike Hoffmann's anthropomorphising of the magician's sleeve in his manual (1890), it is interesting to note that Roberts primarily and repeatedly refers to the "(opening or entrance)" of his pocket as a "mouth," even in an official document such as a patent (1914). It could be argued that it is the addition of a pocket's mouth of this kind, that allows an innocent sleeve to turn into a shoplifter's sleeve, which devours trifles from department stores' counters (*The Savannah Morning News* 1903). His patent recognises that Roberts is not the first to conceive of pockets in sleeves, and argues that the novelty of his invention consists in the position of the pocket and of the pocket's

mouth, respectively not in the upper arm but near the cuff, and inside the sleeve (Roberts 1914). Court's patent also acknowledges, possibly already referring to the Frenchwoman in London whose invention would be noticed only two years later by the *Penrith Observer*, that "in coats, jackets, and the like, more especially in connection with ladies' dresses, a safety pocket has been proposed in the upper part of the sleeve" (Court 1914).

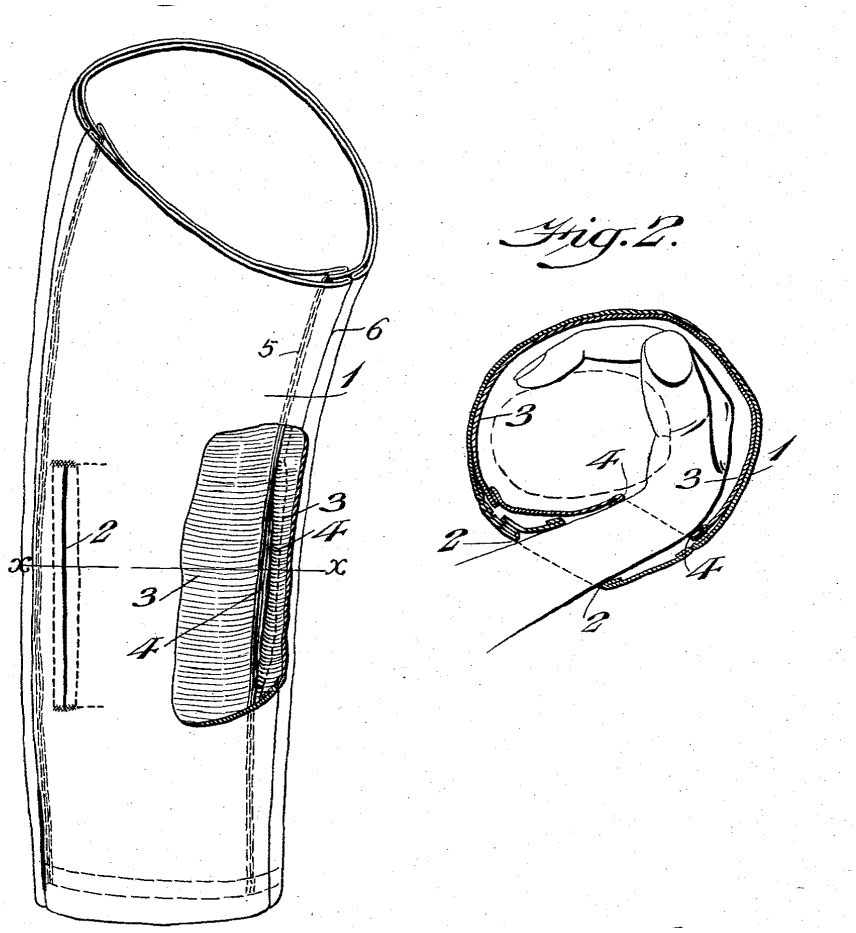


Fig. 5.23: Abraham D. Goldman's 'Coat-Sleeve', US1152169A, 1915.

The following year in the United States, Abraham D. Goldman would patent "[a] coat sleeve having in its side an inlet adapted to lead to the interior thereof, and a lining having in its side an inlet adapted to lead to the interior thereof" (1915) (Fig. 5.23). The patent for Goldman's improved 'Coat-Sleeve' meticulously describes how its inventor imagines it will be used. This is what Madeleine Akrich calls a 'script' – "*the world inscribed in the object*" (1992, p.209):

> The operation is as follows: When a companion of the one wearing the sleeve is desirous of grasping the arm of the latter, he inserts his hand through the inlet 2 which opens sufficiently to allow the hand to enter the lining. Then the hand continues its motion inwardly to the inlet 4, when it successively passes through the same, opening it and entering the

> coat sleeve. By this provision the hand is enabled to reach the shirt sleeve of the wearer of the garment and so grasp the arm of said wearer

The patent adds that the hand that grasps the arm of the wearer is also protected from the cold in the process. Although Goldman does not specify this, it is safe to assume on the basis of etiquette and social conventions at the turn of the 20th century, that he would have expected the wearer of his invention to be a man. More surprisingly, it appears from the pronouns used in the patent that he imagines the companion grasping the wearer's arm to also be male (Goldman 1915). Either way, if clothes "produce … modes of bodily demeanour" (Negrin 2016, p.115), Goldman's sleeve produces when worn a social relation. This is not a coat's sleeve intended for the wearer to wear when on their own.

Goldman might have been able to acquire a patent for this invention, but this is not to say that similar technologies were not already in circulation. An unnamed "fashionable tailor," quoted in *The New York Times*, already in 1899 had explained how:

> Now and then we have an order for an overcoat with a pocket in the left sleeve. We always know the man who gives that order is in love with his wife or somebody else, for the purpose of the pocket is to let a woman holding the man's arm slip her hand into it. (1899, p.7)

Here there's no doubt about the genders of wearer and companion. Similarly, in 1920, Nebraska's *Alliance Herald* publishes a short story written by Walter J. Delaney. In it a gentleman receives a new coat as a birthday present, and:

> discovering a small slit on the inner arm of the garment, he inquired: 'Here is a new wrinkle to me. What is this for?' 'A pocket for the dainty hand of any young lady to whom you may happen to be escort when the weather is cold.'

Eventually, the protagonist's love interest, who is of course a woman, slips her hand into his sleeve's pocket, and finds in it an engagement ring (Delaney 1920, p.7). The 'script' inscribed in Goldman's invention is further fleshed out, and fulfils its heteronormative potential in Delaney's short story.

There is however a difference between these inventions and the one described in Goldman's patent. Delaney's short story is titled 'The Secret Pocket', and for the protagonist's love interest to find a ring in it, it would have to have a been a pocket. *The New York Times*' fashionable tailor is also discussing pockets. Goldman's patent, however, takes care to clarify that "there is no pocket as such in the sleeve, and no pocket as such in the lining". Rather, "compartments for the hand"

are provided by both (1915). Of course, this might have been just a way to make his invention original enough that it would be granted a patent. If Goldman's 'Coat-Sleeve' was ever actually commercialised, and a shoplifter ever came across it, it would have been easy enough, with some sewing skills, to turn a 'compartment for the hand' into a pocket for the purpose of stealing. But perhaps she did not need to do that. If the shoplifter's hand, holding for example a stolen ring, entered the first slit – inlet 2 – but stopped before entering the second – inlet 4 – she could have dropped the stolen ring inside the lining of the sleeve (Fig. 5.23). Could the sleeve's lining as a whole not be considered a pocket in this instance?

5.8 Coat Sleeve, 1915

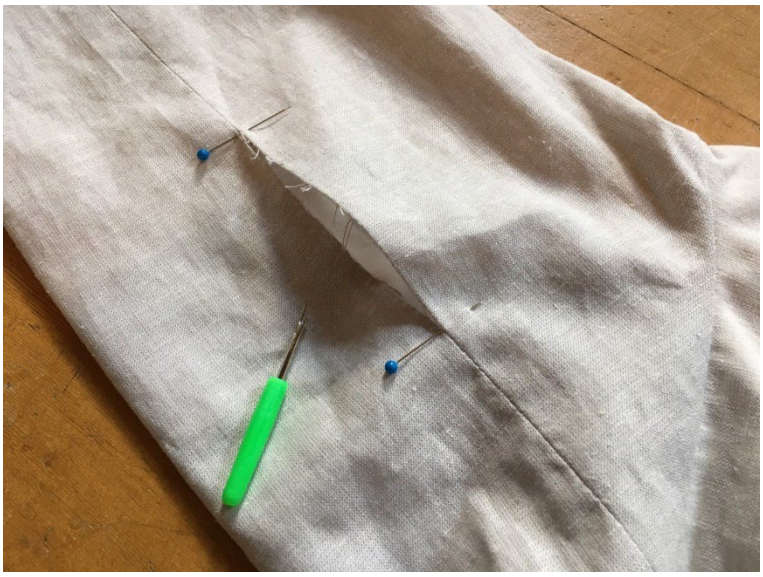


Fig. 5.24: The making of a performative replica of Goldman's invention.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, some women were starting to wear clothing items that had traditionally been considered menswear (Crane 1999; Myers 2014). Sartorial or otherwise, when women appropriate a technology which is not designed for them (Wajcman 2004), a queer use of it (Ahmed 2019) might challenge that technology's heteronormative script. If a script is its inventor's prediction about how, for what purpose, and together with which actors a clothing invention will interact with the world, to make and wear a performative replica of it, can be to explore the extent to which that technology might lend itself to de-scription (Akrich 1992). Between the products imposed upon him and the consumer, de Certeau observes that "there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them" (1988, p.32). To make and wear a performative replica of a clothing invention can be to expand this gap between "*the world inscribed in the object* and *the world described by its displacement*" (Akrich 1992, p.209). What unforeseen

routine, beyond escorting or a marriage proposal, might Goldman's invention, or an invention similar to it, have been put towards in the early 20th century?

For my performative replica of Goldman's invention, I wanted to adapt an existing sleeve. A shoplifter in the early 20th century might have come across Goldman's invention, or an invention similar to it, and displaced it. She might have put it towards a purpose other than the one it was invented for – towards "ends and references foreign to the system" (de Certeau 1988, p. xiii). She might also have made such a sleeve from scratch, from her own intuition or after reading Delaney's story in the *Alliance Herald*, or seeing Goldman's invention, or an invention similar to it, in a department store or a department store's catalogue. But it is also reasonable to believe that she might have wanted to adapt the sleeve of a jacket or coat she already owned. Although the sleeve I was going to adapt had to be a contemporary sleeve, I looked for one that matched Goldman's coat sleeve in two specific qualities: it needed to be lined, and it needed to be a two-piece sleeve, as shown in Goldman's patent's drawing (Fig. 5.23). I chose the right sleeve of a linen and cotton blazer, with polyester lining. On the seam at the back of the sleeve, I marked with two pins the place, just above the elbow, where I would grasp the arm of the person wearing it, if I was in the role of the companion. This would be inlet 2, where my hand would enter the space between lining and cloth. Measuring the distance of the lower pin from the cuff, I marked the same distance on the seam on the inner side of the sleeve – this would be inlet 4, where my hand would enter the lining to grasp the wearer's arm. I unpicked the stitches between the two pins on the seam at the back of the sleeve, and hand-stitched the edges so that it would not unstitch itself further (Fig. 5.24). Turning the sleeve partially inside out from the resulting slit, I found the place where the pins I had placed on the seam on the inner side of the sleeve where piercing the lining, and substituted those with pins on the same positions, but from the inside, adjusted so that were piercing the lining only. Again, I unpicked the stitches between the two pins, and hand-stitched the edges. Goldman's patent notes that "[t]he turned-in portions of the ends of the lining at the inlet 4 form the hems for said inlet," so I hand-stitched those down to avoid them getting in the way (1915).

I had decided to follow the patent's instructions and open up both inlet 2 and inlet 4, even though a shoplifter miswearing Goldman's coat sleeve, or an invention similar to it, for the purpose of stealing, would only have needed one slit. When I put on my performative replica of Goldman's invention, I thought at first that this might have been a mistake. Inlet 2 on the seam at the back of the sleeve, was not as easy for me to reach as I had hoped. The wearer's hand is not the hand that is meant to slip through this slit (Fig. 5.25). I wondered if I should have placed inlet 2 on the inner side of the sleeve, where inlet 4 now was – and where the sleeve's pocket designed by a Frenchwoman in London indeed was (*Penrith Observer* 1916). However, I realised at the same time that although inlet 2 was quite invisible when my right arm was stretched out (Fig. 5.26), it did show if I bent my elbow. Perhaps because unlike the pocket described in the *Penrith Observer*,

the slit in Goldman's coat sleeve is not kept close with small clasps, if inlet 2 had been on the inner side of my sleeve, it could have been noticed much more easily by someone standing in front of me. A sales assistant at a jewellery counter would much more easily have noticed the slit on the sleeve of a shoplifter biding her time by that counter, if this slit was on the inner side of her sleeve, than if it was on the back. What an inlet on the seam at the back of her sleeve lost in accessibility, it gained in invisibility – and it is likely that this would have seemed an acceptable compromise to the shoplifter. Invisibility could be not be gambled with: like a cycling skirt that hid the wearer's legs while she pedalled, a shoplifter's sleeve in the late 19th or early 20th century, ought to have looked "acceptable on the surface, even though underneath it enabled a radical act" (Jungnickel 2022, p.9).

Fig. 5.25: Ways for the wearer to reach for an inlet on the seam at the back of a performative replica of Goldman's coat sleeve.

The difficulty of reach could be resolved by way of a companion, or accomplice. Goldman's invention is after all intended to be used by two people at once – and it would have been easier for the shoplifter who might have worn it, to not be the one who filled with stolen fans, rings, or handkerchiefs. This is unlikely to have posed a problem: according to newspaper reports, professional shoplifters, or at least those who stole with premeditation in the late 19th and early 20th century, often worked in pairs (Mayhew 2009 [1861]; *The Wichita Daily Eagle* 1902; *New-York Tribune* 1905; *The Evening Times* 1913). The woman dressed in blue and the woman dressed in brown work together in Grant's illustration (1910), and even Three-Handed Annie would visit jewellery shops with a couple of friends (Rose 1912). If Goldman's invention, or an invention similar to it, ever lent itself to be worn by shoplifters working in pairs in the early 20th century, the slit at the back of the sleeve could have become the all-important site of the handing over of stolen goods from her accomplice or companion, to the shoplifter who wore the coat. Although inlet 2 is not designed as a "pocket as such" (Goldman 1915), and not designed to be worn by women, like women's pockets, it too might be understood as a threshold which articulates "relationships between interior and exterior, secrecy and disclosure, self and other … subjects and objects" (Fennetaux 2008, p.310-11).

Fig. 5.26: The quite invisible slit on the back of my performative replica of Goldman's coat sleeve, when the arm is stretched.

The difficulty of reach was not so pronounced however, that a shoplifter on her own, if her movements were not too closely surveilled, would not have been able to make use at all of Goldman's coat sleeve, or of a similar clothing invention provided with an inlet on the back of its sleeve. And although fashionable sleeves were narrower in 1915 than they had been in 1907, compared to Barnes' sleeve holder, an invention of this kind would have allowed her to steal more

voluminous objects without any risk of them dangling out. My performative replica of Goldman's invention could fit a fan as easily as the sleeve's pocket described in *The Lakeland Evening Telegram*, and not necessarily a miniature one (1912). Because the lining of a blazer is only connected to it at the outer edges – cuffs, collar, hem and down the opening in the front – I realised that any object dropped into the slit that I had opened on the seam at the back of the right sleeve, did not need to stay within the lining of that sleeve. If I straightened out my arm, plastic rings, a leaf-shaped brooch, a golden necklace or a fan would slide down towards my back, to be retrieved only slowly and one by one, when I took off the blazer and identified their position by touch. This realisation much expanded in my understanding, the capaciousness of Goldman's coat sleeve as a shoplifter's sleeve (Fig. 5.27).

Fig. 5.27: Dropping a leaf-shaped brooch and a fan into my performative replica of Goldman's invention.

Conclusion to Chapter Five

I started this chapter on the role that the shoplifter's sleeve might have played in her practice at the turn of the 20th century, with a concise visual analysis of a caricature published in *Puck* in 1910, depicting archetypal shoplifters. I noted that the archetypal shoplifter at this point in time was a middle-class woman, and that the reader of *Puck* would have recognised the women in this caricature to be middle class at first glance, from their being well-dressed. This equation between dress and class would have been useful in real life, to the shoplifters who might have worn fashionable womenswear to blend into the crowd at a department store, whether they were themselves middle class or not – and who would have most likely reinforced the archetype for doing so. This means that a sartorial technology such as the shoplifter's sleeve would have had to change as women's fashions changed. At the same time, its change would also have at least been partially informed by the numerous newspaper reports on shoplifting methods published in the late 19th and early 20th century. Although I observed that a timeline for the evolution of the shoplifter's sleeve cannot be drawn on the basis of these reports, in the first place because they only concern the sleeves of shoplifters who got caught, even the shoplifter's sleeve that is discovered is not for nought: as Timothy Carroll, David Jeevendrampillai and Aaron Parkhurst observe, "failure is a moment before invention" (2017, p.15). Or in Sara Ahmed's words, "[t]he failure of things to work creates an incentive to make new things" (2019, p.25). The shoplifter's sleeve that is discovered and written about in newspaper reports contributes to its diffusion and evolution.

From an analysis of selected newspaper accounts of shoplifters' sleeves at the turn of the 20th century, I concluded that in its simplest version, the shoplifter's sleeve at this point in time consists at least of "a sort of catch" (*The Sully County Watchman* 1890, p.5) fastened to the sleeve of an outer garment, that picks up from department stores' counters the small objects against which the wearer's arm rests. The technology becomes more precise when a rubber band is introduced that connects this catch to the wearer's fingers, so that she can tighten and release it at will (*The Sun* 1907). As well as from the failures of less precise inventions published in the newspapers, I argued that a shoplifter's sleeve of this kind might also have drawn inspiration from, or misused, a particular variety of sleeve holders. In the late 19th and early 20th century, sleeve holders were technologies designed to hold the sleeve of an inner garment in place while an outer garment was put on – and this particular variety of sleeve holders does it by connecting its cuff to the wearer's fingers (Butts 1890; Kepler 1898). But even though the shoplifter's sleeve that connects her fingers to its cuff, much resembles in its description this variety of sleeve holders, I proposed that another variety of sleeve holders in the POP dataset that would have been the most helpful to shoplifters. This second variety of sleeve holders relies on an elastic strip sewn either to the shoulder's seam, or wrapped around the wearer's arm at the elbow (Hoyt 1891; Barnes 1907). When released from

the wearer's fingers, the strip of elastic bounces back inside the outer garment's sleeve. If she ever acquired them, I considered that a shoplifter in the late 19th or early 20th century could have misworn this variety of sleeve holders for the purpose of stealing, with little need for any adaptation. Still, the making and wearing of a performative replica of Herminia M. M. Barnes' 1907 elasticated 'Sleeve Holder', showed that when a little hook is secured to the ring sewn at the cuff's end of the elastic tape, the resulting invention's capacity to capture and retain plastic rings or a leaf-shaped brooch, significantly increases.

Indeed, in both the United Kingdom and the United States, in the early 20th century, newspaper accounts describe more elaborate versions of the shoplifter's sleeve in which an elastic is tied to the wearer's shoulder, within her sleeve, and bears on the other end a little hook or clip that she secures to the object she intends to steal. When released from the shoplifter's finger, elastic, hook, and object disappear at once inside her sleeve (*Enniscorthy Guardian* 1904; *Pearson's Weekly* 1910). As well as from the failures of less precise inventions, and from sleeve holders of the elasticated variety, I argued that this more elaborate version of the shoplifter's sleeve might also have drawn inspiration from, or misused, the kind of mechanical aids that magicians wore at this time. The shoplifter's ingenuity at the turn of the 20th century was said to match that of a conjurer (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph* 1913), and if she ever came across devices such as the "card-vanisher" or the "Buatier pull" (Hoffmann 1890, p.133, 209), they might have lent themselves to a purpose other than a magic trick. Indeed in *Card Sharpers*, first published in 1891, renowned magician Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin worries about the possible overlaps of the magic tricks he is explaining and criminal activities (Robert-Houdin 1891; Ashton-Lelliott 2024). Two manuals for magicians written by Professor Hoffmann in the late 19th century (Hoffmann 2018 [1876], 1890) helped me to understand why, when I wore my performative replica of Barnes' invention and tried to use it to catch and vanish a golden necklace, I was having little success. At the turn of the 20th century, if they wished to disappear them by way of elastics hidden inside their sleeves, both shoplifters and conjurers would have wanted to choose carefully which objects would be best suited for their intentions. Small and compact ones would be much less likely to dangle from their cuffs and give the trick away.

In the 1910s however, fashionable sleeves become too narrow to avoid this risk. Anglophone newspapers observe how, on the shoplifter's arm, large bags have come to replace the capaciousness that her sleeve has lost (*Dublin Daily Express* 1910; *The Ogden Standard* 1918). Alternatively, the sleeve of a professional shoplifter might be stuffed with a false arm, to distract onlookers while her actual arm steals from underneath her coat (*Evening Star* 1900; *Freeman's Journal* 1900; *The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury* 1906; *Chicago Eagle* 1908; *New-York Tribune* 1909; Rose 1912; *Popular Science Monthly* 1916). Less discussed, whether for its effectiveness or for its simplicity, a small pocket or slit concealed on the inside, or on the inner side of the

shoplifter's sleeve, may still have been of great convenience at this time, to the woman who stole in jewellery stores or at handkerchiefs' counters (*The Sun* 1907). Although they don't often feature in newspapers' overviews of shoplifting methods, a number of invisible pockets in or on sleeves, were invented and patented in the 1910s, in both the United Kingdom and the United States (*The Lakeland Evening Telegram* 1912; R. A. Roberts 1914; Court 1914; Goldman 1915; *Penrith Observer* 1916). In 1915, Abraham D. Goldman patents a coat's sleeve with a compartment for a companion's hand, to grasp the wearer's arm. When a performative replica of Goldman's invention is made and worn, the script of this invention can be challenged – and its helpfulness to the shoplifter who might have misworn it for the purpose of stealing, or come up herself with a similar sartorial technology, can be surmised. When I wore my performative replica of Goldman's coat sleeve, I understood that the more invisible the opening of the compartment was, the least accessible it would have been to the wearer of the sleeve. But at the turn of the 20th century shoplifters often worked in pairs, and an accomplice could have been cast in the role that Goldman's patent assigns to the companion. Most notably, although I had started my investigation from the assumption that the narrow sleeves of the 1910s would never have been as capacious as the wide sleeves of the mid-1890s and mid-1900s, by making and wearing a performative replica of Goldman's coat sleeve, I realised how much more capacious than I had anticipated this invention actually was. This capaciousness might have been the very reason why a shoplifter would have wanted to adopt Goldman's coat sleeve, or a similar invention, for a purpose other than the one it was originally intended for. "[W]hen we use something in ways that were not intended" writes Ahmed, "we do so *given* the qualities of a thing. Perhaps when we use something in ways that were not intended, we are allowing those qualities to acquire freer expression" (2019, p.26).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the shoplifter's sleeve – with a catch, with an elastic and hook, with an invisible pocket or slit – seized, accommodated or concealed the objects she stole; or when it was stuffed with a false arm, at least diverted the attention of salesmen and detectives from her unlawful activities. The shoplifter's sleeve played the role of her accomplice or companion, most likely at least occasionally alongside the shoplifter's human accomplice or companion. When women's shoplifting is understood in the context of women's political and financial dependence on men at the turn of the 20th century, of the limitations of the consumer citizenship which, besides being a temporal and transactional exercise rather than a given, was available to only the women who could afford to buy into it, and of the kleptomania epidemic – then the shoplifter's sleeve can be understood as an evolving everyday practice by means of which a shoplifter "performatively accomplished" (Marres 2015, p.23) feminist and embodied acts of citizenship from below, which did not aim for political inclusion, but for economic evasion (Camhi 1993; Sheller 2012). When they failed, and she was caught, the shoplifter's sleeve which was described in newspaper reports about that failed theft can be still understood to have contributed to the diffusion and evolution of

a sartorial technology which might have enabled, facilitated, or encouraged women's shoplifting as a citizenship practice in the late 19th and early 20th century. The fact that these sleeves and their specific contribution changed in line with the ebb and flow of women's fashions, further challenged traditional understandings of citizenship in which the masculine rationality of the ideal citizen is signalled and defined by his unchanging and restrained attire (Roberts 1998; Parkins 2002; Trufelman 2022).

In the next chapter, I will consider what role the shoplifter's garter might have played in her practice at the same time.

CHAPTER SIX
THE SHOPLIFTER'S GARTER

Having considered both skirts and sleeves, my research on the role that sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, turns in this chapter toward garters. If today they may seem less significant in comparison, the chapter begins with an historical overview of garters as a fundamental component of women's everyday dress at this point in time. I review how in the United Kingdom and the United States, the garter persisted in spite of the changes in fashion and technological innovation that characterised these emerging consumer societies, where the women who could afford to were allowed, if not encouraged, to consume their way into consumer citizenship – despite the moral concerns that women's shopping, and their increased presence in the public sphere, was raising at the same time. In this context, I examine how their ordinary garters contributed to women's shoplifting. While the elastic band that held her garter up could be trusted to secure and carry anything that a shoplifter was able to thrust underneath it, pretending to have dropped her garter in a busy store could earn her both the privacy and time to steal unsupervised. I consider why this would be the case, how the Victorians' reluctance to acknowledge the existence of women's legs relates to women's historical exclusion from citizenship, and what this means when we understand women's shoplifting as an embodied citizenship practice. I then go on to introduce two modified garters: the garter with hooks, which emerged in New York as a shoplifting technology in its own right, and the pocketed garter, that might have been designed to facilitate women's newfound consumer citizenship, at a time when visible pockets were still controversial in fashionable womenswear. The making and wearing of performative replicas of a sock suspender for men patented in 1900, sheds some light on the possible origins of the garter with hooks, and on how technologies and consumer products of this kind, if they were ever worn for purposes other than those they were intended for, might have played a part in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. The making and wearing of performative replicas of a pocketed garter patented in 1913, however, reveals how small the pockets on a garter would have had to be, and complicates my understanding of the relationship of pocketed garters with women's consumer citizenship. I consider whether a technology of this kind might not have more easily lent itself to the purpose of shoplifting than it did for the purpose of shopping, not despite, but indeed because of the fact that I encountered no mention of pocketed garters in newspaper accounts of women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century.

6.1 The Persistence of the 19th-Century Garter

To understand the role that the garter might have played in women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century, it will be helpful to clarify what a garter was and did at this point in time: what it would most likely have been made of, who would have been most likely to wear it, as well as how it responded or resisted to changes in fashion and technological innovation. *The Dictionary of Fashion History* defines the garter as a "tie or band to keep the stocking in place on the leg, and placed above or below the knee" (Cumming et al. 2010, p.90). In the early 19th century in Western fashion, garters had been simple strips of knitted wool, or more rarely silk with metal clasps. With nylon stockings still a century away, a revolutionary occurrence in the evolution of garters as sartorial technologies was the introduction in the 1830s of India rubber woven into elastic, and of vulcanised rubber bands shortly after (Cumming et al. 2010, p.219). "At the beginning of the 1840s, vulcanization (a process of treating rubber with sulfur to improve its chemical characteristics) was developed simultaneously in the USA, the UK, and France" writes Manuel Charpy (2012, p.434). According to Charles Goodyear, who was granted a patent for vulcanisation in the United States, the process protected rubber "from decomposition or deterioration" (1844). "Vulcanized rubber opened an infinite number of uses for this "miracle" material in everyday life and particularly in clothing" (Charpy 2012, p.434). Compared to those that had been made out of silk, rubber garters were relatively cheap, too – in *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mayhew reports that in the 1840s, they were sold on the street of the British capital for a penny a pair (2017 [1851], p.391).

Garters had been worn by men as well as women up until the 18th century, but in the 19th century men's socks were kept in place by their trouser legs, and garters were considered primarily a woman's, sometimes a child's, accessory. In the late 1880s and 1890s however, some gentlemen's garters were being patented in the States (Shelby 1885; Armstrong 1887; Freese 1891; Hake 1900; Deacon 1900; Blakesley 1900) (Fig. 6.1). Sometimes described as a 'sock suspender' or 'sock supporter', a man's garter usually comprised of an elastic band to be tied around the wearer's calf, "with a pendant piece terminating in a metal and rubber clip to grip the top of the sock" (Cumming et al. 2010, p.200). Indeed, a man's garter differed from a woman's because it was not placed on top of the stocking or sock itself – also referred to as the 'hose' or 'half-hose' – but above it. Still, it might not have differed from a woman's garter enough: *The Dictionary of Fashion History*'s entry for 'sock suspender' notes that the invention was unpopular at least at first, for its obvious resemblance to what by then had come to be known as womenswear (ibid.). Women's garters were themselves being disputed around this time. According to contemporary fashion historians, they would be replaced from 1878 by suspenders, attached to the edge of corsets and clipped on to the top of stockings (Cunnington and Cunnington 1992; Cumming et al. 2010).

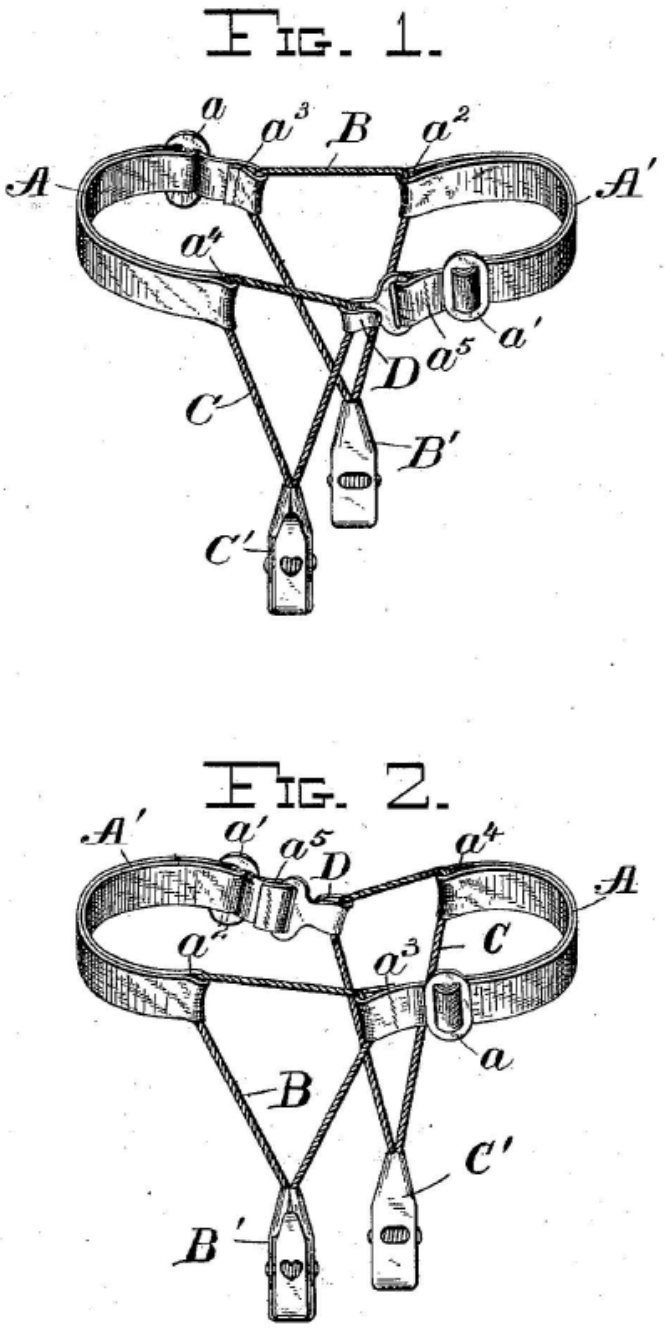


Fig. 6.1: William Madden Deacon's 'Garter' for men, US653220A, 1900.

Women's suspenders – which were often, but not always, called 'supporters' in the United States – were also, confusingly enough, sometimes referred to as garters. Where the ordinary garter was tied around the wearer's leg horizontally, the suspender or supporter was nothing other than a garter that stretched vertically from the top of her stocking to the edge of her corset, not unlike a longer version of the 'pendant piece' in the sock suspender. This invention aimed to resolve what had been a major drawback of the horizontal garter: its constricting nature. An advertisement for 'Warren's Patent Stocking Supporters', in the 1878 *Catalogue of Novelties and Specialties in Ladies' and Children's Underwear, Constructed on Dress Reform and Hygienic Principles*, manufactured in Boston by George Frost & Company, confidently observes that "[t]he superiority of stocking supporters over the old fashioned blood-strangling garters is now a well recognized fact by every intelligent person" (Frost 1878, p.21) (Fig. 6.2). In 1884, educator Juliet Corson writes for *Harper's Bazaar* that for "healthful dressing … limbs and extremities should be equally free from pressure in the form of tight bandages, garters, or shoes which in any way interfere with the circulation" (1884, p.827), while in relation specifically to women's cycling in 1887, author Elizabeth Robins Pennell similarly asserts that "[n]othing could be worse for riding or walking than tight garters. There is no reason to wear them nowadays, when so many varieties of stocking suspenders are to be had" (1887, p.679). Meanwhile in England, an 1886 issue of *The Queen* features an advertisement for 'Hoven's Improved Patent Stocking Suspenders' that also deems "garters entirely superseded" by this invention which "allows free Circulation of the Blood" (1886, p.6).

Neither Warren's nor Hoven's patents survive today in the Politics of Patents (POP) dataset, nor on Espacenet – but others do, for comparable inventions that seek to resolve the long-standing issue of, as one patent puts it, "the garter acting as a ligature, and stopping the free circulation of blood through the leg" (McCoy and Wheeler 1867), or in the words of another inventor, "an impeded circulation, cold feet, and other incidental evils being already recognized as due, to a large extent, to the use of tight garters" (Bowman 1880). The earliest patent I could find addressing this issue was for an 'Improved Stocking-Supporter' patented in 1863, in New York, by Ellen F. Putnam (1863) (Fig. 6.3). Between 1863 and 1939 – when nylon was introduced at the New York World's Fair, leading to a revolution in women's hosiery (Science History Institute, n.d.) – a search in the POP dataset for the keywords 'garter' or 'garters' combined with either 'circulation' or 'blood', results in 84 inventions. This testifies to an extensive discontent both with garters, spanning several decades, and with their alternatives, which for all that their superiority ought to be "a well recognized fact by every intelligent person" (Frost 1878, p.21), were clearly never good enough to substitute garters entirely. If they had, inventors would have been patenting improvements on those alternatives – instead, they continued to patent improvements on, or alternatives to, garters. In fact, although the term 'garter' in these 176 patents features largely to describe what's unsatisfactory about the traditional solution for holding up one's stockings, not all of these patents are for suspenders or supporters. 51 out of 176 still use the word 'garter' or 'garters' in their titles, and however improved, look just like garters in the accompanying drawings: horizontal strips of various materials adherent to the outline of a leg, above or below the knee. Interestingly, several of these 51 improved garters, especially from 1910 onward, are drawn on male legs or explicitly described as being intended to be worn by men, and include either "a pendant piece terminating in a metal and rubber clip" (Cumming et al. 2010, p.200) or a comparable fastening device (Carpenter 1910; Speedy 1914; Hammerberg 1922; Weilman 1930). This might be taken to mean that since women had by now been experimenting for a while with alternatives to garters, such as suspenders attached to the edge of corsets, men were growing more comfortable with accepting them as an accessory of their own (Fig. 6.4). And consequently, more uncomfortable with their constricting nature, so that inventors of garters for men were now seeking solutions to the same problem that inventors of suspenders for women claimed to have resolved.

But if alternatives to traditional garters for women's use – whether improved garters (Enriquez 1920; Bear 1922; Bisch 1926; Friedman 1926; Keyser 1928), or stocking suspenders or supporters – were still being patented in the 1920s, this could also be taken to mean that women's garters were still being found uncomfortable, and therefore still being worn. It clearly had been too soon to deem them entirely superseded in 1886. In fact, the same British magazine where the advertisement that did so appeared, not a full decade later ran an advertorial for 'The Twentieth Century Garter' which although "altogether different from any preconceived notion of the nineteenth century ones" are garters nonetheless once more. "[W]arranted not to impede

circulation, a boon to those suffering from varicose veins," the text goes on to argue that these garters are "likely to fulfil a long-felt want, and to supersede the suspenders, which have many objections" (*The Queen* 1895, p.430).

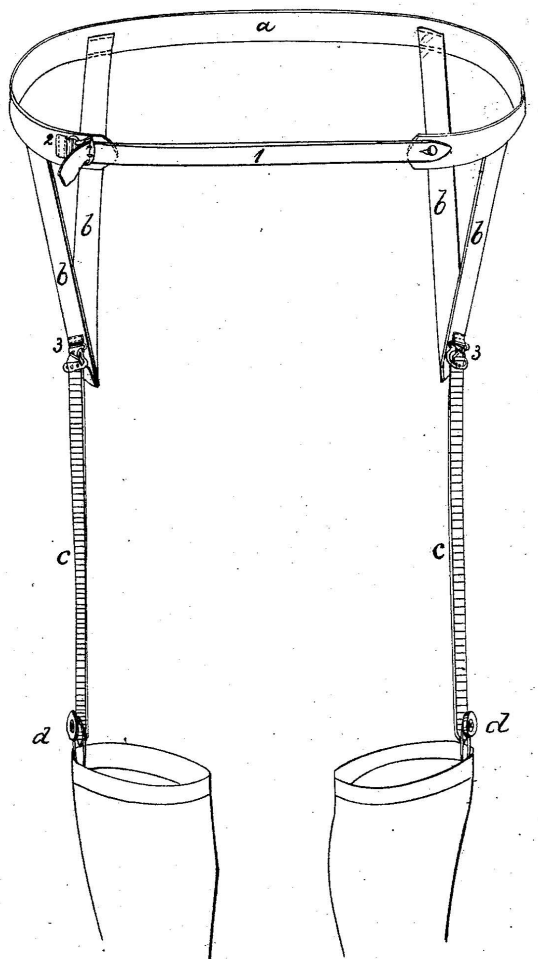


Fig. 6.2: 'Warren's Patent Stocking Supporters' in the *George Frost & Company*'s 1878 catalogue (left).
Fig. 6.3: Ellen F. Putnam's 'Stocking Supporter' for women, US38639A, 1863 (right).

In the early 1910s in the United States, just as men grow more comfortable with wearing garters, and therefore more uncomfortable with their drawbacks, it seems that women are getting tired of the alternatives that for three decades have aimed to supersede garters in their own wardrobes. Especially because most suspenders or supporters at this point in time still require a corset, to be either directly attached to, or for the waistband they are attached to, to be worn upon – and the corset as a whole is now being challenged by the elasticated girdle, a precursor of the brassiere. In France, Paul Poiret, the fashion designer who claimed to have invented the hobble skirt, boosted to have freed women from corsets at the same time (Matthews David 2015). Suspenders were not going to disappear so quickly, but in 1912 *Vogue* lamented how:

there is nothing more difficult to purchase in the average shop than a really smart round garter although it is so often a necessity in the present uncorseted state of the mode. … Even when a corset is worn with negligée dress, a greater sense of freedom can be gained by unclasping the long garters which are attached to the corset and substituting the round garter. (1912a, p.98)

Fig. 6.4: This 1916 advertisement for Hose Supporters "worn by all the family," despite referring to both with the same name, clearly shows the difference between a man's sock suspender or garter, worn not on top of the stocking like a woman's garter would have been worn in the 19th century, but rather above it, and the suspenders now worn by women, or in this case children, which were attached to their waistband. These Hose Supporters were manufactured by the same George Frost Company that had manufactured 'Warren's Patent Stocking Supporters' already in 1878. Image from North Wind Pictures / Bridgeman Images.

The suspender belt worn without a corset and paired with a bra, would not enter mainstream consumption until the 1920s (Wilson-Kovacs 2016). Meanwhile, the quote above suggests that a revaluation of the virtues of a sartorial technology long criticised was in order: the once blood-

strangling garters were now being associated with “freedom” (*Vogue* 1912a, p.98), and novelty garters like the tango garters, affording the wearer a newfound “freedom of movement so necessary to the season’s favourite dance,” started to appear on the American market (*The Day Book* 1914b; *Women’s Wear* 1914). This is a first sign of how the garter, that had never really gone away, was also never entirely to disappear going forward. Even when technological innovation could have consigned the garter to history, it would persevere and shift, from an everyday necessity to the symbol of a liberated lifestyle – perhaps even a luxury good, when a luxury good is understood, as Arjun Appadurai understand it, as a commodity whose principal use is rhetorical and social (2013). In fact, later in 1912, *Vogue* again writes that:

> Long corsets with their fringe of innumerable side, front, and back garters would seem to have done away with the pretty, elaborate, round garter. On the contrary, however, this, having passed into the class of the articles *de luxe*, is more than ever in demand (1912b, p.100-102)

It is of course important to note that these fast-paced successions – the suspenders superseding the garter, the garter superseding the suspenders – would not have been driven only by discomfort and innovation. Or rather, that technological innovation in itself would have been motivated at least in part, by the desire for newness that characterised and was cultivated in the consumer societies where these successions occurred. Among the “many objections” (*The Queen* 1895, p.430) a woman in the late 19th or early 20th century could have had against the article of clothing that held up her stocking, its obsolescence with regards to the “state of the mode” (*Vogue; New York* 1912a, p.98) at a given time, would certainly have counted as one – perhaps one nearly as detestable from her perspective as the garter’s constricting nature.

It is equally important not to mistake this as frivolous. Women’s desire for newness had been carefully manufactured in the interest of profit (Felski 1995). It was the intended result of the major change that commerce had undergone in the second half of the 19th century in the United Kingdom, United States and France, where shopping had been promoted from a necessity to a pleasure (Rappaport 2000; Bowlby 2010). It is true that this change also resulted in a more prominent role in society for at least those women who could afford to indulge in the seasonal trade of garters for suspenders or suspenders for garters – and that this more prominent role threatened in turn men’s exclusive rights to the public sphere. But as they shopped for pleasure rather than necessity, as consumer citizens, these women still served the national economy. Especially in the United States, where extensive tariffs were put in place to turn women’s desire for foreign goods into revenue for the government (Cohen 2017; Block 2021). Fashion magazines and newspapers sang the praises of various foreign goods: the tango garter might have been an American invention – it was patented as a ‘Leg-Covering Means’ by Alexandre M. Grean, founder of the American Tailors’ and

Dressmakers' Association, and holder of multiple patents (*The Wheeling Intelligencer* 1913; Grean 1914) (Fig. 6.5) – but many other fashions and novelty items that the press encouraged American women to buy came from abroad, most often France (*Vogue; New York* 1911; 1912b; 1913; 1914a). It would be only from the early 1930s, after the Great Depression, that the focus of newspaper and magazines, as well as of department stores in the United States, would begin to shift toward the promotion of American design (Hawes 1938).

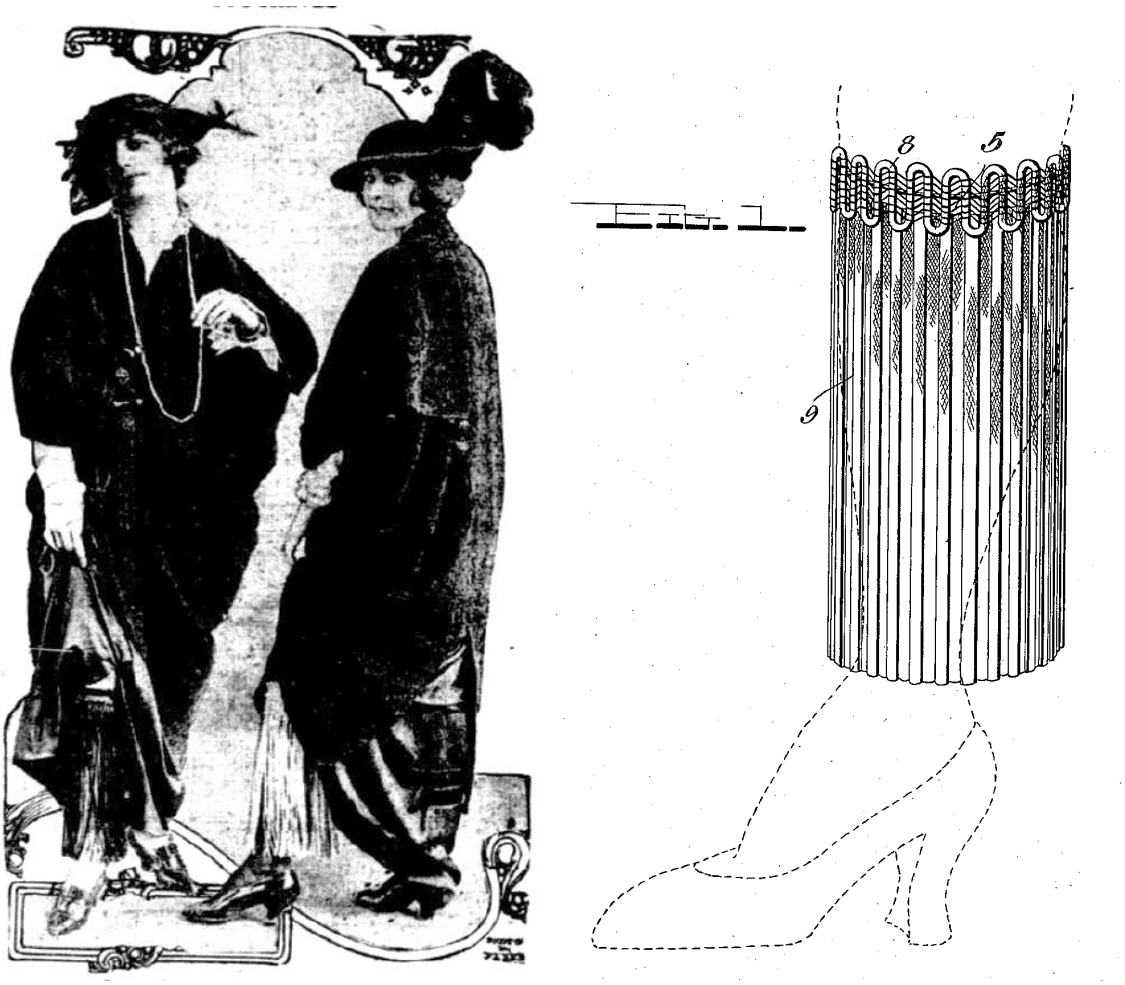


Fig. 6.5: Tango garters in *The Wheeling Intelligencer* 1913, p.1 (left), and in Alexander M. Grean's patent for 'Leg Covering Means', US1106375A, 1914 (right).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, while men were citizens by default, women were citizens to the extent that they could, only if they bought. They relied on the acquisition of objects, often acquired by way of their husbands' allowance, to constitute themselves as social subjects (Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017). The "greater sense of freedom" that in 1912 *Vogue* promises its readers "a really smart round garter" would gain them, can therefore be understood in multiple ways. From a technical standpoint, a body moves, or dances, more freely "by unclasping" (1912a, p.98), a restricted blood flow might just be the price a woman in the 1910s has to pay for the benefit. But

a greater sense of freedom is also a transcendental property, with which any commodity can be endowed to encourage its purchase in a capitalist system. As such, however, it can also be interpreted as a sign of what women in the 1910s were most deprived of, and therefore of what they most wanted: freedom, a greater sense of it, across different spheres – economic, political, sexual and bodily freedom. Of course, however smart, a round garter would not have gained it for them. Yet the promise was not totally empty either. The garter, or more than the garter itself its purchase, would make of the woman who bought it a consumer citizen at least. But not all women acquired the objects that turned them into social subjects legitimately, at least not always, not even all the women who could have afforded to. Some women indulged their desires for new, expensive, often foreign fashions and luxuries without paying high tariffs, or relying on their husbands' allowance, without in fact spending at all. At the turn of the 20th century, a woman's want for a really smart round garter, endowed with the promise of freedom, might have caused her to act irresponsibly, immorally according to ethics and law. Or perhaps it was a woman's want for equal rights, which might have caused her to turn to petty crime (Abdul-Jabbar 2017).

6.2 The Drop

At the turn of the 20th century, "a really smart round garter" (*Vogue; New York* 1912a, p.98) may be what a shoplifter might want to steal, but it may also be what she wears, in order to do so. In this chapter I address as the shoplifter's garter that garter whose foremost purpose is not to hold up the wearer's stocking, although it might hold up her stocking too. Rather, I address as the shoplifter's garter the garter which is worn, or at times just called into question, in the first place for the purpose of stealing. In the late 19th century, her garter is fundamental to a performance that can embarrass or distract onlookers, and therefore play a key role in the shoplifter's practice. To illustrate it, I want to refer to an early example. Though unlikely to have been the earliest case when a shoplifter did this, the case in question is chronicled in an 1863 issue of *The Leeds Intelligencer*:

> A lady (?) has displayed a new method of shoplifting. … going up to a sheepish-looking young man behind a deserted counter, told him she had had the misfortune to drop her garter, and that, in consequence, her stocking was falling over her foot; she requested him to accommodate her with a piece of tape, and to allow her to put it on behind the counter. The young man, blushing crimson, instantly gave her the tape, and, in the most respectful manner, vacated the dark side of the counter, and left the lady, who at once helped herself to a silk dress, which she tied under her crinoline with the tape. … When the man returned to his quarters he found the dress gone, and instantly knew he had been robbed, but too late – the garterless lady was out of sight. (1863, p.3)

This passage captures in some detail the affective powers that, in the 19th century, a woman's garter could exert over an impressionable young man. Or not quite a woman's – rather, a lady's garter. Or the garter of someone who looked like a lady, although her actions compel the reporter to add a question mark between brackets after the term, likely in doubt of how to reconcile a respectable appearance and the deceptive behaviour of the woman in question, perhaps implying as a result that the likeness of a lady might have been nothing more than a shoplifter's disguise all along. But just like the lady herself, the garter that she claims to have dropped might also have been described as a 'garter (?)', since it may never have been on the scene either. In fact, what the shoplifter in this story is taking advantage of, is not exactly her garter's ability to distract or embarrass a salesman, but her own ability to do so by merely mentioning her garter. The implication of its existence suffices to make the young man blush, and vacate the site of his authority and responsibility in the store, "his quarters," "the dark side of the counter" (p.3). His place, it could be argued, in the public sphere. As a relational network, this crime scene comprises of the following human and nonhuman actors:

a lady-like shoplifter
a sheepish-looking young man
a deserted counter
a crinoline
a piece of tape
a silk dress

No garter actually makes an appearance except in the words of its purported wearer: the shoplifter who might have been "garterless" from the start (p.3). In the newspaper's retelling of this story at least, the shoplifter is portrayed as a promiscuous, predatory character, against whose advances – she reveals to have dropped her undergarments – a young, implicitly inexperienced shop assistant stands no chance.

As much as, perhaps at once as the garter she wants – round, smart, endowed with the promise of freedom – may cause a woman to act irresponsibly, the garter she wears, or even that which she only mentions, may cause a shop assistant to act irresponsibly as well. But we must remember that if we think of the garter primarily as a decorative or seductive accessory today, this is because it was rendered superfluous by the introduction of hold-ups in the 1960s, whereas this story takes place even before the introduction of suspenders in 1878. The garter that this shoplifter might or might not have been wearing was neither a luxury nor a symbol. In 1863 garters were still items of daily use, as fundamental a staple in any woman's wardrobe as they had been for most of their history. Then perhaps it is not the implication of the garter's existence per se that causes the young man at the counter to react as he does, as much as the revelation of the garter's unreliability. And

if that's the case, what this shoplifter is actually taking advantage of is her ability to distract or embarrass a salesman, not merely by mentioning her garter, but by alluding to her garter's failure. In the introduction to *The Material Culture of Failure*, Timothy Carroll, David Jeevendrampillai and Aaron Parkhurst observe that "crucial dynamics of social life are revealed" when things fail to behave as expected (2017, p. 6). The very idea of a lady's stocking falling over her foot may shock the young man who only ever knew a woman's stocking and her leg as one. The shoplifter knows and exploits this, she selects him in advance for the unguarded timidity that his appearance betrays: she who has carefully crafted her own to look the least suspicious, the most lady-like. But the shoplifter's garter did not really fail, in fact it succeeded, for its purpose never was to hold up her stocking, but to facilitate her theft.

If we return to the cast of actors in this relational network, we might consider the crinoline she wore, clearly big enough for a silk dress to be taped underneath it, as equally essential to this shoplifter's successful theft as the garter she claims to have dropped. Yet shoplifters are reported to have alluded to the drop of their garters in order to distract or embarrass shop assistants, for much longer than crinolines were in fashion. In 1885, the *Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette* still observes that:

> The latest mode of shoplifting is said to be for an elegantly-dressed lady to enter an establishment and ask for garter. Blushing shopman offers a piece of silk braid, and turns modestly away, while the lady avails herself of it – not to hold up her silk stocking, but to tie a large piece of goods to her crinoline, and retire, bowing and smiling her thanks. (1885, p.2)

If this lady truly was elegantly dressed, according to the standards of the mid-1880s, the *Greenock Telegraph*'s reporter might have described as a crinoline what might have been more accurately described as a crinolette petticoat, a precursor of the revived bustle. Where the crinoline's hoops had been round, the crinolette petticoat's were half-circles (Cunnington and Cunnington 1992; Cumming et al. 2010). Still, there is no doubt that for a whole dress or "a large piece of goods" (*Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette* 1885, p.2) to be tied or taped underneath it, a shoplifter's skirt would have to have been spacious, and preferably supported by an understructure sturdy enough to bear the additional weight of stolen items without collapsing on itself or tilting. But even when she wore such a skirt, and although the allusion to the drop of her garter should have earned a shoplifter some time, to blindly tape or tie large materials under several layers of skirts, petticoats and hoops, would have been a laborious process. Better suited, perhaps, to the American smugglers of French gowns who prepared themselves to return to their homeland by sewing those gowns on the inside of their petticoats (Abdul-Jabbar 2017), than to a shoplifter in a busy department store, even when she was given temporary privacy behind a counter.

A shoplifter's allusion to the drop of her garter, however, did not necessarily have to segue into the tying or taping of stolen items under her crinoline or crinolette petticoat, and was practiced even in times of narrow skirts. When its drop was only alluded to, the shoplifter's garter, still tied around her leg, could itself become a means to secure and carry small-sized treasures. In the United States in 1891, as part of an illustrated overview of various shoplifting techniques, *The Sun* describes this one in detail:

> The woman, standing at a counter, suddenly becomes nervous, reddens slightly, looks round to see if any men are present, and then suddenly stoops down, lifts one foot so that scarcely an inch of the stocking shows above the shoe top, and goes through the motions of pulling up her stocking. Everybody except the experienced detective thinks that she is threatened with one of those accidents to which all women are subject at times. The detective recognizes the trick, and knows very well that she is concealing some stolen articles under her garter. Therefore he follows her. Women have been arrested with all sorts of articles hung over their garters like clothes on a line. (1891, p.26) (Fig. 6.6)

Fig. 6.6: A shoplifter pretends to pull up her stocking, when she is actually hitching stolen jewels under her garter. *The Sun* 1891, p.26

Here there is no need for her to directly address a shop assistant: the shoplifter's comportment is sufficient to communicate the impression that she wants people to get. Like the salesmen who were "blushing" at the mere mention of a lady's garter's failure to hold up her stocking (*The Leeds Intelligencer* 1863, p.3; *Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette* 1885, p.2), this woman "reddens" to indicate that this is what is happening. The difference of course is that unlike theirs, her embarrassment is a performance – clearly, she is consummate enough in the art of deception that she can blush on command. Her "stout garters, clasped about the leg below the knee" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) are still holding up, and not just the shoplifter's stocking but all the objects she intends to steal. At the polar opposite of the "sheepish-looking young man" (*The Leeds Intelligencer* 1863, p.3), the "experienced detective" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) alone recognises it as an act.

Certainly, this shoplifter would not have been able to hang over her garter a dress, nor any large item. But with no need for silk braid or tape, and much more quickly in comparison, she could have stolen jewels or buttons, handkerchiefs or lace, and "anything else that can be securely fastened by being thrust under a tight elastic band" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26). The same tight garters that, since 1878, stocking suspenders or supporters had been trying to replace, might have found thereafter a new lease of life among shoplifters. Both technologies (Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015) and commodities (De Certeau 1988; Wajcman 2004), rubber garters could be misworn, precisely by virtue of "how they have taken shape" (Ahmed 2019, p.200). The very quality that was the most significant drawback of the 19th-century garter, its constricting nature, could have been the quality that made them especially useful to steal with. The discomfort a shoplifter might have experienced, at least for the duration of her expedition, was surely worth her reward. One might speculate that the complicity of garters and shoplifters, in the years of the kleptomania epidemic, may have contributed to the renewed appreciation for garters over supporters or suspenders – that already in the mid-1890s, products like 'The Twentieth Century Garter' (*The Queen* 1895) were answering to.

6.3 The Leg

Women's garters might have been items of daily use rather than decoration in the 19th century, but this was only for as long as they worked as they were expected to. The garter could "recede into the background" (Latour 2005, p.80) up until the moment when it dropped, or when it was said to have dropped, and then attention was drawn both toward the garter, and toward the leg around which it should have been tied. Their malfunction or failure draws our attention to things (Carroll, Jeevendrampillai, and Parkhurst 2017; Sampson 2020) even when it is only alluded to. It might seem counterintuitive that a shoplifter should want to draw attention to herself, especially if, as I wrote in previous chapters, she had willingly given up on the convenience of wide sleeves and ample skirts at times when these styles were not in fashion, so as not to stand out in a department store. Yet the shoplifter who incorporated this performance in her practice would have known that the gaze which was drawn to her leg in a public space, would most likely have been drawn immediately away from it, as if by reflex – and that this redirection of the gaze or attention of onlookers, as a result of their distraction or embarrassment, would have enabled her to steal unsupervised. Victorian society is renowned for its reticence to think about women's legs: while it does appear in newspaper articles and patents, historians observe that the word 'leg' itself was often replaced by 'limb' in polite conversation (Rhodes 2023). Bifurcated garments, which reminded observes of their existence, were considered by some especially "vulgar, ugly and wicked" (F. 1911, p. 35). Perhaps not unlike the disapproval of pockets, the preference for womenswear that dissimulated the wearer's legs might also be interpreted as a preference not to

acknowledge women's freedom of movement. But while the resemblance of pockets and women's genitals might have been partially an excuse, there is no doubt if bifurcated garments were considered vulgar when worn by women in the late 19th century, this was first and foremost because a woman's leg was widely understood as one of the most seductive parts of her body.

There is a scene In Émile Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise*, the 1883 novel set in and about a department store of the same name, in which a shoplifter is caught with "her thighs and bosom padded with sixty pairs of gloves" (2008, p.342). Leslie Camhi refers to this particular passage and observes how, in fiction as in real life, "[a]ll bodily sites of seduction were available to assist in fraud" (1993, p.9). Of course, it is not those bodily sites per se that dissimulate the gloves, any more than the shoplifter's leg alone could have concealed a silk dress or jewels. It is the clothed body that does. The shoplifter's body "extends and is augmented by its conjoining with other objects" (Blackman 2021, p.138; Negrin 2016; Sampson 2020). What's padded are not a shoplifter's thighs and bosom but her dress, or rather the interstice between the two. It is in the space between a shoplifter's leg and her crinoline or crinolette petticoat that large goods are taped or tied, from the space between her calf and her stocking, secured by a garter's "tight elastic band" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26), that a stolen handkerchief hangs. Camhi can take this for granted, but given the focus of my study, I would add to her quote that in the late 19th and early 20th century, all bodily sites of seduction were available to assist in fraud, if and when they were joined with, or operated alongside complicit sartorial technologies. It is the coming together of human and non-human elements that shape what a body can do (Blackman 2021). As a bodily site of seduction, a shoplifter's leg facilitated her theft, if by way of round or semi-circular hoops, it was kept at enough distance from the cloth of her skirt, for a whole dress to be tied between them and not show. Or if a garter was tied tightly around it. At once as her garter's elastic offered the means to secure and hide the objects that the shoplifter stole, her allusion to its drop constituted a distraction that drew away the gaze of onlookers.

This is important in relation to the question of women's citizenship in the late 19th and early 20th century. If, historically, "the very identification of women with the body, nature and sexuality, feared as a threat to the political order" has been the cause of their exclusion from citizenship (Lister 2003, p.72; Puwar 2004; Sheller 2012), the fact that an allusion to the drop of her garter could draw attention to a woman's body and sexuality, that this could distract or embarrass onlookers and therefore technically facilitate her shoplifting, when women's shoplifting is posited as a feminist act of citizenship, suggests that the very reason why women were excluded from citizenship could become the means for them to reclaim it. The key role that clothes can play in women's citizenship practices, at once for their symbolic connotations and as sartorial technologies, is demonstrated here. But of course, this is not a prerogative of the shoplifters who incorporated this performance in their practice. Those who wore fashionable skirts or sleeves to

look inconspicuous, on top of sartorial technologies concealed inside them, already subverted through their actions the expectations of how a well-dressed lady should behave – and when their thefts are understood as feminist acts of citizenship, as much as the sartorial technologies they wore can be understood as material participation (Marres 2015), their fashionable clothes would have challenged the disembodied ideal by emphasising, rather than trying to dissimulate, the femininity of their wearers. If she was suspected of stealing, moreover, fashionable clothes could have allowed a shoplifter to try and deploy "conventional femininity to elude arrest," as much as they allowed the suffragette who wore the latest fashion to go window-smashing to do the same (Parkins 2002, p.115; Rappaport 2000).

There is a fundamental difference however, between the feminist act of citizenship of a fashionably dressed, window-smashing suffragette and that which the shoplifter, her contemporary, might also have performed. While both unlawful, and not to be considered any less acts of citizenship for it (Parkins 2002; Lister 2003; Isin 2008), and while they might have both involved or relied on clothes, they differed in their objectives or trajectories. If they are both acts of citizenship, they are acts of citizenship differently understood. The suffragette's violent act, though less elegant than the peaceful protests of her suffragist counterpart, still comes across as nobler than that of the shoplifter. It reclaims citizenship more directly, focusing on the right to vote as a metonym for equality. Yet its claim is "a double-edged sword" (Sheller 2012, p.9) because political recognition is its ultimate goal. The suffragette aims to fit in. The shoplifter's act, on the contrary, is a "[form] of bodily assertion through contesting the power and gaze of others" (ibid., p.17) most obviously so when it distracts onlookers by drawing attention to her leg. It is because of this that she may be understood to practice instead, citizenship from below.

6.4 The Garter With Hooks

The example in *The Sun* testifies to how the ordinary 19th-century garter, which comprised of an elastic band tied around the wearer's leg, when worn by a shoplifter could secure, and hold on to, the objects she stole. But in this time of transition in the history of garters – in which their function of holding up women's stockings is first taken over, to some extent, by the corset with attached suspenders, then retrieved when the corset itself disappears, to be eventually forgone in favour of a less functional and more decorative role – the shoplifter's garter as a sartorial technology in its own right emerges in New York. By this I mean, that a shoplifter's garter comes to the attention of reporters, which is not an ordinary 19th-century garter that by virtue of its tightness lends itself to a purpose different from the one that it was invented for (Ahmed 2019). Rather, it is an invention which may well hold up their stocking, but that was designed first and foremost to facilitate women's stealing. Although it emerges at a time of transition in the history of garters as a whole, influenced by changes in commerce and technological innovations, the rise and fall of this

particular version of the shoplifter's garter also reflect, as will become clear, trends and developments in the history and evolution specifically of shoplifters' clothes.

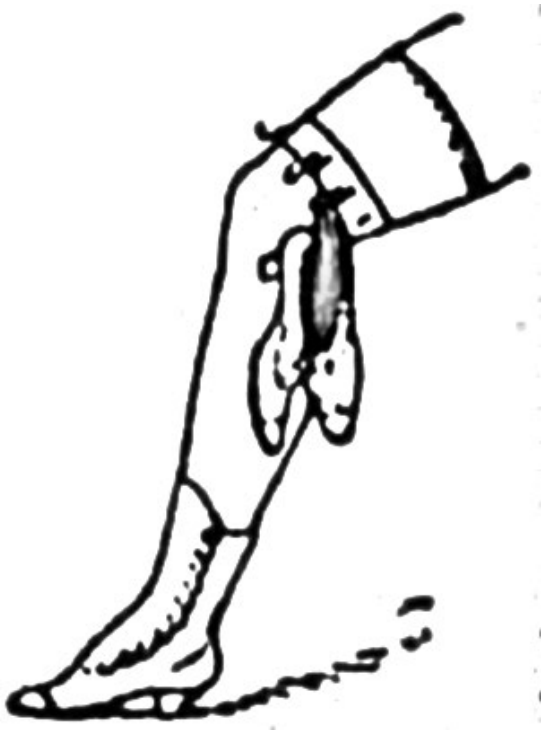


Fig. 6.7: Queer garters with hooks all around them in *The Sun* 1891, p.26

A first version of it is described in 1882 in the *Iron County Register*, which reports that "[a] female shoplifter in New York was found to have a hook fastened to her garter and a pair of stolen new shoes hung to the hook" (1882, p.6). Because of their strings, by means of which they could be hung, shoes were to become a favourite catch for the shoplifter wearing garters with hooks, at least according to newspaper reports. Two years later, the same invention is listed alongside other "devices for concealment" in an article on 'Shop Lifting In New York' in the *Omaha Daily Bee*. The cited case is either the same, or that of another shoplifter caught "in a shoe store on Sixth avenue … A pair of shoes were found hanging to a hook attached to the woman's garter" (1884, p.2). The more exhaustive description of the shoplifter's garter with hooks is however published in *The Sun*, as part of the same illustrated overview of various shoplifting techniques which also reviews how a shoplifter might allude to the drop of her garter but actually turn it into a receptacle for small-sized treasures. Whilst any woman with a rubber garter and some acting skills may decide on the spot to use that trick, the author of the article moves on to describe the "queer garters" worn by the professional shoplifter. By 1891 the hooks on one of these garters have multiplied (Fig. 6.7), and so have the pairs of shoes that can hang from them:

> She wears her garters above her knee, and queer garters they are. In the first place they are very tight. They are wide and heavy, too. Oddest of all, they have little hooks fastened all around them. The woman with these queer garters enters the shoe department of a big store … seizes several pairs of shoes and hangs them on the hook of her garters by the strings which couple each pair … and swoops out of the store. (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) (Fig. 6.8)

When Sara Ahmed gives her definition of queer use, she acknowledges that this is not a neologism as such: "you can find many newspaper articles from the late nineteenth century that use queer

use in exactly this way – articles that refer to the queer uses of cups, bicycles, cigars, and cloisters" (2019, p.199). But the garters that in the late 19th century *The Sun* describes as 'queer' do not appear to be ordinary garters that have been put towards a queer use. That's what happens when a shoplifter thrusts stolen goods under the elastic of an ordinary garter, in defiance of its intended purpose which is to hold up the wearer's stockings. Rather, the garters worn by professional shoplifters that *The Sun* describes as queer are queer in the same sense in which Three-Handed Annie uses the term, when she describes the lengths she went to, to make sure that her real arm, hidden under her coat, would not make her figure look strange and give itself away (Rose 1912). The garters with hooks described in *The Sun* are said to be queer because they are perceived to be odd, and the hooks all around them are perceived to be "[o]ddest of all" (1891, p.26).

Fig. 6.8: The shoe department of a big store, in Charlie Chaplin's *The Floorwalker* (1916) is helpful to imagine the setting in which the theft of multiple pairs of shoes by way of garters with hooks as described in *The Sun* 1891, p.26, might have occurred. Production still from the Charlie Chaplin Archive.

But were they really as bizarre as the article makes them sound? Perhaps not quite. In their essential components – a tight, horizontal band of cloth or elastic and one or multiple hooks – the shoplifter's garters with hooks described in these newspapers seem remarkably similar to the men's garters or sock suspenders that were being patented around this time. All necessarily prehensile, these men's garters were usually furnished with depending straps that might have

been equipped with clasps, loops, or indeed hooks, in order to serve their intended purpose. In the POP dataset, a search for inventions patented between 1881 and 1920, with both the word 'garter' and the word 'hook' in their descriptions, gives 23 results, for either garters or suspenders, for either women or men. Although in these patents what is referred to as the 'hook' is at times the fastening that binds around the wearer's calf one end of the horizontal band to the other, often it is what's at the end of the "pendant piece" (Cumming et al. 2010, p.200) that hangs from a man's round garter, to attach it to the wearer's sock, or what's at the end of the strap, depending from a woman's corset, that is itself sometimes referred to as a garter. And however the patent refers to the "clip to grip the top of the sock" (Cumming et al. 2010, p.200) at the end of the strap, in the accompanying drawings it frequently looks just like a hook. The shoplifter's garter with hook would not have emerged out of nowhere, and it is not difficult to imagine how some of these inventions, especially those intended to be worn by men, if worn instead by female shoplifters could have lent themselves to a use different from that which their patents prescribe – could have lent themselves to stealing, or a queer use (Fig. 6.9).

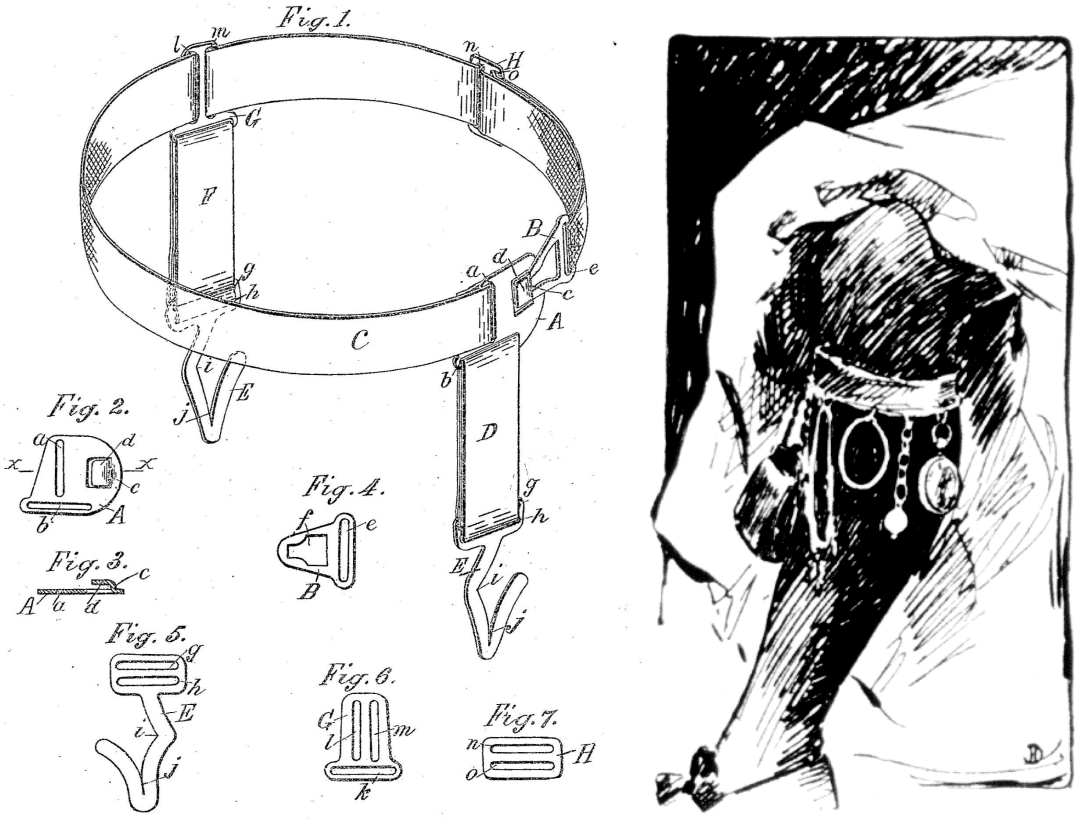


Fig. 6.9: Harlan M. Stidham's patent for a 'Garment-Supporter or Garter', in which hooks hang from depending straps to secure a gentleman's sock, US845321A, 1907 (left).
A shoplifter's garter with hooks drawn in the Baltimore's *Sun*, also in 1907, p.15 (right).

In the New York of the early 1890s, in the eyes of reporters or of the detectives that they interview, the garter with hooks is "[o]ne of the newest and most successful" (*Eagle River Review* 1892, p.7),

"[o]ne the neatest" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) sartorial technologies. It is a step above the tricks involving silk handbags or reticules, practiced by amateurs but requiring "very little practice" (Weippiert 1891, p.3) or even "no skill whatsoever" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26; *Eagle River Review* 1892, p.7), or those too familiar to salesmen to be of any use, such as the one in which a shoplifter's handkerchief is dropped over a small item on the counter and both are picked up together. The shoplifter's skirt is also by now supposedly too well-known to be relied upon, although the fact that fashionable skirts became too tight for the kick is still the main reason why it is no longer as common as it once was (*The Sun* 1891; *Eagle River Review* 1892). Not that these two aspects were necessarily unrelated. In 1879, the *New York Times* did argue that not shoplifters, but the smugglers of French gowns mentioned above, had contributed to the crinoline's fall from grace in the United States. "The time finally came when crinoline smugglers became so numerous that every lady who was crinoline-rigged was suspected of smuggling whether she carried any cargo or not," the article claims, to the point that the ladies who wanted to avoid being searched by custom inspectors when they returned from a trip oversea, took to wear tightly fitted skirts to manifest their innocence, and these soon became a new trend (*The New York Times* 1879, p.4; Abdul-Jabbar 2017). Perhaps in part as a result of this, the crinoline under which in 1863 a shoplifter could tape a whole silk dress when left alone behind the counter (*The Leeds Intelligencer* 1863, p.3), if worn in 1891 or 1892 would have only attracted attention – and not in the useful way that a garter could. Rather than embarrassment or distraction, it would only have aroused suspicion.

Fig. 6.10: A shoplifter in gigot sleeves wears a garter with hooks in *The Topeka State Journal* 1895, p.14

Whether that was simply what was new and fashionable, or whether close-fitting styles did in fact suggest innocence in a way that women, whose moral sense was still being debated (*Vogue; New York* 1914b; Childe Dorr 1916), might have found helpful, from the 1890s onwards skirts would only get tighter. In 1895, the same year when *The Queen* announced that the garter was back and ready to replace suspenders, *The Topeka State Journal* observed that in the shoplifter's wardrobe,

the garter with hooks had taken the place of the shoplifter's skirt. The article is accompanied by the drawing of a woman dressed in fashionable gigot sleeves, a skirt that must have counted as tight at the time, and a garter with hooks (Fig. 6.10). It concedes that:

> Stowing away the stolen goods is a difficult matter. The present fashion of gowns fitting close to the hips does away with the "kick," or shoplifter's pocket, extending to the bottom of the skirt. One young woman recently caught had a unique contrivance fastened around her leg just below the knee. It was a strong band of heavy cloth, which fitted like a garter, and to it was attached a number of small hooks. The instant she stole anything she would stoop down as if to tie her shoe and slip the article on one of the hooks. (*The Topeka State Journal* 1895, p.14)

In 1902, *The Wichita Daily Eagle* similarly includes a report on the 'Tricks of Shop-Lifters' in which readers are assured that although:

> one of the oldest tricks of the profession is what is known as the shoplifter's skirt. … No shoplifter of standing would now attempt this trick. The modern shoplifter prefers the garter device. The garter is made of strong, stiff elastic, and is provided with a dozen or more sharp hooks. It is fastened below the knee.

They cite the unlikely case of a shoplifter arrested not long before, with as much as a gold chain and a gold watch, silk stockings and a silk handkerchief, a pair of buttons and a pair of glasses, a diamond ring, a purse and a piece of lace suspended at once from the numerous hooks in her garters, once again in a Sixth avenue's department store (*The Wichita Daily Eagle* 1902, p.21).

6.5 Hose Supporter, 1900

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau understands consumption as another form of production, whose outcomes however are not products per se, but rather ways of using the products that a dominant economic order imposes upon consumers. A politics should be developed, he writes, out of "[t]hese ways of re-appropriating the product-system, ways created by consumers" (De Certeau 1988, p. xxiv). It may not be difficult in this respect, to imagine how some female shoplifters might have wanted to re-appropriate some of the men's garters invented and commercialised towards the end of the 19th century, and wear them to steal. But would it have worked? Might the fact that the shoplifters who wore them succeeded be the reason why I could find no evidence in historical newspaper archives, of men's garters ever having been misworn to shoplift at this time? Can we conceive, perhaps, of the re-appropriated sock suspender as a middle stage between the drop of the garter that any woman might perform on the spot, hence turning

the round, elasticated accessory towards a queer use (Ahmed 2019), and the purposefully designed shoplifter's garter with hooks, worn by professionals in the field? Can we even conceive of it as affording, or encouraging the transition from the consumer citizen, who purchases garters or suspenders for their promises of freedom, to constitute herself as a social subject, to the citizen from below, who steals in defiance of ethics and laws?

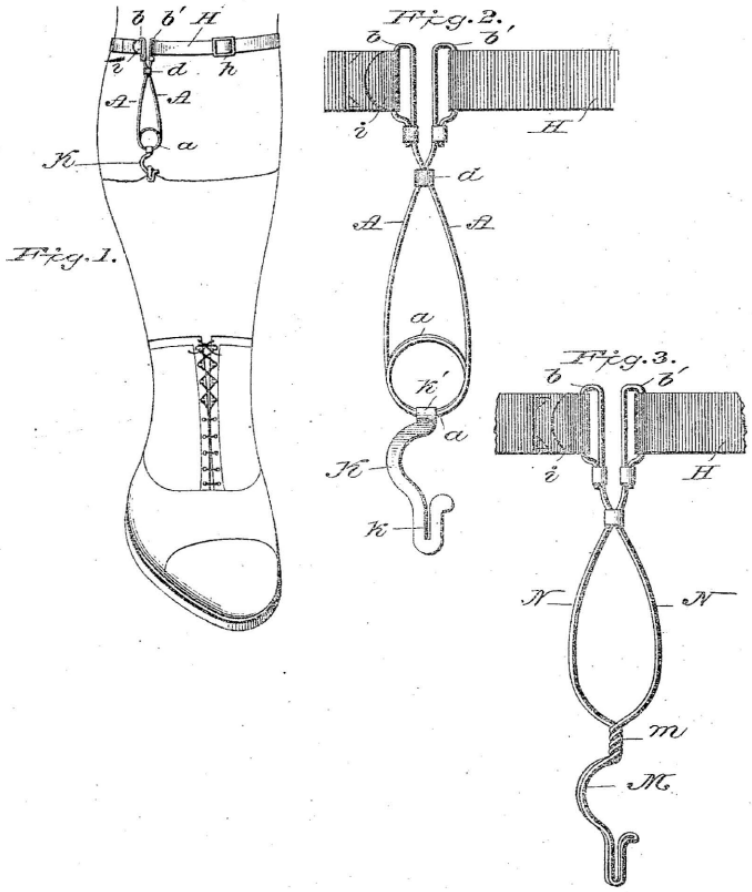


Fig. 6.11: Otto H. Hake's 'Hose Supporter' for men, US655439A, 1900. The patent specifies that "Fig. 2 is an enlarged detail view of the spring-wire connection. Fig. 3 is a similar view of a modification of said spring-wire connection".

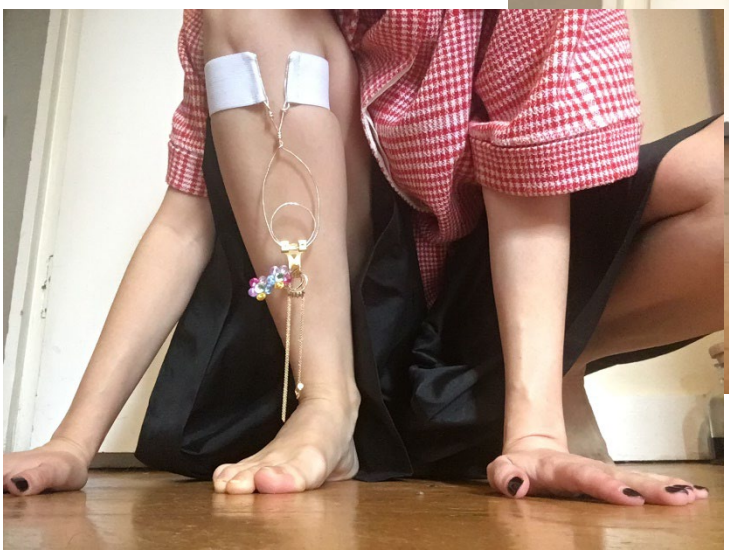
To try and address these questions I considered a 'Hose Supporter' patented in 1900 by Otto H. Hake of Washington, Missouri. Hake's invention is introduced as the solution to two sets of problems: first, "the rapid deterioration of the gum-elastic band employed, coupled with the undue wear that comes upon the cord" in conventional sock suspenders, and second, the much-lamented "binding and itching sensation always felt by wearers of gum-elastics". The patent does not acknowledge that as an inventor of garters for men in 1900, Hake was trying to resolve an issue that inventors of suspenders for women already claimed to have resolved, over two decades before him. Still, men would not have been wearing corsets to attached suspenders to, and Hake's patent does not allow for a wearer other than the one for whom this invention "for supporting men's

half-hose" was intended, nor does it consider what other problems a sock suspender of this kind might have either resolved or caused, depending on one's perspective, morals, or desires. Although some leeway is conceded where the hook that connects his invention to the wearer's sock is concerned, since Hake's patent allows that "changes could be made in the shape of the spring-wire connection without sacrificing its advantages," (Hake 1900) the document does not envisage how Hake's 'Hose Supporter' could lend itself to de-scription (Akrich 1992). Unlike the author of the magic manual who worries about how the tricks he describes might serve a reader with criminal inclinations (Robert-Houdin 1891; Ashton-Lelliott 2024), patents for sock suspenders at the turn of the 20th century do not account for how these inventions might have allowed or facilitated women's shoplifting, any more than newspaper articles on women's shoplifting methods account for sock suspenders. But to make and wear the inventions they describe might tell us more about them than patents openly do (Jungnickel 2018b). To make and wear a performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter' might even "reveal alternate and lesser-known acts and performances of citizenship" (Jungnickel 2021, p.20).

What drew me to this patent, in the first place, were the enlarged, detailed hooks in its technical drawing (Fig. 6.11). The earliest accounts of shoplifters' garters with hooks that I came across in newspaper archives had mentioned a single hook attached or fastened to the garter, which I pictured looking not too different from these ones (*Iron County Register* 1882; *Omaha Daily Bee* 1884). This supports my suggestion that a re-appropriated sock suspender could have been the middle stage between a shoplifter's misuse of a conventional elastic garter, and the fully-fledged shoplifter's garter with multiple hooks as a sartorial technology in its own right. Hake's patent presents two versions of the hook (1900), and for my first performative replica of his invention, I wanted to make the version which is drawn higher up in the technical drawing (Fig. 6.11). In this version the spring-wire connection that depends from the round garter ends with a separate, smaller hook. I used a picture hook for it, and at first, I chose garden wire for the connection because of its flexibility – but finding it too flimsy, I switched to steel wire. Although Hake's invention intends to "dispense entirely with the use of elastic bands and cords," I still decided to use an elastic band for my performative replica, since at this point in time "hose-supporters … which are used to support men's half-hose … comprise usually an elastic band" (1900). I did this because Hake's reason for avoiding elastic – its rapid deterioration – did not concern me, and I was less interested in determining whether Hake's invention specifically was ever used to shoplift, and more in whether men's sock suspenders in general might have been, especially if equipped with a hook similar to the one that Hake's invention provides. I also considered that a shoplifter would have preferred the tight elastic of a conventional sock suspender, despite its discomfort, over the non-elastic band of Hake's supporter, if she aimed to steal anything heavier than a sock. Out of the same consideration for the weight and volume of a shoplifter's haul, I decided to make

the hook of my performative replica bigger than the technical drawing in Hake' patent suggests that his hook was.

Fig. 6.12: A performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter'.



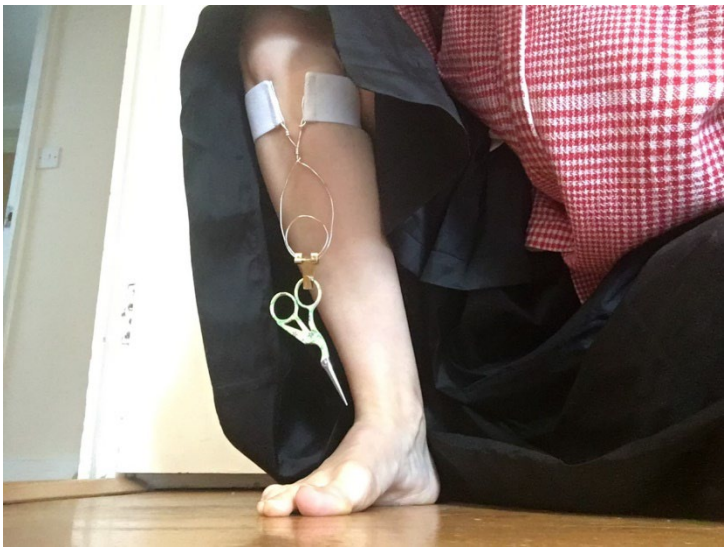


Fig. 6.13: A hairpin, a golden necklace and two small rings (above), as well as a pair of embroidery scissors (below) hang from my first performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter'.

Fig. 6.14 (left): In a second performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter', the hook is made entirely out of steel wire. It is small and adheres to the leg rather than facing outward. As a result, the brooch and hairpin attached to it don't slide off.

Fig. 6.15 (below): My first performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter', on the right, is taller and slightly looser. Here a golden necklace is tangled in it. In comparison, my second performative replica of this invention, on the left, is tighter and shorter. Here two plastic rings hang securely from the hook, so that they don't fall even when it is placed upside down.

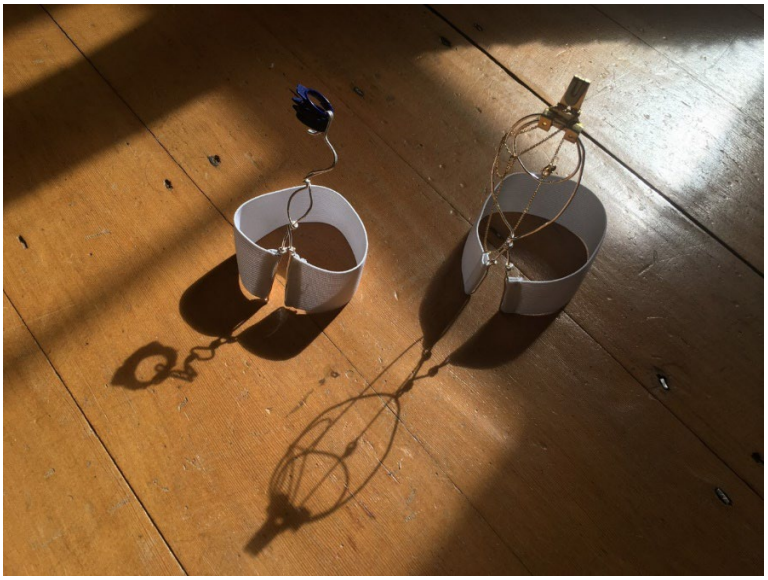


Fig. 6.16: In a third performative replica of Hake's 'Hose Supporter', the elastic band is replaced by cotton, and the steel wire by garden wire. The hook at the end of the wire is small and covered in fabric. This version of the invention is not dragged down, when embroidery scissors are attached to the hook.

Fig. 6.17: Three performative replicas of Hake's 'Hose Supporter'.

When I wore my performative replica of Hake's invention, despite the fact that I did use an elastic band for it, the patent's claim that the elastic could be dispensed with since "the necessary elasticity [is] being furnished by a spring-wire connection" was effectively demonstrated: when my leg was straight, "the ends of the spring members" around which the elastic band is sewn were close to each other, and when I bent my leg they separated (1900) (Fig. 6.12). On the other hand, it was immediately obvious that despite my use of a "strong, stiff elastic" (*The Wichita Daily Eagle* 1902, p.21), no pair of shoes, let alone "several pairs" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26), could ever hang from this invention without dragging it down – but neither was I expecting that a sock suspender, however modified in its materials and proportions, would have been able to hold that much weight. If not an exaggeration on the newspapers part, the ability to carry shoes might have been a prerogative of the shoplifter's garter with hooks that was purposefully designed to steal them. Lighter objects – a golden necklace, rings, a hairpin, a brooch, a pair of embroidery scissors – hung easily from the hook that I made (Fig. 6.13), but the picture hook I used at the end of the steel-wire connection did not prevent them from sliding off if I walked as fast as I suspected a shoplifter at the turn of the 20th century might have wanted to walk, when fleeing the scene of her crime.

I decided to make a second performative replica of Hake's supporter, this time with the version of the hook which is drawn below the first in the technical drawing (Fig. 6.11). This hook does not have a separate piece at the end, but is all crafted from the same wire which connects the two ends of the horizontal band. At first, I made the hook once again bigger than the proportions in the technical drawing of Hake's patent suggest. But when it snapped while twisting it into shape, I

opted to make it closer in size to what Hake intended, thinking that it would be less likely to break if it was more compact. Although I still used the elastic, I cut it shorter this time, so that the invention would feel “very tight” (*The Sun* 1891, p.26) even when “the ends of the spring members” separated if I bent my leg (Hake 1900). As I tried it on, I realised however that more than these modifications, what would have made this second performative replica of Hake’s invention more convenient than the first one I made, from a shoplifter’s perspective, is the fact that the second version of the hook did not face outwards – rather, it adhered to my shin or calf, so that once an object was attached to it, that object was very unlikely to slide off, even if I jumped (Fig. 6.14, 6.15).

I still wanted to try and make a third performative replica of Hake’s invention as its inventor envisioned it, with a non-elastic band. I used a cotton band, which I cut just long enough to wrap under my knee when it was fastened with a hook and eye – although in the patent’s technical drawing the fastening appears to occur by way of what looks like a buckle (Fig. 6.11), which is referred to in the text as “the usual adjusting-slide” (Hake 1900). Given that I was using cotton instead of an elastic band, I returned to the garden wire for its lightness, and made another version of the first hook. Instead of a picture hook, at the end of the “pendant piece” (Cumming et al. 2010, p.200) of garden wire I secured another hook like the one that matches the eye around my leg. This is both smaller and lighter than the metal picture hook, and for the way that it is shaped and the fabric that covers it, I hoped that it would make it more difficult for objects to slide off from it. While obviously less tight than the elastic ones, this third performative replica of Hake’s supporter did not feel particularly unstable when worn, and against my expectations it was not dragged down my leg when either a golden necklace or a ring, a hairpin, a brooch, or a pair of embroidery scissors were attached to the small hook (Fig. 6.16).

More than archival research on its own could do, the making and wearing of three performative replicas of Hake’s invention (Fig. 6.17) give substance to my suggestion that at the turn of the 20th century, a successful shoplifter might have misworn a sock suspender to steal. Of course, I inevitably read the instructions in Hake’s patent through the lens of my interest in shoplifting methods at the turn of the 20th century. Still, when I wore them, my performative replicas both challenged and exceeded my expectations: they snapped, let slide, did not drag, attached, held. The affordances associated with a clothing invention depend as much on the invention’s own propensities as on the intentions of the wearer (Michael 2016; Sampson 2020), be it the shoplifter who might have worn Hake’s hose supporter, or a man’s garter equipped with a similar hook, at the turn of the 20th century, or the researcher who wears performative replicas of that invention today.

Unlike the objects I hooked to my first performative replica of Hake’s invention, those I hooked to my second and third ones did not slide off if I walked fast, or even jumped – but the odds of a

shoplifter wearing Hake's invention or a similar one at the time when it was patented would have changed in relation to many technical factors beside the size, material, and shape of the hook. For example the weight, volume, and material of the object or objects she attempted to steal, the material and size of the horizontal band around her leg, the sock suspender's newness and whether she wore it above or below her knee, under how many layers of skirts, whether or not it was worn on top of stockings and if so, which material those stockings were made of. Her odds would also have changed in relation to many circumstantial factors. For example how busy the store was, how good the shoplifter's disguise or how convincing her performance, and whether experienced store detectives or sheepish-looking salesmen were present. The making and wearing of performative replicas of Hake's supporters could not have led me to determine for sure that the shoplifter who might have worn this or a similar invention at the turn of the 20th century would have been successful. However, if she ever came across Hake's invention or a similar one, and it is not improbable that she would have, at this time when many similar sock supporters were being patented, the making and wearing of these performative replicas leads me to believe that it is likely that their hooks would have lent themselves to a queer use. And the absence of men's sock suspenders from newspaper accounts of women's shoplifting methods at this point in time, suggests that if she did come across them, and if those hooks lent themselves to a queer use, she was not caught, or at least never arrested.

May we consider this way of re-appropriating a consumer product, political? The politics that De Certeau claimed should be developed out of consumers' ways of re-appropriating products, is arguably addressed in Sheller's notion of citizenship from below, as an evolving everyday practice which is improvised and inventive (De Certeau 1988; Sheller 2012). Now, when women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century is understood as a feminist act of citizenship from below, may we consider it to have been enabled, facilitated or encouraged by the sock suspender itself, as material participation (Marres 2015)? Jane Bennett argues that since we can consider an act a political act even when the human actors who enact it do not intend it to be, we should be able to consider non-human acts political too, and to recognise that human agency itself presupposes some nonhuman agency (2010), or rather that agency is shared, distributed between human and nonhuman actors (Barad 2007; Ahmed 2019) – in this case between a sock suspender and its wearer. That is to say that at the turn of the 20th century, a re-appropriated man's garter, when worn by a woman, might have been more than just a tool. It might not only have allowed, but by virtue of its affordances, have invited shoplifting in the first place: setting off the transition of its wearer, whom it had not been designed for, from a consumer citizen to a citizen from below.

6.6 Diffusion and Demise

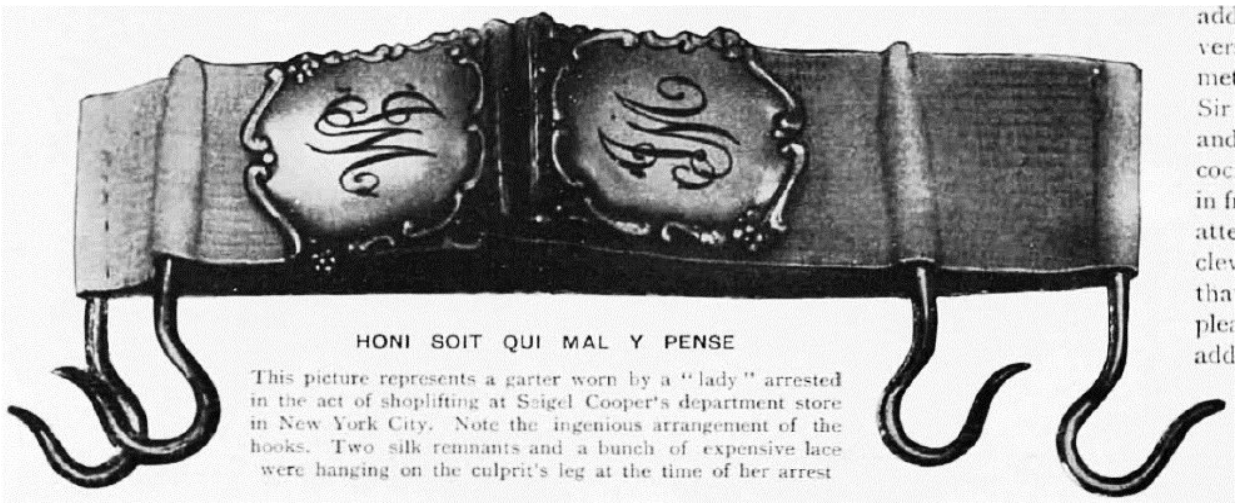


Fig. 6.19: A garter with hooks in *The Tatler* 1904, p.402.

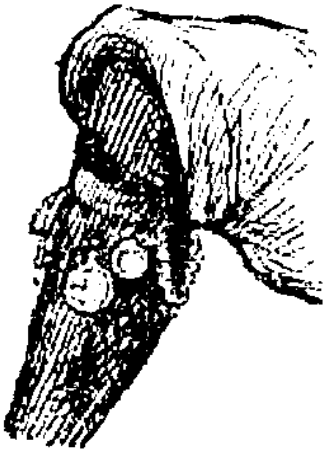


Fig. 6.18: A garter with hooks in the *Dundee Evening Post* 1903, p.8 (left).
Fig. 6.20: A garter with hooks in Hargrave L. Adam's *The Police Encyclopaedia* 1912 (right).
Image from Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images.
Another version of the same photograph was published in 1906 in *The Illustrated London News*, p. 799.
The resemblance between the drawing on the left and the photograph on the right suggests that the photograph might have been taken earlier even than its publication in *The Illustrated London News*, and re-drawn in the *Dundee Evening Post*.

It is around this time in the early 1900s that the shoplifter's garter with hooks crosses the ocean – whether or not it had done so once before, if it really did originate in France as a detective interviewed by the *Eagle River Review* believed (1892). The earliest mention I could find of a shoplifter's garter with hooks in a British newspaper, is in a 1903 issue of the *Dundee Evening Post*, as part of the description of an elaborate costume comprising as well of a bag with false bottom, a shoplifter's skirt, another handbag with an opening on the side, a fur coat with springs in its cuffs, a book with its pages cut out, and a boot with a sticky heel, allegedly all worn at once by a woman caught stealing in a shop in London (1903, p.8) (Fig. 6.18). The following year, both the *Daily Mirror* and *The Tatler* would reproduce a detailed drawing of an elegant garter with hooks which they claimed had been worn in New York by a shoplifter caught stealing at another department store in the 'Ladies' Mile', Siegel-Cooper (*Daily Mirror* 1904; *The Tatler* 1904) (Fig. 6.19). It might well have been an advertisement for the invention, not unlike any other novelty garter. In 1906, *The Illustrated London News* prints a demonstrative photograph of a garter with hooks in the presumable aftermath of a raid, a clock and a feather as "the swag" (1906, p.799) – meaning both the "loot" and "a suspended cluster of something" ('Swag', n.d.) – securely fastened to it. The image would also be reprinted in 1912, in Hargrave L. Adam's *The Police Encyclopaedia* (Fig. 6.20). It would have been surprising if these representations had *not* inspired a new wave of British shoplifters to equip themselves with garters with hooks of their own.

Indeed, as far as New South Wales, Australia, by 1907 the news has spread that "in London … many of the female raiders have," among various other sartorial technologies, "hooks on their garters, upon which they can slip anything from a watch or a bracelet to an eight-day clock" (*Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 1907, p.13). At the height of its popularity, the shoplifter's garter with hooks is described in some British and Australian newspapers as a "chatelaine garter" (*Leicester Daily Post* 1913, p.8; *Kalgoorlie Miner* 1913, p.1), after the chatelaine, a fashionable accessory that was worn from the 1840s and 50s to the early 20th century, as a substitute for pockets in womenswear (Matthews 2010). Chatelaines were thin chains of cut steel first and oxidised silver or electroplate later, tied around the waist like belts, and furnished with a depending hook, from which the ladies who wore them could hang the items they wished to carry with them (Cumming et al. 2010). Yet fame always precedes the demise of a shoplifting technology or technique: no sooner had the shoplifter's garter with hooks earned its moniker, that shoplifters were moving on from it. Sure, in the United States, "professional thief-catcher" D. J. Cotter, of the W. J. Burns agency of private detectives, was still speaking to *The Evening Times* about shoplifters who wore garters with hooks in 1913 (1913, p.3) – and as well as from his own detective work, Cotter may well have gotten this information from the article that police informant Jacob Rosenzweig, under the pseudonym of Jack Rose, had published the previous year in the *Evening Star*. Having introduced Three-Handed Annie and her false arm, Rose continues in the next page

to disclose a specific tell-tale of the garter with hooks, at least when the shoplifter who wears it tries to steal too much:

> If a woman is equipped with hooks around her knees to hang stolen goods on … she usually reveals her secret by her walk. Any woman with yards of chiffon wrapped around her knees is sure to have an unnatural walk. The shoplifter's gait is called by the store detectives the "wolly-wiggle walk" (Rose 1912, p.3)

But just like the old trick of "women who retire behind the end of a counter or to a corner under the pretense of fixing their garters" while what they're doing instead is thrusting small-sized treasures under their garters' tight elastic band, which likely due to salesmen having caught up, already by 1906 is "not frequently" performed (*The Clarksburg Telegram* 1906, p.8), so the wearing of a garter with hooks is by 1915 a method "so well known to shop detectives that it is very seldom practised" (*Hampshire Telegraph* 1915, p.14). It seems most likely that just as much as they would have contributed to the international diffusion of the shoplifter's garter with hooks as a sartorial technology, as 'knowledge from below' (Foucault 2003), newspaper reports would also have played a key role in these detectives' knowledge of it, leading eventually to its disappearance.

6.7 The Pocketed Garter

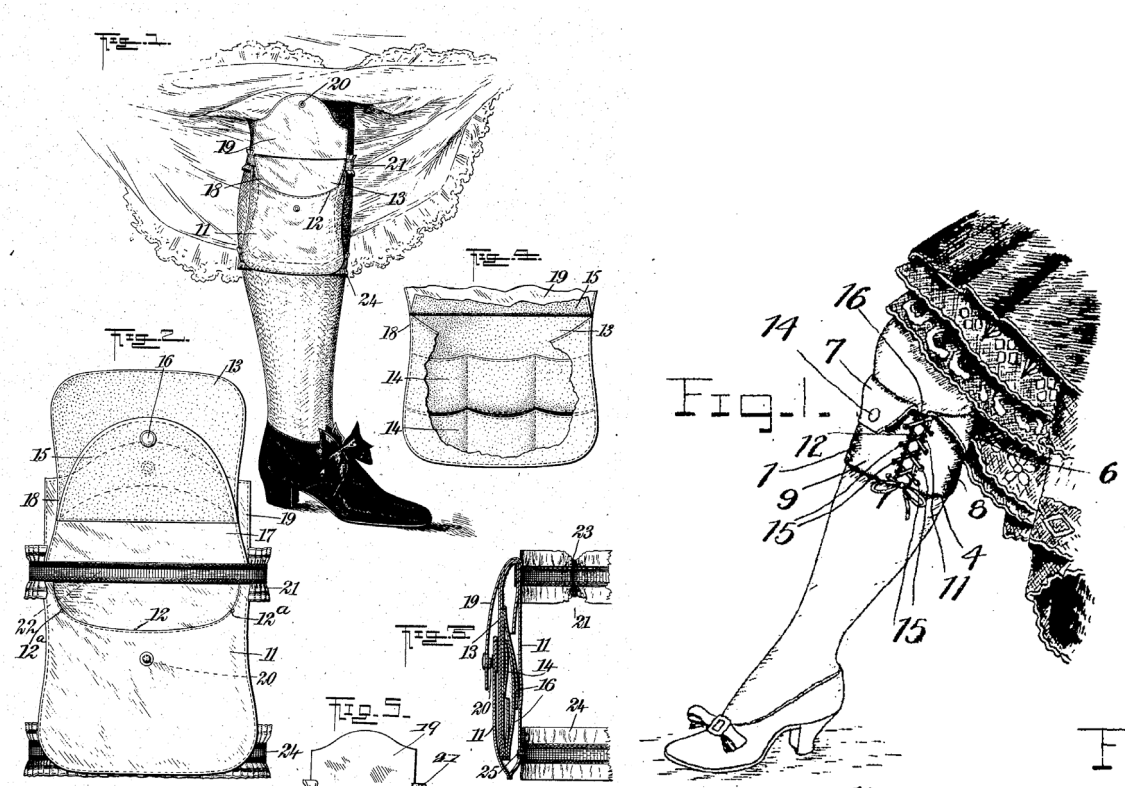
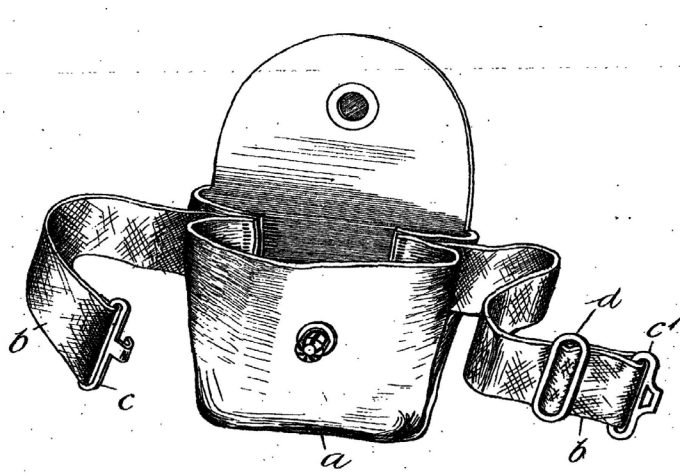
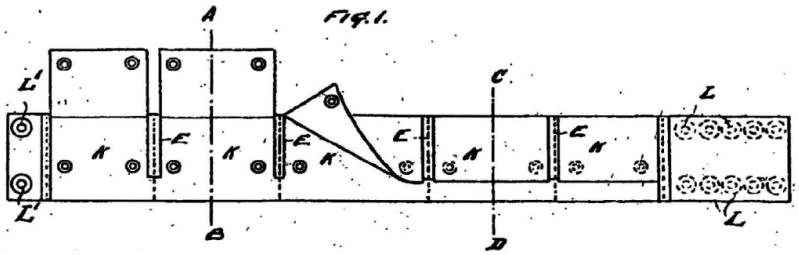


Fig. 6.21 (left): Charles H. Scott's 'Secret Double Safety Pocket' US790595, 1905.
Fig. 6.22 (right): Hugo V. Geissler's 'Safety Pocket' US926402, 1909.





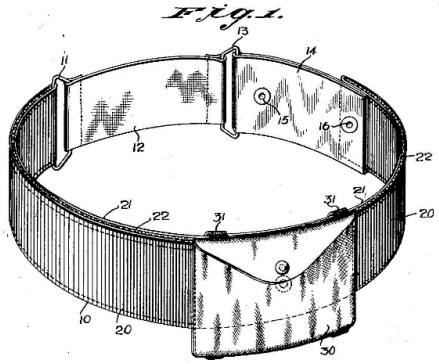


Fig. 6.23: Charles Leach and Alexander Munro's 'Ladies' Safety Purse' GB190809840A, 1909 (top).
Fig. 6.24: Sarah Alice Morling's 'Improved Garter or Encircling Band for Holding Valuables' GB191126553A, 1912.
Fig. 6.25: Money garter of unknown origin, c. 1913. From the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa's Textile and Dress Collection.
Fig. 6.27: Lillian G. Warren's 'Garter' US1382446A, 1921 (bottom).

Fig. 6.26: Leonard Careless' 'Purse' US1287875A, 1918 (top left).
Fig. 6.30: A garter with week-end bag in *The Day Book* 1914, p.15 (middle).
Fig. 6.28: Robert E. Ward's 'Hose Supporter' US1167669A, 1916 (top right).
Fig. 6.29: Edward V. Crouse's 'Garter Pocket' US1209401A, 1916 (middle right).
Fig. 6.31: A garter with powder-puff case in *Harper's Bazaar* 1917, p.108 (bottom).

I have considered in Chapter Four how together with, but more so even than their sexual connotations (Fennetaux 2008; Matthews 2010), the financial independence and the freedom of movement that pockets both conveyed and permitted, was most likely at the root of their disapproval in fashionable womenswear throughout the 19th century. While women's desires were cultivated in the interest of profit, and in France, but in the United Kingdom and United States just as much, women's shopping was deemed necessary to "the economic health of the nation" (Felski 1995, p.68); it must have seemed equally necessary, just as the women who could afford to assumed the role of consumer citizens in these consumer societies, to set limits to their autonomy, this time in the interest of protecting patriarchal hierarchies. By virtue of what it was most likely to hold, the pocket became a material metaphor for financial exchange, and its presence on middle-class women's clothes was therefore perceived as unsightly. The capacious tie-on pockets of the 18th century, at least where middle-class women were concerned, devolved as a result into much smaller inset pockets over the course of the 1800s, that not unlike sock suspenders, came with a prescribed function and pre-approved contents: watch pockets, ticket pockets, coin pockets (Burman 2002; *The Day Book* 1916). This is a tendency we are still familiar with: of our contemporary running shoes, walking shoes, or dancing shoes, Sampson writes, referencing Latour, that "task specificity is, in part, a transference of responsibility … our garments are made surrogates for our own obligations and needs". We assign to them, she argues, "physical and moral responsibilities" (Sampson 2020, p.109). If this is still the case for our shoes today, it would have been all the more the case for women's pockets in the 19th century – and it explains the urgency, where pockets in womenswear were deemed inevitable, to limit their scope and justify their usage. It is at this point in time that alongside the chatelaine and other solutions, such as the pocket sewn inside a muff, the garter with pocket emerges to supplement the difference between the capacious pockets of the 1700s and what fashionable Victorian women were advised to wear (Burman 2002). If I could find no evidence in newspaper archives of the pocketed garter ever having been used to shoplift, once again this might be due more to its efficacy in not getting shoplifters caught – both providing them with a space of privacy, as pockets do (Fennetaux 2008), and redirecting the gaze of onlookers away from their legs as a bodily site of seduction, as garters do – than to shoplifters never having used it to steal.

Although it is not presented as a garter in its description, Charles H. Scott's 'Secret Double Safety-Pocket' which "can be worn in a convenient place where it is entirely concealed from view, and that at the same time it will serve the function of supporting the hose" is a good example of a garter with pocket, patented in New York (1905) (Fig. 6.21). It may be a coincidence that Scott's pocket is patented in 1905, just the year before *The Clarksburg Telegram* observes that the trick of the drop of the garter is "not frequently" performed by shoplifters anymore (*The Clarksburg Telegram* 1906, p.8). Except that the patent for another safety pocket, similar to Scott's, which was issued to American inventor Hugo V. Geissler in 1909 (Fig. 6.22), makes precisely this connection:

> Heretofore, valuable stones and moneys of all characters have been carried in divers ways, and among these the practice of inserting jewels and other valuable articles in the stocking has been prevalent. This, while a very secure mode of carrying articles, entailed considerable time and trouble in getting at them, and it is the object of my invention to avoid such difficulties and provide a device which is equally secure, and at the same time convenient and accessible. (1909)

The "considerable time and trouble" (Geissler 1909) a woman would have to go through, to retrieve the valuables she kept in her stocking for her lack of pockets, is best described in the same article in the *Los Angeles Herald*, in which the story of the woman who miswore a sock suspender, or sleeve holder, to make up for her lack of pockets is also told. This scene echoes the shoplifter's technique of alluding to the drop of her garter in order to gain privacy and time, which was still common in the 1890s and which *The Sun* had described in much detail the previous year:

> Others select their stockings … as repositories of wealth. These women are always making some purchase which overdraws the cash they have in sight. It is very amusing then. The woman begins to hedge … Clerk, very much aggrieved, urges the desirability of the goods. Woman blushes … says she will go over to the glove counter while he is cutting the material … disappears, not in the direction of the glove counter. Reappears in five minutes somewhat ruffled, but solvent. (*Los Angeles Herald* 1892, p.9)

Of course, a shoplifter would not normally have needed to get the valuables she stole out of her stocking while in the store – but she might have, on those occasions when she suspected that her theft had been noticed and wanted to abandon the evidence. And compared to the shoplifter's garter with hooks, a shoplifter's garter with pocket, even if full, would probably not have caused the wearer to walk any differently, and might also have prevented stolen items from sliding off and giving the shoplifter away. Scott's patent, specifically, claims that his invention secured the pocket to the hose supporter in such a way that allowed for "the free movement of it thereon without danger of having it misplaced … preventing the receptacle from swinging outwardly from its support" (1905).

In the United Kingdom, in 1909, Charles Leach and Alexander Munro's patent for a 'Ladies' Safety Purse' finally uses the word 'garter', if not in its title, at least in its description of their invention as a "combination of a purse and garter" (1909) (Fig. 6.23). From this starting point, like the hooks on the chatelaine garter before it, the pockets on the pocketed garter would also multiply. In 1912 in London, Sarah Alice Morling patents "a garter … provided with a number of pockets in which valuables may be placed for security … in preferably a soft material such as chamois leather" (1912) (Fig. 6.24). I was not able to determine whether Morling's invention was ever commercialised – but in 1984, the international Textile and Dress Collection of the Museum of

New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa was gifted, by a Mary Griffith, a pocketed garter in suede of unknown origin, that they date circa 1913, and that much resembles the technical drawings in Morling's patent (Fig. 6.25). In the United States in 1918, a pocket-like purse which is tied at once above and below the wearer's knee, and therefore secured against accidental drops, is patented by Canadian inventor Leonard Careless (1918) (Fig. 6.26), while the patent for Lillian G. Warren's 1921 improved 'Garter' claims that this invention can, at once, "hold the hose securely in place without danger of unduly binding on the user's leg or interfering with the blood circulation" and "provide convenient means for safely storing money, jewelry or other valuable articles" (1921) (Fig. 6.27). In 1916, both Chicago's Edward V. Crouse and Kansas City's Robert E. Ward had already separately patented pocketed garters for men (Crouse 1916; Ward 1916) (Fig. 6.28, 6.29).

In the press, already in 1906, the 'Woman's Section' of *The Minneapolis Journal* would recommend a garter with safety pocket as a handmade gift for "the woman who for one reason or another is accustomed to carrying large sums of money or pieces of jewelry" (1906, p.41). On the 1st of December, 1911, *Vogue* too would list a series of ideas for handmade Christmas presents, once again ostensibly inspired by what was being sold in the shops in Paris. Among them:

> A jewel bag that fastens securely to the round garter … in the form of an envelope with a flap at the top … is attached firmly to the garter by means of loops of satin ribbon (1911, p.86)

Might it not be precisely because it could be equipped with a bag or pocket of this kind, that the following year *Vogue* would deem the round garter capable of granting the wearer a "greater sense of freedom" (1912, p.98) than suspenders ever could? In 1914, a few months after the tango garters, *The Day Book* informs its readers that another novelty garter, "the gold-clasped garter, with the 'week-end' bag" which is illustrated as a pouch stuck to the wearer's calf, "has become very popular". This, too, originates in Paris (1914b, p.15) (Fig. 6.30). Whereas by 1917, *Harper's Bazaar* can reassure its readers that "[t]he problem of the age, where to carry one's powder-puff, is solved by this pink, blue, or lavender-silk garter, with powder-puff case lined with white rubberized nainsook attached" (1917, p.108) (Fig. 6.31). Was this *Harper's Bazaar*'s attempt to promote a pocketed garter with a prescribed function and pre-approved contents? Perhaps, but "even if something is shaped around what it is for, that is not the end of the story … what happens to those things is not fully decided by what they are for" (Ahmed 2019, p.24), because "what something is for is a partial account of what it can be" (p.35). Or in the words of Bruce Braun and Sarah Whatmore "[f]ar from deterministic, technological artifacts temporalize, opening us to a future that we cannot fully appropriate" (2010, p.xxi). A powder puff may remind a woman of her sexual difference, might instruct her, even, to take pride in it. Yet when a powder-puff case is attached to a garter, and when that garter is worn by a shoplifter, it should not have been difficult

to swap that powder puff for a stolen “gold chain, a pair of sleeve buttons on a card” (*Eagle River Review* 1892, p.7), or “a watch or a bracelet” (*Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* 1907, p.13). As a consumer of the garter with powder-puff case attached, the shoplifter who did this would have been doing “other things with the same thing” and going “beyond the limits that the determinants of the object set on its utilization” (De Certeau 1988, p.98).

6.8 Pocket Garter, 1913

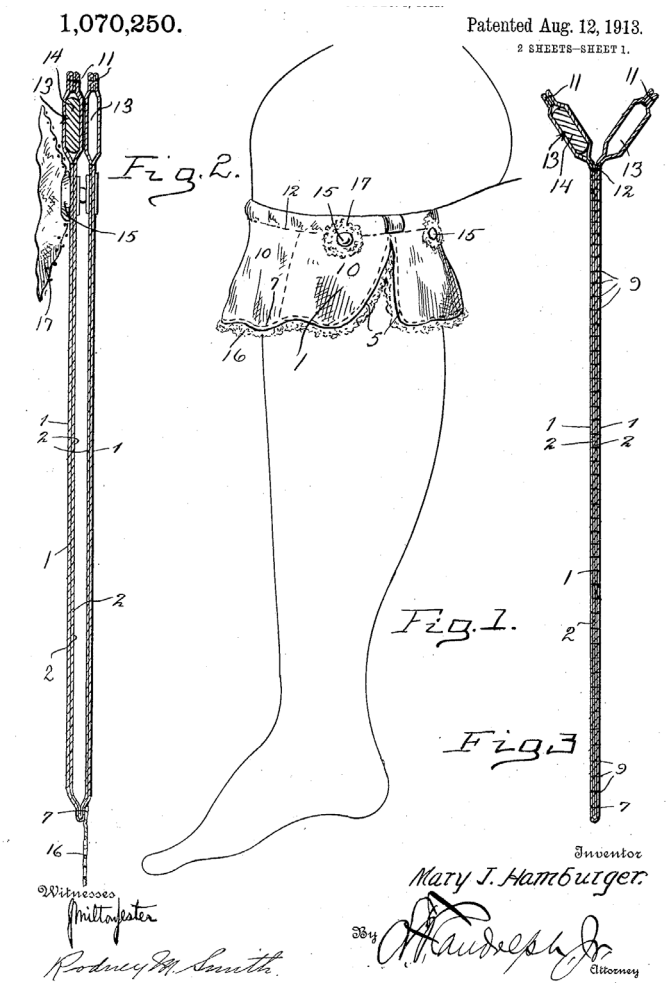


Fig. 6.32: Mary J. Hamburger’s ‘Pocket Garter’, US1070250, 1913.

I want to consider a ‘Pocket Garter’ patented in the United States in 1913, by Mary J. Hamburger (Fig. 6.32). Its “extremely simple construction” is presented as the defining feature of Hamburger’s invention, but the patent uses complex language to introduce both the invention itself and the accompanying drawings, that are described, for example, as “transverse sectional views taken upon [specific, numbered] planes” (1913). Although all patents are written formally, and a text from over a century ago might seem more flowery when read today than it would have intended to be in its time, more explanations are possible for the language in Hamburger’s patent, that pertain to

her invention and her case specifically. First, if the technology is as simple as it promises to be, complex language might be intentionally chosen to limit the reproducibility of Hamburger's own intellectual property (Hemmungs Wirtén 2019). It might also complicate it just enough to deem it acceptable as an invention, and worthy of a patent at all, while simplicity remains its unique selling point. But the choice of complex language also gives legitimacy to Hamburger herself, as a female inventor at a time when female inventors are a minority, even while the optional strips of lace she proposes – to edge the pocketed garter, and to encircle the heads of the also optional fasteners (Fig. 6.33) – stress the femininity of her invention, and of its inventor by proxy. And if Hamburger as a patentee can be a woman in business without renouncing her femininity, then her feminine but practical invention may want to reassure potential customers that they can do it too. This would not have been obvious at a time when the women who fought for the right to vote were often mocked for their supposed masculinity (Felski 1995), and the adoption on part of some women of selected items of dress that would have traditionally been considered menswear, worried the advocates of clearly defined gender roles (Crane 1999; Myers 2014). Even the chatelaine, despite the fact that it had renounced the privacy that women's pockets had afforded to them, happened to be criticised for its morphology, as a dangling, protruding appendance that was "threatening, for some watchers of women in public, to unwoman women" due to its associations with the "master organ" (Matthews 2010 p.575-6). Hamburger's garter, with its strips of lace, might have wanted to persuade potential customers that they could participate in the marketplace, by way of their pockets, without being women any less for it. That it was not unwomanly to have pockets – in garters or elsewhere – and to use them to buy – especially if they were used to buy Hamburger's pocketed garters. If this is the message that Hamburger's invention wanted to send, it is no less significant for being self-serving. Indeed, what her pocketed garter openly wanted to do was "to generally improve articles of this nature, to render them more convenient, attractive and desirable," and if optional strips of lace could "add to the attractiveness of the article," Hamburger's garter would resort to them (Hamburger 1913).

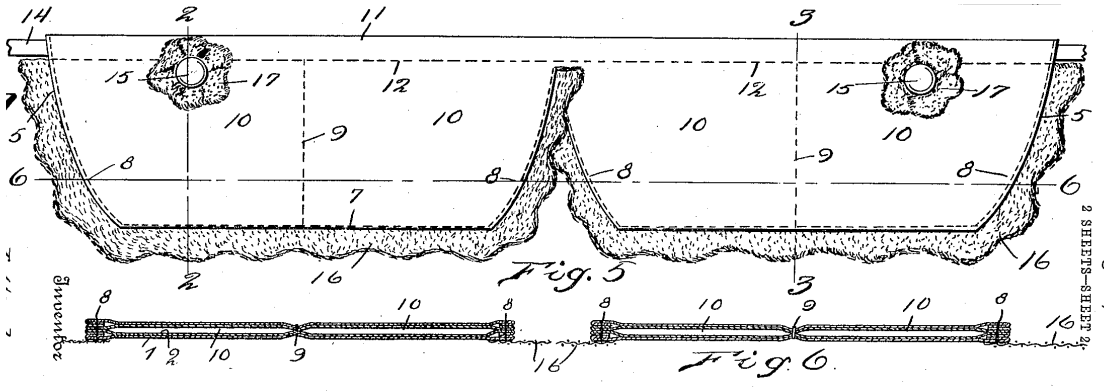


Fig. 6.33: A "side elevation" of Hamburger's invention, showing the optional lace trims at the pockets' edge and around the fasteners. US1070250, 1913.

Fig. 6.34 (top): Small pockets in the making, for my first performative replica of Mary J. Hamburger's 'Pocket Garter'.
Fig. 6.35 (bottom): A first performative replica of Hamburger's 'Pocket Garter', worn below the knee.

In making a performative replica of Hamburger's pocketed garter, I hoped to assess whether this invention, or a pocketed garter of this kind, would have provided the wearer with a space of privacy, from which valuables would have been unlikely to fall off, but could be retrieved easily if the shoplifter who might have worn this or a similar invention needed to abandon the evidence of her theft. Because I would not be selling it to female consumer citizens in the early 20th century, I did not need my performative replica of Hamburger's invention to be reassuring or persuasive in appearance – so I decided against the optional lace trims. Hamburger's patent does not specify which fabric to use, but one of the advantages of her invention over similar ones is that it is "cheap to make," and "may be formed from a single piece of material" (1913). I decided to use calico, which is relatively cheap as well as being sturdy. Calico is also a quite forgiving fabric, that lends

itself to unstitching and restitching if mistakes are made. To make my performative replica I enlarged the pattern provided in Hamburger's patent to fit my leg's measurements, and as I did this it quickly became clear that my previous reflections might have been rushed: Hamburger's invention may have wanted to reassure potential customers that pockets could be feminine, and participation in the marketplace a woman's activity – yet its pockets were actually really small (Fig. 6.34). When it was ready to be worn, I could fit in it no more than a match, a hairpin and two coins. Hamburger's invention adheres to the wearer's leg by way of a strip of elastic housed into a compartment sewn between the pocketed garter's external fabric and its lining, but I tied my first performative replica on with a string, the way that garters were tied before the introduction of elastic. I found it safe enough, and not particularly constrictive of my blood flow (Fig. 6.35). Granted, I was not using it to hold up my stockings – so perhaps it did not need to be as tightly tied as it would have needed to be at the time, if the wearer wanted it to serve both functions. What interested me here was not to test the efficiency of elastic garters as a way to hold up stockings, but the quality of pocketed garters as receptacles.

I decided to make a second performative replica of Hamburger's pocketed garter, in linen lined with muslin this time. Linen shares some of the properties that I valued in calico – its sturdiness and forgiveness – but affords the end result a more finished feel. I also wanted to experiment with two different fabrics for the outside of the garter's pockets and their inside, and muslin is a sheer, more delicate fabric, which reminded me of lingerie. For this new version, I modified Hamburger's pattern to allow extra space for a "strong, stiff elastic": both because she intended for her invention to be worn with one, and because that is how many of the shoplifters' garters I encountered in newspaper archives supposedly adhered to the legs of the shoplifters who wore them – both the ones under whose elastics stolen items were thrust, and at least some of those provided with hooks (*The Wichita Daily Eagle* 1902, p.21; *Eagle River Review* 1892). The addition of the elastic, and of slightly larger seam allowances, resulted in bigger pockets on my second performative replica of Hamburger's invention: as deep as my forefinger rather than just my thumb. I could fit in them my student card, key, a plaster, and a lip balm in a round tin (Fig. 6.36). These contents felt even safer, yet were slightly more difficult to reach for when the garter was worn, than those I put in the smaller pockets of the string-tied version. At the same time, the elasticated round garter was looser than the tie-on garter, suggesting that I should have cut the elastic tighter if I had wanted these garters to actually hold up stocking – or if I had wanted to experience the "impeded circulation" that tight garters were notoriously responsible for (Bowman 1880).

On the one hand, pocketed garters might have hoped to appeal, by way of strips of lace if necessary, to those women who might be persuaded to shop for pleasure in the consumer societies of the 1910s, and who would generate profit for their inventors by doing so. On the other hand, the making and wearing of two performative replicas of Hamburger's invention suggest that

pocketed garters of this kind would only have afforded to the women who wore them limited freedom to do so. If pockets are “civilization’s artificial way of naturalizing the body for the marketplace and the overall social endeavor” (Matthews 2010, p.586), then the proportions of Hamburger’s invention, and presumably of many similar ones, indicate that women’s participation in the marketplace, and therefore their access to citizenship by way of consumption, was still restricted in practice. This example illustrates Barbara Burman’s observation that, in the late 19th century at least, “the frustrations and limitations of women’s access to money and ownership of property were neatly mirrored in the restricted scope of their pockets” (Burman 2002, p.458-9). Myers’ argument, that small pockets could still threaten patriarchal privileges for their symbolic associations even if they were not functional (2014), does not apply to pockets hidden behind layers of skirts. In fact, it could be argued that compared to “the practice of inserting jewels and other valuable articles in the stocking” which was apparently “prevalent” in the early years of the 20th century (Geissler 1909), the pocketed garter made for an even more shallow receptacle. Moreover, if adaptations were made to make it less shallow, the wearer would no longer have had those valuables within easy reach, which might have been her only reason for choosing a pocketed garter over her stocking as a receptacle.

In the early 20th century, it is seen as “very amusing” when her attire poses an obstacle to a woman’s wish to shop (*Los Angeles Herald* 1892, p.9). But if not quite “large sums of money” (*The Minneapolis Journal* 1906, p.41), small but valuable objects could still have been held safe and secure in pocketed garters, if the purpose of these garters is posited as other than their wearers’ participation in the marketplace as consumer citizens. Shopping requires not just a place to keep one’s purchases, but a place to keep currency “which overdraws the cash they have in sight” as well as any eventual change (*Los Angeles Herald* 1892, p.9). It is easier to imagine how sartorial technologies of this kind might have contributed to the practice of a ‘penny weighter’: the shoplifter who specialised in jewellery stores (Davies 2021). Someone like Betty Amann’s character in the film *Asphalt*, who steals a diamond using the hollow tip of her umbrella, might have had better luck if she had been wearing pocketed garters (May 1929). Of course there might be other reasons – “one reason or another” (*The Minneapolis Journal* 1906, p.41) – beside their having stolen them, for women in the early 20th century to carry around “precious stones” (Morling 1912), or wear a ring not on their finger but in a pocketed garter. But it is also reasonable to speculate that if they did steal that ring or diamond or those precious stones, a tried and tested pocketed garter would have been judged a suitable receptacle to keep them safe and secure, not at risk of sliding off from hooks and not interfering with the wearer’s movement, while still within easy reach if she suspected that her theft had been observed and wanted to get rid of the evidence. In 1891, *The Sun* introduces its readers to the shoplifter’s garter with hooks by writing that “queer garters they are” (1891, p.26): I stencilled these words on my performative replicas of Hamburger’s invention (Fig. 6.37), to suggest that pocketed garters of this kind might have lent themselves to a queer

use (Ahmed 2019). That in the late 19th and early 20th century, the same pocketed garters which might have been designed to appeal to those women who could afford to become consumer citizens, but that also challenged their ability to do so for their pockets' size, by virtue of their affordances might not only have allowed, but also have encouraged her to steal something small and valuable instead. That when further restrictions were posed to her claim to a citizenship whose limitations were already apparent, the pocketed garter, as material participation (Marres 2015), might have persuaded its wearer to claim citizenship, but from below (Sheller 2012).

Fig. 6.36 (top): A modified pattern allows for slightly bigger pockets, on a second performative replica of Mary J. Hamburger's 'Pocket Garter'.
Fig. 6.37 (bottom): Queer Garters.

Conclusion to Chapter Six

I started this chapter on the role that the shoplifter's garter might have played in her practice at the turn of the 20th century, by taking into account that this was a time of transition in the history of women's garters as a whole. If in the second half of the 19th century a woman's garter was an undergarment commonly made out of rubber, whose function was to hold up her stocking, in the late 19th century rational dress advocates popularised suspenders for women. Comprised of an elastic strap vertically stretched from the top of the wearer's stocking to the edge of her corset, a suspender, or supporter, endeavoured to replace the horizontal garter and resolve the longstanding issue of its constricting nature. Gentlemen's garters, which were being introduced at around the same time and often referred to as sock suspenders or supporters themselves, would eventually have to face the same design fault. As evidence of this widespread discomfort, I considered the numerous patents in the POP dataset addressing the issue. Still, the horizontal garter would become fashionable in womenswear once again in the 1910s, when the corset as a whole was being abandoned in favour of the elasticated girdle. As much as discomfort or technological innovation, I observed that changes in fashion are likely to have had an impact on these successions, in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In order to constitute themselves as social subjects in consumer societies (M. L. Roberts 1998; Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017), the women who could afford to were tasked with shopping for more than just what was needed. There were some women, however, who opted not to buy their way into consumer citizenship, whether or not they could have afforded to. They constituted themselves as social subjects otherwise: by stealing, rather than buying, the latest garters, suspenders or girdles, or whatever else they desired.

A time-honoured shoplifting method, already in the 19th century, was for a woman to allude to the fact that her garter had dropped. From my research in British and American newspaper archives, I understood that this would embarrass a male shop assistant enough that he would give her privacy, and even provide her with tape or some silk braid, supposedly to hold up her stocking where her garter had failed to do so. The shoplifter would then use that tape or silk braid to tie as much as an entire dress under the hoops of her skirt (*The Leeds Intelligencer* 1863). The technique did not disappear when hoops went out of fashion, but the shoplifter's garter, whose drop was only alluded to, itself became the means to secure and carry anything that the wearer could thrust under its tight elastic band (*The Sun* 1891). In defiance of its intended purpose, which was to hold up the wearer's stocking, the horizontal garter could become an accomplice to her crime. Of course, compared to the skirt or even to the sleeve as shoplifting technologies, the shoplifter's garter had self-evident limitations. I noted that the shoplifter relying on this method would have had to consider carefully the weight and size of what she endeavoured to steal – but she would also have been able to steal it more quickly than she would have been able to tie a dress under

her hoop skirt. “Nothing could be worse for riding or walking than tight garters” wrote Robins Pennell in 1887 (1887, p.679). As it turns out however, garters were ideal for stealing small objects, precisely for their being so tight. If the suspenders which Pennell and many others favoured were never able to fully eradicate the horizontal garter, it cannot be ruled out that this unforeseen expediency might have been at least partly responsible for its persistence.

It is because it would draw attention to a woman’s leg, a bodily site of seduction which was rarely spoken of in Victorian times, that the shoplifter’s allusion to drop of her garter was recognised as a reliable way to distract or embarrass a salesman in the late 19th century. Ruth Lister writes that the cause of women’s historical exclusion from citizenship has been their identification “with the body, nature and sexuality” and in turn, the body’s “association with the female … who then symbolised all that citizenship had to transcend” (2003, p.72). I proposed that if women’s shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century is posited as a feminist act of citizenship, and if it is understood that it could be facilitated by the distraction or embarrassment of a salesman, which in itself could be caused by the shoplifter’s allusion to the drop of her garter that would draw attention to her leg, it should then be possible to conclude that at the turn of the 20th century women could claim citizenship not by transcending their body and sexuality in the way that men had deemed necessary to do, but precisely by means of them. By being “irrevocably grounded in the intimate domains of bodily practice” (Sheller 2012, p.25) the shoplifter’s act of citizenship does not “speak the language of the state” (p.34) but refutes its disembodied foundations.

Changes in fashion at this time also had an impact on the shoplifter’s clothes. From an analysis of selected newspaper reports, I concluded that it was in part as an alternative to the shoplifter’s skirt as fashions got tighter, that the shoplifter’s garter with hooks, what eventually came to be known as a “chatelaine garter” (*Leicester Daily Post* 1913 p.8; *Kalgoorlie Miner* 1913 p.1), emerged in New York and was popularised between 1882 and 1915. Unlike the horizontal garter, a pre-existing technology which lent itself to shoplifting by virtue of its tightness, the shoplifter’s garter with hooks was designed specifically to facilitate women’s stealing. But this does not mean that it came out of nowhere. The making and wearing of three performative replicas of a sock suspender for men patented in 1900 by American inventor Otto H. Hake, suggest that the performative flexibility (Marres 2015) of inventions of this kind, which were necessarily prehensile, would have best served a shoplifter’s ill intentions. It suggests, moreover, that a re-appropriated man’s garter could be conceived as a middle stage between a shoplifter’s misuse of a conventional rubber garter, and the shoplifter’s garter with hooks as a sartorial technology in its own right. A middle stage, even, between the consumer citizen (Bowlby 2010; Cohen 2017) and the citizen from below (Sheller 2012), because by virtue of the affordances associated with it, this invention might have encouraged its wearer’s shoplifting. From an analysis of newspaper reports, I observed that in the early 20th century, the shoplifter’s garter with hooks was exported to the United Kingdom,

where it is said to have been swiftly adopted by local shoplifters. Eventually, it was its fame that led to the chatelaine garter's demise. Indeed, as much as they must adapt to changes in fashion, the shoplifter's clothes ought to keep up with their own cycle of adoption, popularity and abandonment. When a particular technology is too often mentioned in newspaper articles about the most common shoplifting techniques, the experienced shoplifter knows that it's time to move on to something new.

While the women who could afford to might constitute themselves as social subject by way of their purchases, mainstream fashion did not make it easy for them. As if to reinstate their financial dependence on men, pockets in fashionable womenswear remained as small at the turn of the 20th century as they had been throughout the 19th century (Burman 2002; Matthews 2010). I considered how the persistent disavowal of capacious pockets had led to the appearance of smaller and less visible ones – including the pocket on a garter. Several pocketed garters were invented and patented in the early 20th century, in both the United States and the United Kingdom (Scott 1905; Geissler 1909; Charles and Munro 1909; Morling 1912; Hamburger 1913; Crouse 1916; Ward 1916; Careless 1918; Warren 1921), and fashion magazines apparently approved of them. The making and wearing of two performative replicas of a 'Pocket Garter' patented by Mary J. Hamburger in 1913, however, reveal how small pockets would have had to be to fit on a garter. The women who relied on them to participate in the consumer societies of the 1910s while still abiding to 19th-century fashionable codes, would have been able to do so only in a limited capacity. But by virtue of the affordances associated with it, I argued that a pocketed garter of this kind might have facilitated, or even persuaded a woman to steal. I could find no record of a pocketed garter ever having been worn to shoplift, but just like the sock suspender, this does not necessarily mean that it never was. It only means that if it was, the shoplifter who wore it was likely never caught, or did not get arrested – or still was able, somehow, to escape the archives. Of course, if it was ever worn by a shoplifter, Hamburger's invention or an invention similar to her 'Pocket Garter', would also have allowed her to secure and carry only treasures even smaller than those that she could have carried by thrusting them under her garter's elastic band, or those that she could have hung from garters with hooks. But unlike the chatelaine garter which would have let them dangle, the pocketed garter could have been trusted to keep its limited contents secret, and not to affect the shoplifter's walk in a way that might give her practice away to store detectives. Unlike the practice of thrusting them into her stocking, if its pockets were shallow, the pocketed garter would have allowed the shoplifter to more easily retrieve the stolen goods and abandon the evidence if she suspected that her theft had been observed. Unlike a hook or an elastic band from which stolen goods could be hung like "clothes on a line" (*The Sun* 1891, p.26; *Eagle River Review* 1892, p.7), a pocket would also have prevented them from sliding off if she walked too quickly.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the shoplifter's garter – with an elastic band or with hooks, and perhaps with pockets – would have secured, hid and held the small-sized objects she stole, and when it was said or implied that it might have dropped, the shoplifter's garter could gain its wearer both privacy and time to steal unsupervised. In this chapter I proposed that the shoplifter's garter enabled or even encouraged her claim to a citizenship beyond the limitations of that which was offered only to the women who could afford it in exchange for their lawful purchases, and that the fact that it might have facilitated her claim by drawing attention to the shoplifter's leg as a bodily site of seduction, further challenges the foundations of women's exclusion from citizenship, as well as the disembodied citizen as an ideal. By following the shoplifter's garter across time and space, at the turn of the 20th century in the consumer societies of the United States and the United Kingdom – as well as France that often comes up, possibly as a scapegoat, in the shoplifting stories published at this time in British and American newspapers – I sought in this chapter to demonstrate the key role that garters might have played to support women's shoplifting as much as their stockings.

In the next chapter, I will revisit my findings from Chapter Four, Five, and Six, to formulate the answers to the research questions I posed at the beginning of this thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

Over the course of this thesis, I have attempted to answer two research questions on the subject of women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century. The first asks whether this practice may be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, the second considers the role that the shoplifter's clothes, as sartorial technologies, might have played in it. The first research question follows and builds upon the work of feminist scholars who, mostly in the 1990s, reinterpreted the kleptomania epidemic as a subversive practice. The question aims to contextualise this practice in relation to the major changes to women's citizenship that were underway at the turn of the 20th century, drawing in the process from texts that understand citizenship as a practice rather than just a status, performed through acts that might be neither grandiose, lawful, nor deliberate, and may not aim for political recognition. The second research question is informed by what I have referred to as the interdisciplinary Object Turn, which concerns the role that nonhuman objects can play in relational networks, and the political implications of distributed agency. When these implications are considered with respect to women's shoplifting as a relational network, and specifically with respect to the sartorial technologies that shoplifters might have worn in the late 19th and early 20th century, the first and second research questions are brought together.

I sought to address these questions by means of three key methods: archival research in newspaper archives, archival research in patent archives, and the making and wearing of performative replicas of selected clothing inventions patented at the turn of the 20th century. With the first method I gathered a collection of articles, published at the time, which describe the sartorial technologies that female shoplifters supposedly wore during the years of the kleptomania epidemic. I called this collection an archive of failures, because for the newspapers to write about them, the shoplifters who might have worn these sartorial technologies would have had to have got caught. With the second method I gathered a selection of patents for clothing inventions, issued at the time, which resemble in either their instructions or their technical drawings, improved versions of the sartorial technologies discussed in newspapers. This helped me to imagine the sartorial technologies that successful shoplifters might have worn. Misuse Theories, and the concept of material participation became particularly relevant as my research progressed, to consider how shoplifters might have adopted and adapted clothing inventions not originally designed for stealing, and how these sartorial technologies might have contributed to their practice as a feminist act of citizenship. With the third method I sought to ground my speculative reflections in embodied experience, which at times challenged, at times expanded my understanding of the

role that specific sartorial technologies might have played in women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Over the past three chapters, I researched specifically the shoplifter's skirt, the shoplifter's sleeve, and the shoplifter's garter. I examined various iterations of these sartorial technologies between 1880 and 1920, considered how they adapted to changing fashions, but also how they followed their own cycle of popularity and abandonment. Their diffusion was frequently international. I focused in particular on the United Kingdom and the United States, but also on France since French news was often reported upon in anglophone newspapers, and French fashions regularly inspired international trends. Throughout this thesis, I sought to situate women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century in the wider political and sociocultural landscape of these emerging consumer societies, where middle-class women were ever more frequently leaving the domestic realm behind to populate instead the public sphere: in the workforce, at women's clubs, engaged in outdoor sports, and most notably in the new department stores. Technological innovation had introduced new materials, like vulcanised rubber, into the clothing industry, and numerous clothing inventions were being patented that sought to adapt the typically constrictive silhouettes of Victorian womenswear to women's changing lifestyle. But at the same time as the women who could afford to were invited, if not encouraged, to shop for pleasure and support this way their nations' economies, their increased public presence, perceived as a threat to conservative values, was also frowned upon. This disapproval extended to the clothes, or clothing inventions, that were most obviously intended to facilitate women's foray into public life, such as the integrated pockets that the New Woman favoured.

It was in the background of these opposing attitudes of encouragement and disapproval, in the new department stores which were hiring female detectives to prevent it, that women's shoplifting was perceived to have prospered to the levels of an epidemic. Whether accurate or not, the numerous newspaper reports on shoplifting devices (*Eagle River Review* 1892), tricks (*The Topeka State Journal* 1895b; *The Wichita Daily Eagle* 1902), ways (*The Savannah Morning News* 1903), methods (*Daily Mirror* 1904; *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 1907; *Leicester Daily Post* 1913) or wiles (*The Illustrated London News* 1906), would have played a key role in the dissemination of this perception, and I have argued that they might have similarly contributed to the dissemination and improvement of the sartorial technologies that they discuss. Shoplifters are as unlikely to have worn visible integrated pockets as they are the bifurcated pants or bloomers that dress reformists advocated for. But over the past three chapters I have noted how both uncomfortable, constricting fashions, and the inventions that sought to address their drawbacks without changing too noticeably their outward appearance, could assist shoplifters as more than just disguises – as skirts, sleeves and garters that by virtue of their material and technical affordances, might lend themselves to the purpose of stealing.

In this final chapter, I will consider individually my two research questions, and attempt to formulate answers for both of them as I review and reflect over the next two sections, on what I have learnt, what I could not learn, and what I have proposed over the course of this thesis. To do this I will refer to, expand upon, and draw connections between existing scholarship, my own empirical findings, and the analyses I conducted and arguments I made in previous chapters. In the last section I will consider how I could have approached this subject differently, and clarify my reasons, and the advantages, of approaching it the way I did. I will reflect on the contribution that I believe this thesis has made to the literatures at the intersection of which my research questions emerged, and on the politics of speculative research.

7.1 Women's Shoplifting as a Feminist Act of Citizenship

I wrote above that major changes to women's citizenship were underway at the turn of the 20th century. To address my first research question, it will be helpful to revisit the two key reasons why in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as France, this point in time may be considered a milestone in the history of women's citizenship. First, this is because in the new department stores, by virtue of their spending power, middle-class white women were finally being recognised as public subjects. It is important to note that this is not just a conclusion that historians have come to with hindsight. Women were becoming increasingly aware at the time, of the role that they could play as shoppers in the new consumer society. A lecture by Laura Drake Gill, the dean of Barnard College in New York, is quoted in a 1905 article in *Harper's Bazaar* titled 'The Economics of Shopping':

> "Women must learn," she asserted, "that their economic function is the expenditure of money … They must be taught that expenditure of money is their profession. They must make it a science, not a mania." A mania it certainly becomes, in many cases … The science of spending money needs study by most of us; and the more we have to spend the more responsibility we have for spending it wisely … Women are the distributers of wealth. (1905, p.589)

Yet throughout this thesis I sought to draw attention to the limitations of consumer citizenship at this time. The kind of citizenship – or 'responsibility' – that only some women could experience at the turn of the 20th century was temporal, transactional, and exclusive, not just to middle-class white women but to the middle-class white women whose husbands' allowance was generous enough for them to partake in it (*Iowa County Democrat* 1891; *Vogue: New York* 1905; Cohen 2017). When "the constitution of the self as a social subject, a 'citizen of consumer society,' depends on the acquisition of appropriate objects … The sign is thus prerequisite to the personal identity it appears just to confirm rather than to confer" (Bowlby 2010, p.26). At the same time, and

not unrelated to these limitations, the 20th century was a turning point in the history of women's citizenship also because the suffrage movement was fighting internationally for women's right to vote. The figure of the consumer citizen and that of the suffragist or suffragette, who was also usually a middle-class, most often white woman (Felski 1995) (Fig. 7.1), can be seen to overlap in several ways. In the United States, for instance, women's consumer citizenship was all the more exclusive because shopping was subject to extensive tariffs, which would only be reformed when women earned the right to vote against them (Cohen 2017; Abdul-Jabbar 2017). In the United Kingdom meanwhile, "the suffragette movement … was to actively deploy practices associated with modern consumption to reconstitute the political" (Parkins 2002, p.99). While some women might have taken pride in their role as 'distributers of wealth', the events of March 1st 1912, when fashionably dressed suffragettes from the WSPU smashed the windows of around 400 shops in London's West End (Rappaport 2000; Parkins 2002), could be interpreted as indicative of what must have been the frustrations of others, with the inadequacy of consumer citizenship at this time.

Fig. 7.1: With some key exceptions. The photograph in the playing card on the left, from a *Votes for Women* set, shows Indian suffragists marching in London in 1911. From my collection. On the right, Chinese-American suffragist Dr. Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, who, at 16, rode a white horse leading the suffrage parade up New York's Fifth Avenue, in 1912. Via *The New York Times* (2020).

A comparison with a feminist act of citizenship of this kind might be helpful to contextualise the answer to my first research question, and to clarify what I mean when I argue that women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century can be understood as a feminist act of citizenship.

Not only were many of the shoplifters I have encountered over the course of this thesis also fashionably dressed, presumably white women stealing from stores in the very same neighbourhood where the British suffragettes carried out their window-smashing campaign in 1912. My research on the sartorial technologies that they might have worn at this time, testifies to the fact that their thefts were also often carefully planned, at times with accomplices. But even when they were not, even when an impulsive shoplifter took advantage of the combined affordances of her clothes, of a department store's layout, and of a sales assistant occupied elsewhere, I have come to argue that her theft too can be understood as a feminist act of citizenship, because it refutes the exchange which is the foundation of consumer citizenship in the very space, the store, where it ought to take place. The fashionably-dressed suffragette's smashing of shop windows might likewise be interpreted to negate the economic exchange as women's only viable path into the citizenry in the early 20th century. And yet while both have, if successful, an immediate effect, which is the economic damage they cause to the stores they target, women's shoplifting appears fundamentally different from this feminist act of citizenship, in that the suffragette has a long-term goal, which is political inclusion, while the shoplifter might not have one – not consciously, or not at all. In the early 20th century, the suffragettes cannot express their dissent lawfully, because politics does not recognise women as anything other than shoppers. They "barely fall beneath its shadow," not unlike those rioters who would smash shop windows in London nearly exactly a century later. Never acknowledged as political subjects before, it is only because their actions sidestep "the mediation of citizenship and representation" that they are noticed at all (Williams 2011). Like those rioters, and as rioters, the suffragettes want to be seen. But shoplifters do not. In fact, the condition of possibility of any successful shoplifting is for it to not be noticed at all.

The suffragettes smash windows in the name of something, but the motivations of female shoplifters at the turn of the 20th century cannot be known on the basis of the reports of their thefts in anglophone newspaper archives. The feminist scholars whose work I reviewed in Chapter Two, drew attention to how often at the time, but occasionally as far back as the early 19th century, the wealthy female shoplifter was portrayed in the media as a victim of manufactured temptations in the marketplace. "The perception of the shoplifting lady as victim" writes Adela Pinch, "masks and enables her privilege to imagine herself entitled to a luxury beyond price" (1998, p.130). Yet Pinch's depiction of the shoplifting lady as entitled, is no less Pinch's depiction than her contemporaries' perception of the same woman as victim is her contemporaries' perception. This is inevitable when the voices of shoplifters themselves, beyond their declarations of innocence or pleas for mercy, are missing from the archives. Indeed, when a wide enough timeline is considered, it is possible to identify, in retrospect, how portrayals of female shoplifters in the media have changed as the political landscape did. Already in 1920, still writing about the kleptomania epidemic, *The New-York Tribune* reports that "[s]ome say a curious breakdown in moral perceptions, due to Bolshevik tendencies which 'recognize no right of property,' and the

annihilation of ethical standards resulting from the war, is chiefly to blame" (1920, p.4). As I observe the extent to which particular political perspectives or interests might have influenced the way that newspapers wrote about women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, I must acknowledge that my understanding of these acts as feminist acts of citizenship is equally influenced by my own political views, and that a researcher with different political views might draw different conclusions from the same data. I am not, nor do I presume to be, an impartial observer (Haraway 1991). This is not to say that my conclusions are a rhetorical exercise. I do believe that when the kleptomania epidemic is revaluated, this should be done while taking into account women's civil and financial dependence on men at the turn of the 20th century, but also the foray into citizenship by way of consumption of those who could afford and were allowed to participate in the marketplace. It should be done while taking into account, moreover, the desires that department stores encouraged middle-class women to indulge in, the disapproval and anxieties that their "immersion in the mires of the economy" (Rappaport 2000, p.53) simultaneously gave rise to, and the prejudice of femininity as apolitical that the suffrage movement was fighting against. I believe that it is possible to read between the lines of newspaper reports, and read into these thefts a feminist act of citizenship against the limitations and inadequacy of consumer citizenship, even if the motivations of the actors who enacted them will remain unclear. I also believe, following Engin F. Isin, that the identification of an act of citizenship cannot depend on the researcher's understanding of the motivations of the one who enacted it, any more than on her understanding of the act itself (Isin 2008; Morrison 2008).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, in France, the United Kingdom or the United States, a shoplifter may well have stolen in self-interest, or for a sense of entitlement. Yet I have argued that her theft, and more than just her theft the sum of these individual acts, can still be understood as a citizenship practice. Whether premeditated or impulsive, stealing ignored, dismissed, or rejected the capitalist exchange, the same capitalist exchange that women's access to citizenship supposedly depended upon, and if successful it resulted in a loss of profit for the department store where it occurred. But if newspaper reports contributed to the dissemination and improvement of the sartorial technologies that shoplifters wore, then even when unsuccessful, and in fact perhaps especially when unsuccessful, a shoplifting act can be understood to have contributed to a shared and embodied citizenship practice. The cycle of popularity and abandonment of a particular sartorial technology might have sped up as a result of its widely reported failures, perhaps no less than in response to the changing fashions that the shoplifter's wardrobe would have had to keep up with, if she did not want to draw attention to herself in a department store. Or perhaps rather than abandoned, that particular sartorial technology might have improved as a result of its widely reported failures, beyond the point when it disappeared from newspaper reports. It is impossible to know whether or not those same reports might also have enabled the shoplifter who read them to perceive herself as part of a public – a shoplifting public – and perhaps to recognise in her thefts,

as I do now, a way to address, or even redress, woman's condition as a lesser citizen in the society she lived in, to recognise in them a citizenship practice which defied the principle that a woman's citizenship, unlike that of a white, propertied, heterosexual man, was not a given but had to be bought. But this impossibility does not detract from the argument I am making. I want to argue that women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century can be understood as a feminist act of citizenship beyond the motives "as like as peas" (*New-York Tribune* 1909) that the actor who enacted it might have had, or the ways that she might have rationalised her theft to herself, if she did at all. If we were to know them, the motivations of professional shoplifters like Ellen Darrigan or Mary Carr, and those of middle-class women like Clara Blennerhasset or Esther Benjamin, would probably have differed significantly. But their actions less so, the clothes they wore for their symbolic properties or as sartorial technologies less so, and it is their actions and their clothes, and the shoplifter as an actor in a network of human and nonhuman actors that I am most interested in (Fig. 7.2).

Further than a feminist act of citizenship however, after the formulation of Mimi Sheller, over the past three chapters I have described women's shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century as a feminist act of citizenship from below. Although Sheller does not confine its use to the context of her research on Caribbean history, and in fact specifies that the term could apply to the struggles of different "subaltern groups who exist 'below' the level of the citizen, as noncitizens or second-class citizens (i.e., the enslaved, foreign immigrants, women in many cases)" (2012, p.24), since that context is so different from the one of this thesis, I still want to clarify why I believe that this term applies to my subject. While I would argue that it is fair to describe women as a whole, at the turn of the 20th century, as lesser citizens than men with respect to their limited rights, certainly not all women were the same at this time. Their race and ethnicity, sexuality and class, as categories constituted and performed in social interaction (Puwar 2004; Sheller 2012), would have determined very different experiences of their limited rights, however much distinctions might have been blurring in the marketplace (Cohen 2017). But when I refer to the shoplifter at this time as a citizen from below, I do not mean this so much with respect to her identity or background, which beyond her gender, is difficult to pry from newspaper reports that may be vague or biased, of shoplifting acts in which disguises and performances often played a key role. I refer to the shoplifter as a citizen from below because she carries out, or aims to carry out at least, an act of citizenship from below: from below the radar, below the index of visibility. The shoplifter is a "parasite" (*Popular Science Monthly* 1916, p.648): she infiltrates the public sphere, and lurks in the shadows of politics. Unlike the suffragette who smashes windows because she wants to be seen, the shoplifter's theft is an act of citizenship from below because it is not veered towards inclusion, but rather aims "to dodge, escape, and trick the state" (Sheller 2012, p.34). Her theft is an act of citizenship from below, moreover, because it deploys knowledge from below: "the knowledge of the delinquent" (Foucault 2003, p.7), who is in fact as much an "inventor" (*Popular*

Science Monthly 1916, p.648) as she is a parasite. The knowledge that arises from the opportunities and material culture of her time, through trial and error, that is improvised and inventive, that spreads via word of mouth and evolves from the failures written about in biased and vague newspaper reports. Lastly, I refer to the shoplifter as a citizen from below, because while citizenship is always a bodily practice, and women's acts of citizenship in particular must challenge the disembodied ideal, her theft especially "alerts us to questions of embodiment, corporeality, and the 'vulgar'" (Sheller 2012, p.24), since the shoplifter makes frequent use of her femininity, and at times of allusions to her sexuality, to increase the chances of its success.

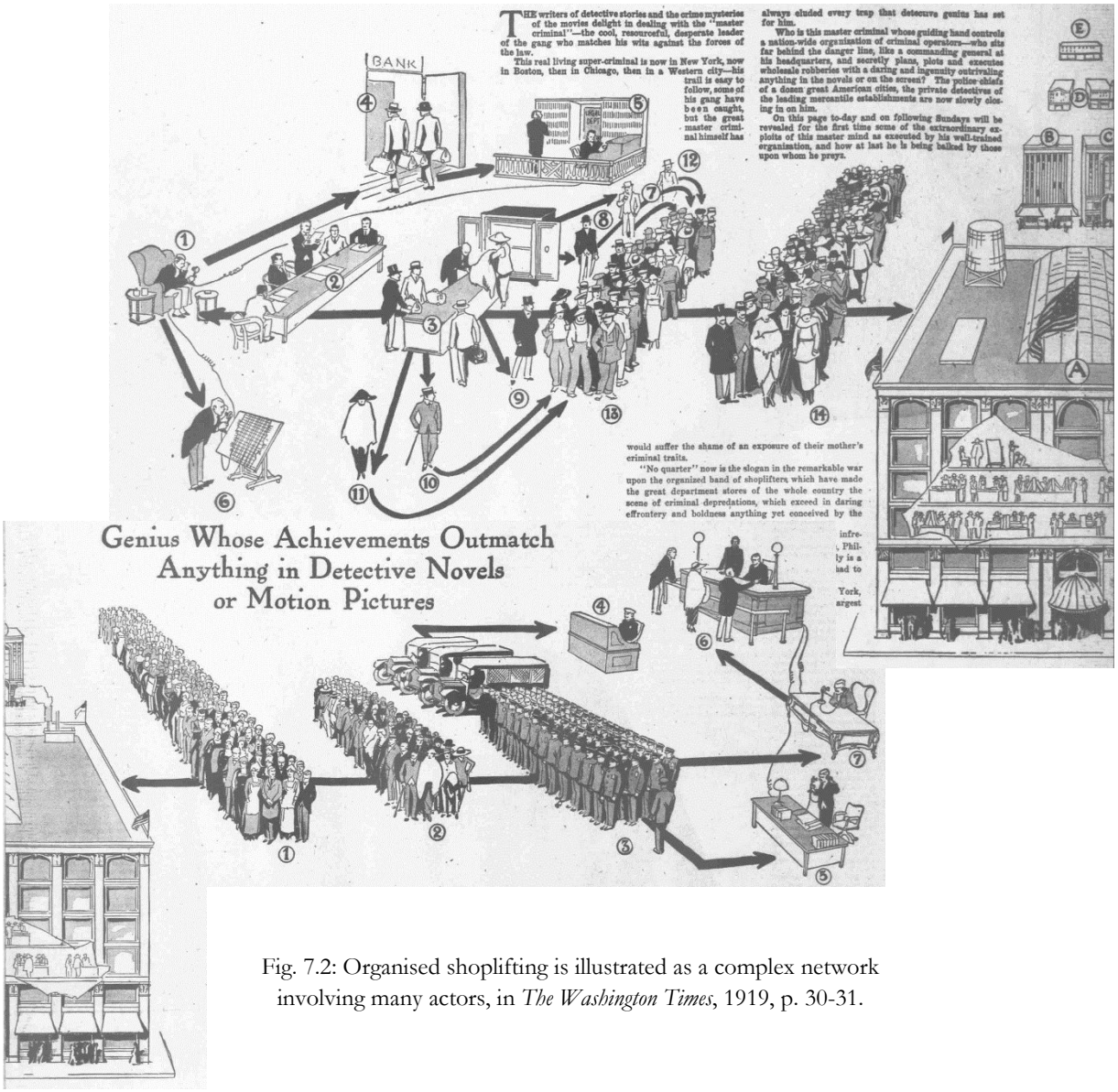


Fig. 7.2: Organised shoplifting is illustrated as a complex network involving many actors, in *The Washington Times*, 1919, p. 30-31.

Shoplifting has been defined, by either its critics or its defenders, as consumerism by other means (Williams 2011), or as consumerism taken too far (Camhi 1993; Pinch 1998; Gamman 1999). I

want to argue that if the shoplifters I have encountered over the course of my research can be considered consumers as well as a citizens, they are not to be considered consumer citizens who "follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created" (Isin 2008, p.38), who follow "the straight path, the right path" (Ahmed 2019, p.201) – but rather citizens from below, and consumers in de Certeau's understanding of the consumer, who "manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them" (1988, p.xiv). This evasion, which is shoplifting as "an act of economic evasion in response to an economy without just measure" (Camhi 1993, p.6), which is a feminist act of citizenship from below in a consumer society, is tactical in that it takes advantage of "the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them" (De Certeau 1988, p.37). And just like "poachers' pockets cleverly disguise illegal spoils at the small of the back" (Carlson 2023, p.8), women's shoplifting as a feminist act of citizenship from below is also enabled and performed by way of specific sartorial technologies (Marres 2015; Jungnickel 2021).

7.2 The Role of Sartorial Technologies

Unlike the purchases of the consumer citizen, women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century does not rely on a man's allowance, or return tariffs to the government. Unlike the suffragette's window-smashing, it does not aim for further inscription into the state order. As a feminist act of citizenship from below, in defiance of ethics and law, women's shoplifting challenges traditional conceptions of citizenship, property, and propriety. Yet as much as it is an act, shoplifting is a material network comprised of a woman, a department store, the objects she steals from it and the clothes she wears to do so. Throughout this thesis, I have focused specifically on the clothes that shoplifters might have worn to steal in the late 19th and early 20th century, and on how these might have contributed to their thefts. Clothes can contribute to a shoplifter's practice in two key ways: for their symbolic connotations, or as sartorial technologies. These are not mutually exclusive and in fact my research has shown that the same garment often aimed to do both, such as when a fashionable bustle or gigot sleeve doubled as a repository for stolen goods. Yet existing literature about women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century considers the role that clothes might have played in their practice primarily as symbols. It was in order to address this gap, that I decided to consider throughout this thesis how the shoplifter's clothes might have contributed to her practice in particular by virtue of their technical affordances. I decided to focus on the shoplifter's clothes as sartorial technologies in a material network.

To address my second research question, I have considered in detail over the past three chapters the role that shoplifters' skirts, sleeves, and garters, might have played as sartorial technologies in their wearers' thefts in the late 19th and early 20th century. I considered how skirts, sleeves, and garters which might not originally have been designed with shoplifting in mind, might have lent

themselves to this purpose: how they might have lent themselves to be misworn. Misuse Theories (De Certeau 1988; Akrich 1992; Wajcman 2004; Marres 2015; Ahmed 2019) proved especially useful to reflect, for example, on how the smaller and less visible pockets that the persistent disavowal of capacious pockets in womenswear had led to the appearance of – such as the sleeve's pocket for a lady's fan, but also the powder-puff pocket on a round garter (*Harper's Bazaar* 1917) – might have acted as shoplifters' accomplices, and repositories for stolen objects beyond the lawfully-acquired fans and powder puffs they were supposed to hold. This is not altogether a new perspective, and not something which should exclusively apply to the turn of the 20th century. Already in 1860, the golden age of the fashionable crinoline (Fig. 7.3), *Punch* had described this skirt style, which presumably had not been originally designed to facilitate theft, as "an incentive to bad conduct," particularly for kleptomaniacs:

> we forbid our wives and daughters to wear it when out shopping, for fear that it may tempt them to commit some act of theft. […] Some ladies have a monomania for thievery […] Having a commodious receptacle in reach, wherein they may deposit whatever they may sack, they are naturally tempted to indulge in their propensity. (1860, p.32)

But while not exclusive to this time in history, if "the potential to queer use might reside somewhere between our bodies and our worlds" (Ahmed 2019, p.201), over the past three chapters I have sought to show how, in the material network of a department store's crime scene in the late 19th or early 20th century, it might have resided in the shoplifter's clothes, as that threshold between the body and the world which a stolen object would have had to cross, before it could cross the threshold of the store. I approached the POP dataset and the patent archive on Espacenet through the lens of these Misuse Theories, in search of clothing inventions whose material and technical affordances, both those which their patents openly acknowledge and those that I became aware of only once I had made and worn performative replicas of those inventions, may have contributed to the practice of the shoplifter who might have misworn them – which, if successful, would have left no trace in newspaper archives.

When the unsuccessful shoplifting acts outlined in newspaper reports, and the successful shoplifting acts I envisioned when I analysed, made and wore performative replicas of clothing inventions from patent archives, are considered together, a few different modalities emerge for the shoplifter's clothes to have contributed to her practice as sartorial technologies. Over the past three chapters, the sartorial technologies I examined might have enabled, facilitated, or encouraged their wearers' stealing most frequently as *vessels*. From the hollow bustle or the gigot sleeve, to the repurposed knitting bags of 1917 and 1918, to the much smaller, but concealed, pockets in sleeves and garters, if the female shoplifter can be described as a "migratory storehouse" (Byrnes 1886, p.31), it is by virtue of the storage which her clothes afford her. While shoplifters might no longer have been wearing the capacious crinolines that *Punch* objected to in

1860, throughout the time period of my research newspapers still regularly write about the legendary proportions of various versions of the shoplifter's skirt. The making and wearing of performative replicas of a skirt protector, and of a sleeve with a slit or compartment for the hand of the wearer's companion, were suggestive of yet more concealed repositories that a shoplifter at the turn of the 20th century might have availed herself of. Other clothing inventions, meanwhile, might have contributed to her practice as *prehensile technologies* for the annexation of stolen goods. The making and wearing of performative replicas of a sleeve holder and of a sock suspender indicated how inventions of this kind, if they were ever misworn by a shoplifter, might have hold on to stolen objects beyond the sock and sleeve which they were designed to hold on to. I proposed that skirt lifters, too, might fit in this category. The internationally renowned chatelaine garter also belongs here, as does the shoplifting technology which comprised of a sleeve, an elastic and a catch, and which might or might not have been inspired by magicians' sleeves. But as well as sewn inside a shoplifter's sleeve, and bouncing back with a stolen item attached to it when she released it from her fingers, an elastic might also have contributed to her practice when tightly tied around her leg, in the shape of a round garter which could act as a *securing mechanism*. Its tightness, that ordinary wearers of round garters, both male and female, found so uncomfortable, was reportedly rather helpful to the shoplifter who wished to safely secure stolen goods between that elastic and her leg. As she did this, pretending to have dropped her garter could distract onlookers, and earn her precious privacy and time. Another sartorial technology which might have contributed to her practice as a *distraction*, was the sleeve stuffed with a false arm. Lastly, newspaper reports describe an arrangement of drawstrings in her skirt, which might have contributed to the practice of the shoplifter who was about to get caught, as a *fail-safe* that allowed her to get rid of the evidence. The making and wearing of performative replicas of a pocketed garter patented in the early 20th century, suggested that at least when compared to the option of hiding them in her stocking, an invention of this kind would also have allowed the shoplifter who might have misworn it, to keep the items she stole within reach, and therefore to get rid of them if necessary.

Overall, however, my research has shown that perhaps the most important quality which shoplifters might have been looking for in the sartorial technologies they miswore as vessels, prehensile technologies, securing mechanisms, distractions or fail-safes, was their invisibility. If not repurposing the folds and volumes of particular silhouettes that were fashionable at a given time, the sartorial technologies that they availed themselves of would have to have been discreet enough that they could hide within a bell sleeve, or under several layers of skirts. It was propitious then, that in order to appease traditional morals, women's pockets, perhaps the sartorial technologies which could most readily lend themselves to shoplifting, were still often dissimulated in their clothes at this time – but also, for example, that particular technical arrangements were being developed, for the bloomers some women wore while on bikes to turn into skirts when they

got off them. Shoplifters might have taken advantage of, and developed further, the secrecy and convertibility that in the late 19th and early 20th century, different styles of womenswear had already adjusted to accommodate. When women's shoplifting at the turn of the 20th century is understood as a material network comprised of both human and nonhuman actors, at the same time as it is understood as a feminist act of citizenship from below, which aims not to be seen, deploys improvised and inventive knowledge, and is "exercised in evolving everyday practices" (Sheller 2012 p.34), the sartorial technologies that by virtue of their technical affordances might enable, facilitate, or encourage their wearers' stealing at this time, may be recognised as examples of these evolving everyday practices. They may be recognised, by the same token, as technologies of material participation, that afford their wearers, who fall beneath the shadows of institutionalised politics, "a different way of doing politics with objects" (Marres 2015, p.xii), whether their stealing was politically motivated or not.

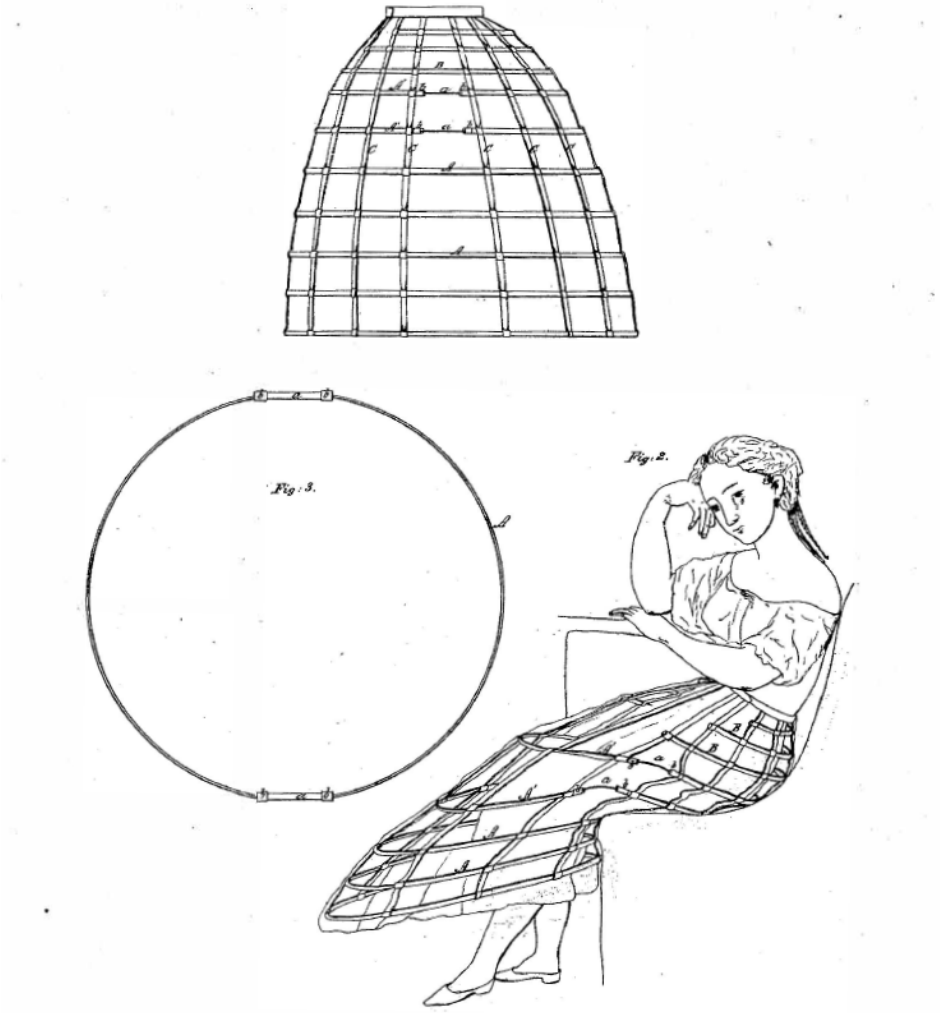


Fig. 7.3: A 'Hoop Skirt' patented by George Mallory in 1858, US21839A.

7.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Over the course of this thesis, I have approached the subject of women's shoplifting, both temporally and geographically, from a wide perspective. There are a number of reasons why I believe that such an approach was important – why I believe that this phenomenon ought to be understood not just as an act of citizenship and a material network, but as an act of citizenship and a material network in a broader context, over the course of four decades. This perspective drew attention to the impact of changing fashions on the sartorial technologies that shoplifters might have worn, whose international cycles of diffusion and abandonment would have followed those of particular silhouettes or trends, which usually originated in France. It also brought to light the ways that those sartorial technologies might have reflected or resisted the technological innovation that at the turn of the 20th century was both fuelled by colonial exploitation, and encouraged by rivalries between countries and by the implementation of new laws which were approved at different times in different regions. This perspective allowed me to observe how the development of the shopping districts where shoplifting prospered, in major cities of the United Kingdom and the United States, might have resulted from the introduction of tariffs targeting imported goods – which also increased the rates of smuggling across the ocean, and which might have contributed to persuade the women who could still not vote against them, but who were principally affected by those tariffs, to fight for their right to do so. It allowed me to consider, moreover, the impact that the entry of middle-class women into the workforce, a process which itself was hastened by technological innovation and by the feminization of office work, as well as by the Civil War in the United States, might have had on their choice of clothes, and consequently on the clothing inventions that shoplifters might have had a chance to miswear at the turn of the 20th century. A different approach to the same subject might have been to focus on a single country, or a shorter time period. A different approach might also have been to examine particular thefts more closely, rather than women's shoplifting as a widespread and evolving practice. If I did this, I might have more thoroughly researched, following the example set by existing literature on this phenomenon, the background and backstories of the notorious criminals or high-society women whose full names are at times provided in newspaper reports. As well as the sartorial technologies that these shoplifters wore, I might then have considered more in depth, also the symbolic connotations of, for example, Esther Benjamin's sealskin coat, or Mary Carr's seven diamond rings. If I focused on fewer thefts and analysed them more in detail, I might also have looked more closely at the other nonhuman actors at these crime scenes: the architecture and layout of the specific department stores that, at the turn of the 20th century, "greatly stimulated this evil by the large and easy fields they offer for pilfering" (*Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 1907, p.13), and the stolen objects which I might have considered either for their economic worth, or for "the service they rendered to the feminine masquerade" (Camhi 1993, p.4), or both. I might

have looked more closely as well, at the other human actors which might have been present: accomplices and fences, blushing shop assistants, the saleswomen that the feminist journal *The Revolution* had described in 1871 as “female spies and detectives” against their own gender (quoted in Abelson 1989, p.123), as well as actual store detectives, both male and female.

With the approach I took over the course of this thesis, I believe to have contributed to existing literature on the subject of women’s shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century, a new analysis of at least some of the clothes that these women might have worn. This analysis considers the evolving contribution, over the span of four decades, that their clothes might have made to these women’s thefts, as sartorial technologies rather than as symbols. When the shoplifter’s clothes are understood as sartorial technologies, their development and evolution can be evaluated alongside those of selected clothing inventions which were being patented at the same time, as well as in the broader context of the technological innovation that defined the turn of the 20th century in both the United Kingdom and the United States. My analysis of the contribution that by virtue of their technical affordances, the shoplifter’s clothes as sartorial technologies might have made to her practice, understands them as actors in the material network of a given theft, a network in which the shoplifter is no longer the only active agent (Law 2012; 2019). Compared to existing literature on this phenomenon, it is this shift towards an object-centred perspective, that enables me to recognise in women’s shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century a feminist act of citizenship from below, without presuming that the women who stole from department stores at this point in time also understood their thefts as politically motivated. Whether they did or did not, politics is not legitimate only when it is rational and deliberate (Parkins 2002; Isin 2008; Braun and Whatmore 2010). Political acts might originate in nonhuman objects (Bennett 2001), and technologies of material participation might perform acts of citizenship (Marres 2015). And when the shoplifter’s thefts are understood as a citizenship practice, their perceived multiplication at the turn of the 20th century can be evaluated in the context of women’s limited opportunities to participate in the polity otherwise at this time, but also of the fissure that the recognition of some women as consumer citizens in department stores had opened up in this status quo, and of the more open challenge that the suffrage movement simultaneously posed to it. Feminist Citizenship Studies often acknowledge the role that clothes can play in women’s citizenship practices, yet, with exceptions (Jungnickel 2021), this role is usually understood as determined by the symbolic connotations of those clothes. I believe to have contributed to this scholarship as well, not just an argument for women’s shoplifting in the late 19th and early 20th century to be understood as a feminist act of citizenship from below, but also a new analysis of at least some of the ways in which the clothes that these women might have worn, might have contributed to their citizenship practice as sartorial technologies rather than as symbols.

I write of the shoplifter's clothes as the clothes that shoplifters might have worn, rather than as the clothes they wore, because the examples of skirts, sleeves, and garters I considered over the past three chapters are gathered either from patents for clothing inventions that were designed for various lawful purposes in the late 19th or early 20th century, but which I speculate might also have lent themselves to be misworn by successful shoplifters, or from newspaper reports of failed shoplifting attempts, that may be vague or biased, are often sensational in tone, and read at times like hearsay. If the motivations of the women who stole from department stores at this point in time cannot be known for sure on the basis of those reports, the sartorial technologies which over the course of this thesis I have suggested they might have worn, are a patchwork of fragments from different archives – whose relation to actual events, to womenswear in real life, might have been more tenuous than it was in the best interest of the authors of these patents and of these reports to make it sound. My subject being a practice which aimed not to be seen further complicates the difficulties that are shared by much archival research in general, and by archival research which concerns the history of women's clothes in particular. There is always a distinction between fashion plates and what people actually wore at a given time (Fennetaux 2019), not every clothing invention which was patented was commercially successful (Jungnickel 2020a), nor every product which was advertised actually sold (Ruberg 2022). The making and wearing of performative replicas of selected inventions from the POP dataset afford to my suggestions the ground of experience to stand on, yet this research was never directed toward the pursuit of truth. The contribution to knowledge of my research is certainly speculative. This is inevitable when one wants to account for what is missing from the archives, when one wants to make data out of absences. I stitched these "fragments and scatters" (Swaby and Frank 2020, p.125) together in a way that made sense to me, in an effort to do justice to the shoplifters who might have worn sartorial technologies of this kind at the turn of the 20th century, but a researcher should not forget to "problematize the unity of the entities that emerge from her research" (Tamboukou 2014, p.631). Undoubtedly, I stitched these sartorial technologies together also because I believe that knowledges from below are what "the subversive intellectual" should participate in the production and circulation of (Halberstam 2011, p.11). It was a political choice to write this thesis. With this I do not mean that I expect it to contribute to diffusion and improvement of the sartorial technologies I discussed, in the way that newspaper reports might have done at the turn of the 20th century – even if that had been my intention, these technologies would have little chance of succeeding, and even less of looking inconspicuous, today. But in considering them a subject worthy of academic inquiry, in considering them deserving of a place in the history of inventions, and in considering women's shoplifting as a whole deserving of a place in the history of women's emancipation, alongside more visible, arguably nobler practices of protest and resistance, I sought to redeem women's stealing and women's clothes as something other than evidence of our surrender to the imperatives of patriarchal capitalism. I sought to craft a counter-narrative (Hartman 2021), tell an untold story (Le Guin 1996). Rather than in the moral high ground of

abstinence and disapproval, I searched within and below consumer culture, for the practices and technologies that might have challenged it – that might have challenged lawful consumption as the premise of the only citizenship available to only some women at this time, that might have performed citizenship otherwise. And since I do believe that wherever there is injustice there is also resistance, whether or not it knows itself as such, whether or not we see it straight away, I sought to redeem the invisible practices and technologies that I could find only some traces of, in the "yawning gaps in historicity" (Trouillot quoted in Sheller 2012, p.3) between and below archive materials, as tactical rather than cowardly: as successful acts that escaped the surveillance of proprietary powers (De Certeau 1988) and poached in their department stores.

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Appendix A - Sartorial Technologies in Newspaper Reports per Item Category

year	publication	country	title	notes	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	smuggling	umbrella	muff	bag or box	glove	female detective or	notorious criminal	kleptomania	fashion	other
1860	Punch	UK	(book)	We forbid our wives and daughter to wear crinoline as incentive to theft.	x												
1860	South Australian Advertiser	AU	Crinoline for Criminals												x		
1860	West Middlesex Advertiser and Family Journal	UK	Extraordinary Robberies By A Female.										x				
1861	Bell's Weekly Messenger	UK	Association for the Prosecution of Shoplifters.										x				
1863	Belfast Morning News	UK	Modest Shoplifting				x										
1863	Cornwall Chronicle	UK	A New Method of Shoplifting.	Dropped garter, silk dress tied under crinoline with tape.	x		x										
1863	The Leeds Intelligencer	UK	Shoplifting.	Shoplifter drops ordinary garter, performs its failure to hold up. She ties silk dress with tape under crinoline	x		x										
1867	Marysville Daily Appeal	US	Shoplifters.	Skirt lined from pocket down, all around the dress, not visible in crinoline.	x												
1873	The Christian Union	US	Smuggling As A Fine Art		x			x									x
1879	The New York Times	US	Smuggling Craft.	Crinoline Smugglers.	x												
1880	The New York Times	US	Young Shoplifters Taken.		x												
1881	Derry Journal	UK		Slit in underskirt and dress hidden by folds. Pocket or bag hangs beneath.	x												
1881	The New York Times	US	A Shop-Lifter Arrested	Pocket or bag sewn into dress, depends from waist, reaches far down.	x												
1881	The New York Times	US	Arrest Of A Noted Thief											x			
1882	Iron County Register	US		NY: shoplifter wearing garter with a hook steals shoes			x										
1884	Harper's Bazaar	US	Dress in Relation to Health	For healthful dressing one must avoid tight garters			x									x	
1884	Northman and Northern Counties Advertiser	UK	How They Pilfer In Paris		x										x		
1884	Omaha daily bee	US	Shop Lifting In New York	NY: shoplifter wearing garter with a hook steals shoes	x		x								x		
1884	Puck	US	An Old Saying Twisted											x			
1884	The Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald	UK												x			
1885	Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette	UK	The Latest Mode.	Shoplifter performs failure of ordinary garter. Uses silk braid to tie stolen goods under crinoline (crinolette?)			x										
1885	Manchester Evening News	UK	A Striking Incident.	Clock stolen by way of bustle pocket.	x												
1885	Puck	US	Canada as 'Mother Mandelbaum.'											x			
1886	Savannah Morning News	US	Fashion's Freaks, as Shown in Women's Dresses	The days of the crinoline were halcyon days for shoplifters.	x											x	
1886	The Queen	UK	Garters Entirely Superseded By Hoven's Improved Patent Stocking Suspender	Stocking Suspenders replace blood-constricting garters			x									x	
1887	Harper's Bazaar	US	Cycling Dress for Women	Suspenders better for sports replace tight garters (Pennell)			x									x	
1887	St. Paul Daily Globe	US	Sketches From Life.		x												
1887	St. Paul Daily Globe	US	Three Good Stories.	As well as a long bag sewn inside a dress, a hollow bustle is much used. - Hollow bustle.	x										x		x
1887	The Weekly Freeman	IR	A Princess Charged With Theft												x		
1889	Dublin Daily Express	UK	Misplaced Sympathy.											x			
1889	Sheffield Daily Telegraph	UK	A Black Leg in Petticoats											x			
1889	Women's Gazette & Weekly News	UK															
1890	Otley News and West Riding Advertiser	UK	Shoplifting in Paris		x										x		x
1890	The Sully County Watchman	US	The Female Detective	Female detective. A sort of catch fastened on the sleeve of a dolman which would hook through the thread which passes from button to button of the back of the card.		x							x				
1891	Freeland Tribune	US	Shoplifting.			x			x		x		x				x
1891	Iowa County Democrat	US	Shoplifters "Kick."	Old 'kick' was a bag or pocket concealed under the left side of a cloak. The 'hoisting kick' replaced it: an apron overskirt covers a slit to the underskirt which is an immense paper muslin bag down to the heels. This was replaced by a draped apron overskirt with a pocket hidden in puffs.	x						x		x		x		x

year	publication	country	title	notes	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	smuggling	umbrella	muff	bag or box	glove	female detective or notorious criminal	kleptomania	fashion	other
1891	The Sun	US	Fine Art In Shoplifting	Muslin shoplifter's pocket reaches below the knees, accessed through slit in outer skirt, under waist flap. Not used because well-known and out of fashion. - Sleeve work is for beginner shoplifters. - Amateur shoplifters hitch items under ordinary (tightness is advantage!) garters clasped below the knee, performing their failure to hold up. Expert shoplifters wear 'queer garters' above the knee, with multiple hooks to steal shoes 'Hoisting kicks' were false pockets in muslin, reached below the knees. Opening in dress hidden by flap. No longer used because of fashion.	x	x	x		x			x	x		x		x
1891	The Waterbury Evening Democrat	US	Female Pilferers	Ingenious and successful shoplifters wear garters with hooks to steal jewelry, lace, shoes	x		x		x			x	x		x		x
1892	Eagle River Review	US	Ingenious Devices	Brought to NY by French shoplifter, garters with hooks are worn below the knee to steal chain, buttons, handkerchief, lace													
1892	Eagle River Review	US	Ingenious Devices		x	x	x		x		x	x	x				x
1892	Hampshire Telegraph	UK	Shop-Lifters' Tricks.	Bag fastened with straps at the waist. Skirts form a bag from waist to feet.	x					x			x				
1892	Los Angeles Herald	US	Pitiful Pocketless Woman.	Sleeves are suspicious. Woman who, for lack of pockets, keeps her handkerchief up her sleeve is mistaken for a shoplifter. Bags are ugly.		x	x				x				x		
1892	Los Angeles Herald	US	Pitiful Pocketless Woman.			x	x				x				x		
1892	Pittsburg Dispatch	US	Costumes for the Bicycle Girl		x										x		
1892	The Morning News	US	Tricks of Shoplifters.		x		x		x		x	x					x
1892	Wood County Reporter	US	About Shoplifters.				x		x		x	x	x				x
1893	Harper's Bazaar	US	Women and Men: Concerning Pockets	fashion											x		
1893	Middlesex Gazette	UK	Vanishing Clothing.	Beneath front of dress, a large pocket two feet square.	x												
1893	Retford and Worksop Herald and North Notts Advertiser	UK	Shoplifting.		x						x						x
1894	Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate	AU	Shoplifting.	Pocket is cloth fastened with pins at sides, drawstring at lower edge. When discovered wearer pulls the string, goods tumble down.	x												
1894	Sheffield Weekly Telegraph	UK															x
1895	Fort Worth Gazette	US	The Queen of American Criminals											x			
1895	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail	UK	London Shoplifters.	Walking skirt with double lining and belt, under outside skirt with slit.	x								x				x
1895	Racine Journal	US	Dark Sides of Life.		x								x				
1895	The Anaconda Standard	US	Nervy Shoplifters	A 'shoplifter's skirt' has a slit to one side, opens into huge pocket.	x		x		x		x	x					
1895	The Queen	UK	The Twentieth Century Garter.	The Twentieth-Century Garter replaces suspenders			x									x	
1895	The Times	US		Fashionable capacious leeves stuffed with plunder.		x											
1895	The Topeka State Journal	US	Some Pickpocket Tricks	Shoplifter illustrated in gigot sleeve, fashionable tight skirt. Garter with hooks clasped below the knee replaces the skirt (at the same time that the garter replaces suspenders anew!)	x		x										x
1895	The Topeka State Journal	US	Mrs. Lena Sittig		x											x	
1896	Dundalk Herald	UK								x							
1896	Sheffield Daily Telegraph	UK	A Child Stolen From A Racecourse											x			
1896	The Aspen Tribune	US	Something New In Skirts	'Something New in Skirts'. French origins, never seen before.	x												
1896	The Herald	UK	A Notorious Woman Thief		x									x			
1896	The Weekly Dispatch	US	Living by Shoplifting.							x				x			x
1897	Islington Gazette	UK	A Smart Capture of An Alleged Shoplifter	Artfully-contrived pockets about her dress.	x												
1897	Kirkintilloch Herald	UK	Evolution.											x			

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1897	Morning Post	UK	Shoplifter Sentenced.	Large pocket sewn in underskirt.	x											
1897	The Sun	US	My! The Chignon.													x
1897	The Topeka State Journal	US	Prosecute Shoplifters.		x				x		x			x		
1897	Vogue	US	Haphazard Jottings											x		
1898	Semi-Weekly Register	US	Tricks of Thieving.	'A shoplifter's skirt … consists chiefly of pockets' worn as underskirt.	x									x		
1899	Northern Wisconsin Advertiser	US	Remedy for Shoplifting.											x		
1899	The New York Times	US	World's Use of Pockets												x	
1899	The Seattle Post-Intelligencer	US	Shoplifters Are Numerous		x				x					x		
1899	The Weekly Dispatch	US	Birmingham Woman's Thefts										x	x		x
1899	Traralgon Record	AU	Tricks of Shoplifters.		x							x	x	x		
1899	Western Mail	UK	Women as Detectives		x					x			x			x
1899	Yorkshire Evening Post	UK	Lady Burdett-Coutts Taken For A Shoplifter											x		
1900	Dundee Evening Post	UK	The Latest "Shop-Lifting" Device								x					
1900	Evening Star	US	She Had Three Arms.			x										
1900	Freeman's Journal	UK		Three-armed shoplifter.		x										
1900	Kansas Agitator	US	Device for Shoplifters.			x										
1900	The Evening World	US	Kleptomania Epidemic.											x		
1900	The Loveland Register	US	New Shoplifting Device		x											
1901	Brighton Gazette	UK														x
1902	Darling Downs Gazette	AU	Ingenuity of Shop-Lifting.													
1902	The Courier	US	Society Notes: Life's Mazy Whirl												x	
1902	The Evening World	US	"Innocent" Hendricksons Have Police Records										x			
1902	The Indianapolis Journal	US	Shoplifting in this City											x		x
1902	St. Paul Daily Globe	US	Tricks of Shoplifters.	The old trick of the shoplifter's skirt with slit is no longer used.	x		x		x		x	x	x	x		
1902	The Wichita Daily Eagle	US	Tricks of Shoplifters.	NY: shoplifter's garter with hooks clasped below the knee replaces the skirt, to steal chain, glasses, diamond ring, handkerchief, stockings, watch, buttons, purse, lace	x		x		x		x	x	x	x		
1903	Dundee Evening Post	UK	Shoplifter Caught!	London: shoplifter's garter with hooks spotted		x	x				x			x		x
1903	Edinburgh Evening News	UK	The Wide Sleeve Shoplifter	The bell sleeve works in combination with a rubber tube or cord, and an air ball that when squeezed tightens a set of hidden grippers.		x										
1903	The Savannah Morning News	US	Ways of Shoplifters.	A multifurcated skirt conceals in its folds a capacious secret pocket.	x	x	x						x	x		
1903	Worcestershire Chronicle	UK	Women Shoplifters.	Slit in skirt, underskirt sewn up into pocket.	x						x					
1904	Daily Mirror	UK	Shop-Lifting Methods In New York	NY: shoplifter's garter with hooks like novelty garter			x									
1904	Enniscorthy Guardian	UK	Shop Lifting In England	A piece of elastic under a fashionable balloon sleeve, one end fastened at her shoulder and the other bearing a little hook or clasp.		x			x							x
1904	Northern Daily Telegraph	UK	A Shoplifter's End							x			x			
1904	The Midland Journal	US	Blouse As Parcel Carrier.													x
1904	The Savannah Morning News	US	The Perplexing Problem of Pockets		x	x	x								x	
1904	The Tatler	UK	A Garter Queen	NY: shoplifter's garter with hooks like novelty garter			x									
1904	The Times Dispatch	US	Arrested for Shoplifting.											x		
1904	The Western Daily Press.	UK	Alleged Extensive Shoplifting In Bristol	Pocket sewn to underskirt, never seen before.	x											
1904	Wagga Wagga Advertiser	AU	Women's Latest Devices.		x											
1905	Daily Mirror	UK	Last Night's News Items.	Yard-long calico pocket stitched to underskirt.	x											
1905	Harper's Bazaar	US	The Economics of Shopping											x		
1905	Los Angeles Herald	US	Suspect Woman of Many Thefts									x				
1905	New-York Tribune	US	This is Harvest Time for the Guileful Shoplifter	Double skirt, gathered from bottom to waist and released if caught. A black headed pin fastened in jacket sleeve, under a button, for stealing handkerchiefs.	x	x					x					

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1905	Rugby Advertiser	UK	A Shoplifter's Skirt	Specially designed waist pocket in shoplifter's skirt – with drawing.	x											
1905	St. Austell Star	UK	Shop Thieves.										x			
1905	St. Austell Star	UK	A Shoplifter's Skirt		x											
1905	The Minneapolis Journal	US	Stole Glad Rags To Keep In Swim	Garter with safety pocket recommended as gift (novelty)									x			
1905	Vogue	US	What She Wears		x										x	
1905	Vogue	US	Paris				x								x	
1905	Vogue: New York	US	Haphazard Jottings											x		
1906	Derby Daily Telegraph	UK	Shoplifter's Hoard													
1906	Islington Gazette	UK	An Alleged Shoplifter.	Detachable pocket tied around waist.	x											
1906	Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper	UK	Lady's Defence To Charge Of Shoplifting	Fashionable wide sleeves catch belt by mistake?		x										
1906	London Daily News	UK	Music-Hall Artiste: More Charges of Shoplifting Brought Against Her							x						
1906	The Bulletin	AU		Underskirts furnished with pockets of shark-like capacity.	x											
1906	The Clarksburg Telegram	US	Detectives for the Shoplifter	(Pocketed garters already patented) Shoplifters rarely wear ordinary garters + performance anymore Pockets sewn up on the inside of skirts near the bottom.	x		x				x			x		
1906	The Illustrated London News	UK	When Lovely Woman Stoops to Thieving: The Wiles of the Shop-Lifter	Spring clip cuff. - Shoplifter's garter with hooks worn below the knee to steal watch, feather	x	x	x				x					x
1906	The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury	UK	Tricks of West-End Shoplifters	Fashionable wide sleeves help shoplifter steal bracelet. Three-armed shoplifter.	x	x				x				x		x
1906	The Minneapolis Journal	US	The Easter Sleeve at its Best			x									x	
1906	The Minneapolis Journal	US	Dainty Gifts You Can Make For A Song				x									
1906	The Queen	UK	Some Sportswoman's Accessories		x										x	
1906	The Sun	US	More and More Stealing Done	Underskirt drawn up by gathering string, and slit in skirt.	x								x	x		
1906	The Tatler	UK	Irresponsibilities. By Flaneur.											x		
1906	Tonopah Bonanza	US	Experiences of Noted Thief		x				x							
1906	Willmar Tribune	US	Tragedies In City Police Cells										x	x		
1907	Baltimore Sun	US		Deep pocket on side of skirt – with drawing. Or hooks from belt. Shoplifter's garter with hooks worn below the knee to steal watch	x		x									
1907	Dundee Courier	UK	Shoplifter's Hold-All		x											
1907	Manchester Evening News	UK	Winter Sales: The Shoplifters' Busy Season		x											x
1907	Marylebone Mercury	UK	An Expert Shoplifter.	Underskirt formed a pocket all around the garment.	x											
1907	Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate	AU	The Shop-Lifting Mania	London: shoplifter's garter with hooks worn to steal watch, bracelet, clock	x	x	x				x					x
1907	Rock Island Argus	US	Get Shoplifter	Two large cloth sacks, attached to a belt, under an apron.	x											
1907	The Bulletin	AU												x		
1907	The Sun (Baltimore)	US	How Shoplifters "Work" The Department Stores	A rubber band hidden in sleeve's cuff connects to woman's finger.	x	x	x				x					
1908	Chicago Eagle	US	Use Three Arms to Steal.	Three-armed shoplifter.		x										
1908	Lichfield Mercury	UK		Underskirts formed pockets like watertight compartments.	x									x		
1908	The Bad River News	US	Young Girls Are Taught To Steal		x								x			
1908	The Globe	UK	Shoplifters at Harrod's	Underskirts formed pockets, slits in outer skirts.	x											
1908	The Marion Daily Mirror	US	New Shoplifting Trick.													x
1908	The Spokane Press	US	Realism That Is Realism											x		
1908	The Tatler	UK	The Humours And Mysteries of Criminal Slang. By "Screwman".										x			
1908	Weekly Irish Times	IR	Shoplifter's Dummy Baby													x
1908	Weekly Irish Times	IR	Countess in the Dock: Lady Who Wore a Coronet Charged with Shoplifting							x						
1908	Weekly Watertown Leader	US	The Shoplifter										x	x		x

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1909	Fulham Chronicle	UK	Unknown Fulham Lady: Caught Shoplifting at the Army and Navy Stores											x		
1909	Irish News and Belfast Morning News	UK	SHOPLIFTERS And Their Gentle Methods: Experiences of a Detective			x	x			x						x
1909	New-York Tribune	US	Now Is The Season When Shoplifters Multiply	The shoplifter's 'kit': bottom of underskirt sewn to outer skirt, slit at the hip concealed by pleat, covered by skirt of outer garment. Improved by drawstring instead of seam, to drop evidence if suspected. Three-armed shoplifter.	x	x				x	x					x
1909	The Evening World	US	Good Ten Years, Old Mary Wilson Stole At XMas										x			
1909	The Umpire	UK	Hatpins In A Parasol. Lady Charged With Shoplifting At Selfridge'S. Profusion Of 'Kerchiefs.		x				x							
1910	Aberdeen Press and Journal	UK	Secret Pocket Discoveries: Smartly-Dressed Ladies Charged With Shoplifting													
1910	Daily Mirror	UK	Reconciled In Court. Dramatic Scene When Estranged Husband Pleads For Erring Wife.	Apron pinned under skirt. 'Absolutely all pocket'.	x											
1910	Dublin Daily Express	UK	Shop-Lifters at Sales.	Fashion of tight sleeves, shoplifting less easy than it was five years ago. Bags substitute.	x	x					x			x		
1910	Elk City Mining News	US	It Looked Suspicious						x							
1910	Herald Democrat	US	Aged Shoplifter Arrested: Her Home A Storehouse		x								x			
1910	Lincoln Daily Star	US	Using Big Hats.					x								x
1910	Los Angeles Herald	US	Knee-Waisted Gowns Start Chatter in Paris		x										x	
1910	Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser	UK	Well-To-Do Shoplifters				x				x		x			
1910	Newark Evening Star and Newark Advertiser	UK	In Tears Wife Admits Shop-Lifting Charge										x			x
1910	Newsletter: an Australian Paper for Australian People	AU	Fashionable Women Thieves											x		
1910	Nottingham Evening Post	UK	Science of Thieving.			x			x	x						
1910	Pearson's Weekly	UK	'Ware Christmas Shop Thieves	A piece of elastic is fastened under the arm-pit of an ulster, on the one end of which a clip is sewn, that the shoplifter uses to steal some silk or a blouse. Pocket on the inner side of skirt – drawing shows it at the bottom.	x	x			x	x						x
1910	Perthshire Advertiser	UK	The Ways Of Shop-Lifters.		x											
1910	Puck	US	Ladies' Day at the Club: Talk About Your Shoplifters!	Caricature: woman steals silverware by way of bell sleeve; woman steals salt and pepper shakers by way of bag.		x					x					
1910	Sheffield Weekly Telegraph	UK	Concerning Reticules.								x				x	
1910	South Wales Daily News	UK	Ladies' Secret Pockets.		x											
1910	St. Austell Star	UK														x
1910	The Bridgeport Evening Farmer	US	Shoplifting Is General Store Handling Their Cases Without Publicity	Long pocket skirts of the shoplifting fraternity. - Foreign women wear double aprons, beneath which folds they conceal.	x											
1910	The Bridgeport Evening Farmer	US	Women Shoplifters Caught With Goods		x											
1910	The Detroit Times	US	Sophie Lyons and A Minister Commend The Policy of The Times										x			
1910	The Globe	UK	Paris Notes.						x	x				x		
1910	The Globe	UK	Concealed in Her Muff.							x				x		
1910	The San Francisco Call	US	Shoplifter Carries Secret Bags for Loot	Bag dangled from waist inside the outer skirt, reached by a slip pocket.	x	x										
1910	The Sketch	UK	O-HOSE! HER STOCKING FEATS!				x								x	
1910	World's News	AU	Secret Pockets.	London: apron pinned beneath skirt; underskirt formed pocket all round.	x											
1911	Bedford Record	UK	Female Shoplifters.										x			x
1911	Bristol Times and Mirror	UK	Shop-Lifters at Sales.		x	x					x			x		
1911	Dundee Evening Telegraph	UK							x							

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1911	North Bucks Times and County Observer	UK	In A Woman's Pocket.	Long slit in dress, lining formed huge pocket.	x											
1911	Popular Mechanics	US		(book)	x											
1911	The Baraboo news	US	Shoplifter Hides Goods in Muff							x						
1911	The Chickasha Daily Express	US	Shoplifter Has Hard Luck	Shoplifters won't wear harem or hobble skirts, because even if fashionable they attract attention.	x										x	
1911	The Silver Messenger	US	Shoplifter Has Hard Luck		x										x	
1911	The Wheeling intelligencer	US	Shoplifting Limited During Holiday Rush		x					x						
1911	Vogue	US	The Distracting Jupe-Culotte	Garter with safety pocket recommended as gift (novelty)												
1911	Vogue: New York	US	Has Paris Over-Reached Herself in her Latest Diverting Sensation?		x										x	
1911	Vogue; New York	US	Hand Made Holiday Fancies	Garter with safety pocket recommended as gift (novelty)			x								x	
1911	Wicklow News-Letter	UK	Modern Shoplifting.	Slit in skirt, pocket or alpaca bag tied to waist underneath. Ingenuity.	x											
1912	Cheltenham Chronicle	UK	Housekeeper's Wholesale Shoplifting								x					
1912	Daily Herald	US	Kleptomaniacs											x		
1912	Evening Star	US	Secrets of the Shoplifters of New York	Three-armed shoplifter, steals a ring or a teapot. Jack Rose: detectives have learnt that a specific walk gives away the shoplifter wearing garters with hooks		x	x						x	x		
1912	The Colorado Statesman	US	Large Rug Muffs Eclipse Owners							x					x	
1912	The Evening World	US	She Shoplifts For Jury							x			x			
1912	The Lakeland Evening Telegram	US	Sleeve Pocket for the Fan			x									x	
1912	The San Francisco Call	US	Beating the Merchant		x					x						x
1912	The Waxahachie Daily Light	US	Kleptomania											x		
1912	Vogue; New York	US	Milady's Garter	(Perhaps because pocketed?) garter = freedom, with or without a corset			x								x	
1912	Vogue; New York	US	In the Paris Shops				x								x	
1912	Women's Wear	US	Pocket in Sleeve for Fan.			x									x	
1912	Women's Wear	US	Shoplifting And Store Robberies		x						x					x
1913	Baxter Springs News	US	Thieves Never Quit						x							x
1913	Daily Mirror	UK	New Dance Garter.				x								x	
1913	Fleetwood Chronicle	UK	Charge of Shoplifting.							x						
1913	Kalgoorlie Miner	AU	Shoplifting	Shoplifter's garter with hooks = chatelaine garter	x		x				x			x		
1913	Leicester Daily Post	UK	Shoplifters' Methods.	Shoplifter's garter with hooks = chatelaine garter	x		x				x					x
1913	Sheffield Daily Telegraph	UK	The Art of the Shoplifter	Fur sleeve with a secret pocket at the elbow. (Muff?)	x	x	x				x					x
1913	The Day Book	US	Fall Skirt Will Have Pistol Pockets		x										x	
1913	The Detroit Times	US	Two Are Accused of Shoplifting										x	x		
1913	The Evening Times	US	Detectives Say That Thieves Never Quit; Schemes Are Many	Shoplifters wear garters with hooks	x		x							x		
1913	The Salt Lake Tribune	US	Why Crime Does Not Pay											x		
1913	The Times Dispatch	US	Why Crime Does Not Pay											x		
1913	The Times Dispatch	US	Why Crime Does Not Pay											x		x
1913	The Wheeling intelligencer	US	Now It's a Tango Garter; Silken Shield to Stockings	Tango novelty garters			x								x	
1913	Vogue; New York	US	Three French Models	Fashion of extra tight sleeves.		x									x	
1913	Women's Wear	US	Catching Shoplifters		x					x			x			
1913	Yorkshire Evening Post	UK	The Shop Lifter.		x		x							x		
1914	Harper's Bazaar	US	Harper's Bazar Personal Shopping Service				x								x	
1914	Ladysmith News Budget	US	Women Diamond Thieves Get Rich											x		
1914	Manchester Evening News	UK	Pilfering At Sales							x			x			
1914	New-York Tribune	US	Tempts Woman Detective										x			
1914	Puck	US	The Knitting Craze												x	
1914	St. Austell Star	UK	Shoplifting as a Disease											x		
1914	The Bulletin	AU												x		
1914	The day book	US	Tango Garters Make Tangoing Easier	Tango novelty garters - Pocket novelty garters			x								x	

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1914	The Day Book	US	Fur-Wound Stocking And Week-End Garter The Latest Parisian Creations				x								x	
1914	The Gazette-Times	US	Glove Has A Pocket.									x			x	
1914	The Hartford Republican	US	Why The Death Penalty													
1914	The Madison Daily Leader	US	Her Loot Fills Patrol Wagon							x						x
1914	The Sketch Supplement	UK	"Nuts and Wine": The New Eton And "Within The Law."							x					x	
1914	Vogue	US	Features: A Woman's Sense of Honor					x								
1914	Vogue	US	A Woman's Sense of Honor					x								
1914	Vogue	US	The Forbidden Land of Dogs					x			x					
1914	Vogue; New York	US	Vagaries from the Paris Shops					x			x					
1914	Women's Wear	US					x								x	
1914	Women's Wear	US	Shoplifter Breaks All Records: Woman Thief Operating In One Brooklyn Store Steals And Hides On Her Person 229 Separate Articles.							x	x					x
1915	Hampshire Telegraph	UK	Women Shoplifters.	Shoplifters rarely wear garter with hooks anymore	x		x							x		
1915	Los Angeles Herald	US	Pockets? Pooh! Not In It With Her Waist											x		x
1915	The Day Book	US	Yes, Betty Brown Wears Fluffy Skirts, But No Crinoline For Her		x										x	
1915	The Evening World	US	The Story of the Crinoline	The crinoline was once declared the shoplifter's best friend.	x										x	
1915	Yorkshire Evening Post	UK	Revival of Shop-Lifting in Leeds		x					x	x					
1915	Yorkshire Evening Post	UK	"Queen of the Forty Thieves"										x			
1916	Birmingham Mail	UK	The Astounding Career of Sophie Lyons										x			
1916	Evening Capital News	US	Sophie Lyons' Success										x			
1916	Penrith Observer	US	The Secret Pocket	Frenchwoman designs invisible pocket in sleeve.		x									x	
1916	Popular Science Monthly	US	The Mechanics of Shoplifting	Bag sewn in shoplifter's skirt. Shoplifters as inventors – with drawing. Three-armed shoplifter steals imported laces.	x	x					x					
1916	Shields Daily News	UK	Local News.							x						
1916	The Clarksburg Daily Telegram	US	As Woman Sees It											x		
1916	The day book	US	"Pear" Pockets For Afternoon Gown		x										x	
1916	The Day Book	US	Pouch Pockets and Watch Pockets Too		x										x	
1916	The Sunday Star	UK			x										x	
1916	The Sunday Telegram	US	Pockets Of All Kinds and Sizes in the Newer Frocks and Coats												x	
1916	The Washington Herald	US	Confidence Queen Turns Uplifter!										x			
1916	The Washington Times	US	Sophie Lyons, Philantropist at 70										x			
1916	Vogue: New York	US	What's in a Muff?							x					x	
1917	Birmingham Daily Post	UK	Theft Campaign in London Stores							x			x			
1917	Harper's Bazaar	US	From the Shops Where We for Beauty Go	Novelty garter with powder-puff pocket, below the knee			x								x	
1917	The Snowflake Herald	US	Clever Shoplifting.	Three-armed shoplifter	x	x			x	x	x	x				
1917	Vogue	US	What the Knitting Habit Leads To								x				x	
1917	Women's Wear	US	Don't Sit Down To The Christmas Feast With Your Door Wide Open To The Unbidden Guest			x					x					
1917	Women's Wear	US	Use Of Knitting Bags For Shoplifting Spreads: Providence Stores Suffer From Use of This Device by Shoplifters.								x					
1918	Nyack Evening Journal	US	Shopping Bags and Baskets								x					
1918	Sheffield Weekly Telegraph	UK	Kleptomania Or Shoplifting?		x					x				x		
1918	The Ogden Standard	US	The Patriotic Knitting Bag Is Being Put to Baser Uses	Shoplifting fell upon lean ways with the coming of shorter, tighter fashions. Bags substitute.							x					
1918	The Weekly Dispatch	US	Shoplifting After Aspirin.							x	x			x		
1918	Women's Wear	US	"Shoplifter" Who Looked For "Vital Spark"; Let Go											x		

year	publication	country	title	notes	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	smuggling	umbrella	muff	bag or box	glove	female detective or notorious criminal	kleptomania	fashion	other
1919	The Diss Express, And Norfolk And Suffolk Journal	UK	Shoplifting At A Drapery Sale.							x			x	x		x
1919	The Evening World	US	The Stores' Mutual Protection Association, Inc.										x			
1919	The Washington Times	US	Searching for America's Mysterious Master Criminal											x		
1919	The Washington Times	US	Searching for America's Mysterious Master Criminal										x	x		
1919	Women’s Wear	US	Sleeve Pocket A French Touch			x									x	
1920	Chelsea News and General Advertiser	UK								x						
1920	Evening Public Ledger	US	Spirit Quailed at Test											x		
1920	Indiana daily times	US	'Love of Game' Is Reason For Shoplifting										x	x		
1920	New-York Tribune	US	Some of New York's Expert Shoplifters Realize $50,000 a Year by Their Thefts	Underskirt with pockets, outer skirt with slit, too well-known to be used.	x						x			x		
1920	The Alliance Herald	US	The Secret Pocket			x										
1920	The Ogden Standard	US	Net Spread In Many Stores For Capture of Shoplifters; Police Women Assigned Posts										x			
1920	Women’s Wear	US	Mid West News: Retailers Should Keep Sharp Lookout For Shoplifter Carrying "Booty Box"								x					
1921	Belfast Telegraph	UK	Invasion by Shoplifters											x		
1924	Daily Mirror	UK	Woman Raffles.											x		
1926	Belfast Telegraph	UK	Will-O'-Wisp Woman Criminal										x	x		
1926	New Britain Herald	US	Carolyn Wells, Writer, Fined for Smuggling					x								
1926	Reynolds's Newspaper	UK	Alice Diamond, Giant Queen of the "Terrors"											x		
1926	Westminster Gazette	UK	Women Taking To Burglary.											x		
1927	Dundee Courier	UK	The Forty Thieves Gang											x		
1928	Reynolds's Newspaper	UK	"Forty Thieves" Gang of Shoplifters											x		
1946	Belfast Telegraph	UK	Crinoline-Mode That Had Many Enemies		x			x								
1954	Daily Herald	US	Blonde on run caught in flat											x		

Appendix B - Clothing Inventions per Item Category

year	patent number	country	inventor	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	muff	glove	pocket	other
1844	US3633A	United States	Goodyear, Charles							x
1858	US21839A	United States	Mallory, George	x						
1863	US38639A	United States	Putnam, Ellen F.			x				
1867	US70238A	United States	McCoy, William H.; Wheeler, A.			x				
1867	US72049A	United States	King, M. A.				x		x	
1874	US156018A	United States	Flynt, Olivia P.	x						
1874	US156019A	United States	Flynt, Olivia P.	x						
1876	US181011A	United States	Ranniger, John Lewis Edward					x		
1877	US188228A	United States	Bergen, Margaret H.							x
1878	US202924A	United States	Brown, F. Barton							x
1878	US210665A	United States	Brown, F. Barton							x
1880	US232671A	United States	Bowman, Harriet F.			x				
1883	US282254A	United States	Baker, Gilbert	x						
1883	US282391A	United States	Smith, Margret				x		x	
1884	US308879A	United States	Cummings, Mary L.	x						
1885	US319477A	United States	Gandil, Charlotte A.	x						
1885	US320301A	United States	Shelby, Christopher C.			x				
1885	US327367A	United States	Whiting, Stiles H.							x
1886	US334513A	United States	Cole, P. Fletcher					x	x	
1886	US461744A	United States	Cole, P. Fletcher					x		
1887	US365450A	United States	St. Clair, Fannie	x						
1887	US365770A	United States	Armstrong, Frank			x				
1888	US382059A	United States	Smith, Lena	x					x	
1890	US419635A	United States	Butts, Daniel G.		x					
1891	US461744A	United States	Fanshawe, W. J.					x		
1891	US462225A	United States	Bindseil, H. F.				x		x	
1891	US462555A	United States	Hoyt, Henry L.		x					
1891	US463985	United States	Freese, Claus			x				
1892	US470100A	United States	Booss, Catharine				x			
1892	US476761A	United States	Sittig, Lena	x						
1893	US489103A	United States	Sittig, Lena	x						
1893	US506375A	United States	Ross, Joseph							x
1894	US520225A	United States	Sittig, Lena	x						
1894	US526573A	United States	Hoffman, James		x					
1894	US526950A	United States	Sprung, Isaac				x		x	
1895	US532601A	United States	Sittig, Lena	x						
1896	US559310A	United States	Rothschild, Alexander W.							x
1897	GB189720350A	United Kingdom	Augensen, Marie	x						
1897	US580053	United States	Lucas, Mary R.	x						
1897	US584454A	United States	Borchardt, Martha	x						
1898	US597883A	United States	Kepler, Orlando S.		x					
1898	US604964A	United States	Cain, Sarah	x					x	
1898	US605465A	United States	Anderson, Mildred N.	x						
1899	GB189824731A	United Kingdom	Mabee, Leonia	x					x	
1899	GB189901186A	United Kingdom	Lewis, George		x					
1899	US630572A	United States	Smith, Mary C.	x						
1900	US653220A	United States	Deacon, William Madden			x				

year	patent number	country	inventor	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	muff	glove	pocket	other
1900	US655439A	United States	Hake, Otto H.			x				
1900	US660553A	United States	Blakesley, Gilbert H.			x				
1900	US662246A	United States	Sowden, Susie B.	x						
1901	US667543A	United States	Mabee, Leonia	x						
1901	US667544A	United States	Mabee, Leonia	x						
1902	GB190206530A	United Kingdom	Hammer, John	x						
1902	GB190216307A	United Kingdom	Currie, Edward						x	x
1903	FR321833A	France	Runyon née Brace, Lettie					x	x	
1903	US717844A	United States	Gutmann, Emil			x				
1904	FR344264A	France	Societe BLOC Freres					x		x
1904	US771442A	United States	Paddock, Stephen C.			x				
1905	AT21877B	Austria	Lustig, Ignaz				x		x	
1905	FR350207A	France	Pilliot née Bergys, Veuve				x		x	
1905	FR356227A	France	Societe BLOC Freres					x		x
1905	GB190401305A	United Kingdom	Turton, Alice Maud	x						
1905	US790595	United States	Scott, Charles H.			x			x	
1905	US808576A	United States	Roberts, Joseph M.	x						
1906	FR369081A	France	Societe Mouilbau, Fayaud, Chevreau, Laurain & Cie							x
1907	FR374585A	France	Libbertz née Volkert, Katrinka					x	x	
1907	GB190604065A	United Kingdom	Pellett Blake, John							x
1907	US843627A	United States	Phelps, George H.			x				
1907	US845321A	United States	Stidham, Harlan M.			x				
1907	US850721A	United States	Barnes, Herminia M. M.		x					
1907	US857578A	United States	Benoit, Ida V.	x						x
1908	FR391916A	France	Triboute, Leon-Gustave			x				
1908	US877672A	United States	Sittig, Lena	x						
1908	US883475	United States	Ortell, Bertha			x			x	
1909	FR401439A	France	Friend	x					x	
1909	GB190809840A	United Kingdom	Charles, Leach; Munro, Alexander			x			x	
1909	GB190901331A	United Kingdom	Friend, Yetta	x					x	
1909	US925963A	United States	Stoldt, Jean F.			x				
1909	US926402	United States	Geissler, Hugo V.			x			x	
1910	GB190919688A	Great Britain	Hills, Margaret Emily				x		x	
1910	US971110A	United States	Benoit, Ida V.	x						x
1910	US979426A	United States	Carpenter, Henry L.			x				
1911	GB191102652A	United Kingdom	Warnkess, George				x			
1911	US999132	United States	Suddick, Louise F.	x						
1912	FR442036A	France	Koch, Franz					x	x	
1912	FR445643A	France	George, nee Durozoi, Mathilde				x		x	
1912	GB191119505A	United Kingdom	Schendel, Olga	x						
1912	GB191126553A	United Kingdom	Morling, Sarah Alice			x			x	
1912	US1025643A	United States	Presmont, Arthur Nathan			x			x	
1912	US1044887A	United States	Holbrook, Clement A.							x
1913	FR452531A	France	Budde, Eduard					x	x	
1913	GB191221819A	United Kingdom	Bauer, Robert		x					
1913	US1066779A	United States	Anderson, John A.				x		x	
1913	US1070250	United States	Hamburger, Mary J.			x			x	

Appendix B

year	patent number	country	inventor	skirt	sleeve	garter or stocking	muff	glove	pocket	other
1914	GB191405330A	United Kingdom	Oswald, Carl			x				
1914	GB191406129A	United Kingdom	Roberts, Robert Alfred		x				x	
1914	GB191407271A	United Kingdom	Lincke, Bruno		x					
1914	GB191416740A	United Kingdom	Court, Edward		x				x	
1914	US1093877	United States	Nickerson, Edith F.					x	x	
1914	US1095746A	United States	Speedy, John Clark			x				
1914	US1106375A	United States	Grean, Alexandre M.			x				
1914	US1117591	United States	Morningstar, R. J.			x			x	
1915	US1149674A	United States	Nichols, Perry John		x					
1915	US1152169A	United States	Goldman, Abraham D.		x				x	
1915	US1154122	United States	Kovesy, Jospeh A.					x	x	
1916	GB191506866A	United Kingdom	Nunan Casey, James Patrick		x				x	
1916	GB191507368A	United Kingdom	Hebdon Reid, Edith			x				
1916	US1167669A	United States	Ward, Robert E.			x				
1916	US1174736A	United States	Kiselgoff, Lena						x	
1916	US1196324A	United States	Atkins, Cora	x					x	
1916	US1209401A	United States	Crouse, Edward V.			x			x	
1917	FR484100A	France	Linden née Van Den Hove-Maeterlinck, Marguerite					x	x	
1917	GB106198A	United Kingdom	Lister, Arthur James			x				
1917	US1224154A	United States	Esser, Henry Jacob			x				
1917	US1247373A	United States	Chaney, Silas N. and Chaney, Reuben							x
1918	US1251524	United States	Hogan, Katherine V.							x
1918	US1258591A	United States	Meyer, Julius	x					x	
1918	US1268516	United States	Von Baldass, Max					x	x	
1918	US1284350A	United States	Cress Hunt, Margarita							x
1918	US1286225A	United States	Capen, Frances W.							x
1918	US1287875A	United States	Careless, Leonard			x			x	
1920	US1338858A	United States	Enriquez, Magdalena de Los S.			x				
1920	US1353483A	United States	Leins, Karl			x				
1921	FR521362A	France	Guerin née Bouvet, Augustine Simone					x	x	
1921	GB161997A	United Kingdom	Beale, Frederick Willert		x					
1921	US1382446A	United States	Warren, Lillian G.			x				
1922	US1415030A	United States	Hersperger, Elizabeth S.			x				
1922	US1417244A	United States	Hammerberg, Erick O.			x				
1922	US1425571A	United States	Bear, Jeanie			x				
1924	US1494505A	United States	Ross, Fred A.			x			x	
1925	US1552420A	United States	Crippen, Herbert O.			x			x	
1926	DE432963C	Germany	Goerges, Josef						x	x
1926	US1589677A	Untied States	Bisch, Louis E.			x				
1926	US1608096A	United States	Friedman, Myrelle			x				
1928	US1682912A	United States	Keyser, Leroy F.			x				
1930	US1766604A	United States	Cohen, Henry			x			x	
1930	US1777238A	United States	Weilman, Melville S.			x				
1932	US1882250A	United States	Mieres, Jose			x				
1959	US2897609A	United States	Bodkin, Lawrence E.							x
2014	WO 2014/153339 Al	United States	Carter-Cohen, Andrea Paige			x			x	

Appendix C – Performing Shoplifting With Performative Replicas

Over the course of this thesis, I made and wore performative replicas of five selected inventions from the POP dataset:

Sittig, Lena. 1908. Petticoat. US877672A

Barnes, Herminia M. M. 1907. Sleeve Holder. US850721A

Goldman, Abraham D. 1915. Coat-Sleeve. US1152169A

Hake, Otto H. 1900. Hose Supporter. US655439A

Hamburger, Mary J. 1913. Pocket Garter. US1070250

For most of these, I made and wore different iterations of my performative replicas. I discuss in their respective chapters and subchapters, what I learnt from the making process, and how the shortcomings of earlier iterations informed the making of more effective ones – more effective either from the perspective of their inventors, and with respect to the lawful purpose that their patents prescribe, or from the perspective of the shoplifters that I propose might have adopted, adapted and misworn these or similar sartorial technologies for the purpose of stealing.

In the following pages I have included a visual overview of the final iterations of my performative replicas, for each of the inventions listed above. These are the garments and accessories I thought I would submit alongside my thesis, until I realised that without a body wearing them, these inventions could not be considered effective from anyone's perspective. And not just any body – but my own, which they were tailored to fit. I hope that these pictures might help to convey what I learnt from wearing these performative replicas, and from wearing them specifically to reenact variations of the shoplifting methods I read about in newspaper archives. I hope that they might help to convey at least some of the tactile knowledge which is difficult to put into words, although I tried my best to do it in their respective chapters.

Sittig, Lena. 1908. Petticoat. US877672A

Sittig's Petticoat was intended to be worn normally underneath an outer skirt, and partially on top of it to protect it on rainy days. To do this the two depending straps would be detached from the petticoat's waistband, and attached to that of the outer skirt, or in this case, to the wearer's belt.

When worn entirely underneath an outer skirt, Sittig's Petticoat is entirely invisible. While standing in a store or sitting at a counter, the shoplifter who might have misworn this invention could easily have lifted the hem of her outer skirt to drop stolen objects into its spacious pocket.

Barnes, Herminia M. M. 1907. Sleeve Holder. US850721A

Barnes' Sleeve Holder is made of an elastic wrapped around the wearer's short sleeve, tied to a 'thumb-ring'. This prevents her short sleeve from slipping up her arm, when a long-sleeved outer jacket is put on.

I've tied a small hook to the thumb-ring of my performative replica of Barnes' invention, and hooked to it a silver ring.

The shoplifter who might have misworn this invention to steal from a jewellery store would have then released the thumb-ring from her thumb, allowing the elastic to bounce back up her sleeve, with the thumb-ring, the small hook, and the silver ring attached.

Through trial and error, and with the help of late 19th-century magic manuals, I learnt that the shoplifter who might have misworn Barnes' Sleeve Holder or a similar invention, would have had much higher chances of succeeding if she opted to steal small and compact objects such as the hairpin, brooch and ring in these pictures.

Goldman, Abraham D. 1915. Coat-Sleeve. US1152169A

Goldman’s Coat-Sleeve, on the contrary, proved to be much more capacious than I anticipated, even though its inventor had not intended for it to be used as a receptacle.

The slit at the back of the sleeve is matched by a slit in its lining. Passing through both, this invention was meant to allow the hand of the wearer’s companion to grasp their arm, and keep warm in the process.

The shoplifter who might have misworn Goldman’s Coat-Sleeve or a similar invention, would only have made use of the first slit. The stolen objects she dropped into it would disappear into the coat’s lining until she took it off.



At the back of the sleeve, the slit in Goldman’s invention is slightly difficult for the wearer to reach, but all the more invisible for being so. Since shoplifters at the turn of the 20th century often worked in pairs, an accomplice rather than the wearer herself, might have been the one to drop stolen objects into this slit.

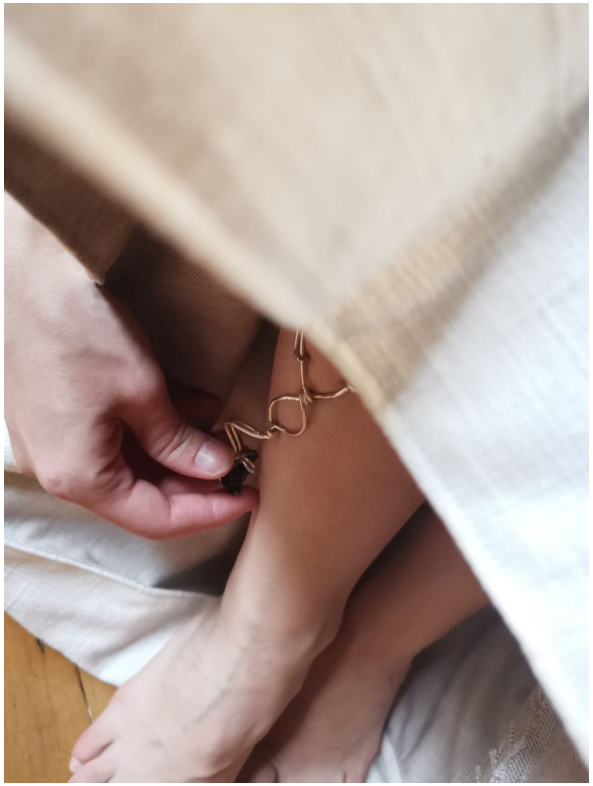
Hake, Otto H. 1900. Hose Supporter. US655439A

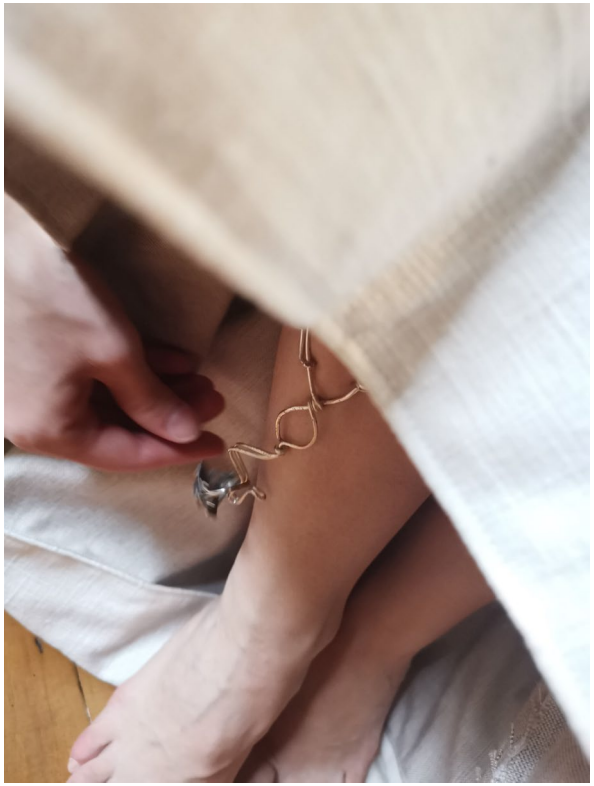
When men wore garters at the turn of the 20th century, they did not wear them on top of the stocking like women did. Men's garters were worn around the calf, and furnished with depending straps, or in the case of Hake's Hose Supporter, hooks, that their stockings could be attached to.

In this picture I am miswearing my performative replica of Hake's Hose Supporter, in the way that a woman's garter would have been worn at the time: on top of the stocking. This frees the hook, which might lend itself to a different purpose.

A shoplifter miswearing Hake’s Hose Supporter, or a similar invention, would have had higher chances of succeeding if she opted to steal lightweight objects, such as this ring, to avoid the risk of them dragging down the garter’s elastic.

The shape of the hook prevents the ring from sliding off, even when the wearer jumps or runs away.





When I made this performative replica of Hamburger's invention, I modified the pattern provided in her patent to make its pockets slightly bigger.

The shallower the pockets, however, the easier it would have been for the shoplifter who might have misworn Hamburger's Pocket Garter or a similar invention, if she suspected that her theft had been noticed, to retrieve and get rid of the stolen objects she hid in it,.

Hamburger, Mary J. 1913. Pocket Garter. US1070250

Sartorial technologies of this kind might have been especially helpful to a ‘penny weighter’: the shoplifter who specialised in jewellery stores.

Although I analysed them individually, the shoplifter's outfit might also have combined several of these sartorial technologies at once.