CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

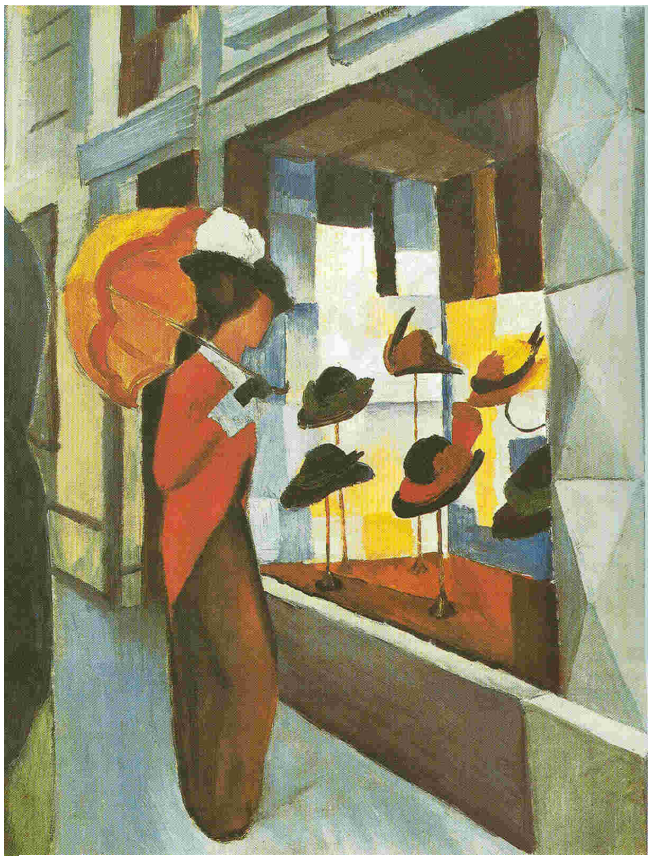

Figure 1: August Macke, Hutladen, 1914, Anne Meseure, August Macke, 1887–1914, Cologne, 2004.

Prologue

Standing alone in front of a hat shop window, a seemingly well-dressed lady takes a moment to peruse a selection of hats on display. She stands alone. Perhaps she is unaccompanied, although the dark portion at the very left of the scene alludes to the likelihood of an escort – husband, father or friend – waiting at close proximity. She might be promenading the city street on a Sunday afternoon or be planning her next purchase of the latest season's fashions.[1] Alternatively, she could be on the way to an appointment or be returning to her domestic quarters, taking a fleeting glance at new stock on the way. The picture offers room for much speculation. Of central importance, however, is the fact that the woman standing in front of the shop window is in public, that she is engaging in window-shopping, quite clearly indicating her position as a potential consumer. Simply entitled Hutladen, August Macke's 1914 oil on canvas painting belongs to a series that treats the motif of the shop window. Not infrequently the figure of the female consumer of fashion appears in this series, which indicates that at the beginning of the twentieth century women were indeed visible on the city street as consumers.[2] This figure of the shopping woman was associated with myths about fashion and shopping as specifically female interests – myths that were frequently adopted by popular magazines in satirical representations of mass culture.[3]

Macke's painting draws our attention to the topic of this book – the female consumer. The study considers the way in which a specifically female consumer was constructed at the turn of the twentieth century in Germany, drawing principally on advertising material from the city of Munich. In what follows, I will provide an overview of the methodological approach for the primary source analysis, a description of the sources used and an outline of the broad theoretical concepts.

1.1. Introduction

My point of departure is the increasing debate about the role of consumption in today's western society. Reading the newspaper, listening to talk-back radio or watching television current affairs programmes, one quickly becomes aware of the significance of consumer-related topics and the idea of a 'consumer-culture'. Consumption, it seems, is what drives us; our goal in life is to own nicer, more

1 For a discussion of the role of the Spaziergang in nineteenth Germany, see Gudrun M. König, *Eine Kulturgeschichte des Spaziergangs. Spuren einer bürgerlichen Praktik 1780–1850*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar, 1996.

2 Other works by Macke also depict a woman window-shopping, including *Großes helles Schaufenster*, 1912; *Helle Frauen vor dem Hutladen*, 1913; *Hüte-Mode*, 1913; *Modegeschäft*, 1913; *Hutladen*, 1913. See Anne Meseure, *August Macke, 1887–1914*, Cologne, 2004.

3 Sherwin Simmons, 'August Macke's Shoppers: Commodity Aesthetics, Modernist Autonomy and the Inexhaustible Will of Kitsch', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 63. no. 1, 2000, pp. 47–88, p. 49.

expensive and greater quantities of things. And the aim of the game is, of course, happiness.

Shopping and retail therapy have in recent years been a popular choice of subject for numerous (particularly English-language) television programmes – think of *Sex and the City* or *Absolutely Fabulous* – and books such as *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, *Retail Therapy: Life Lessons Learned While Shopping* and, in German, Nicole Müller's *Kaufen – ein Warenhausroman*.[4] In fact, consumerism has been perceived as so all-encompassing that the last decade has actually seen a movement against mass consumption – a conscious 'scaling down' of desires, wants and consumer behaviour by individuals wishing to reduce the impact of material values on their lives.[5] The theme of consumerism and shopping found in these books has been supplemented by numerous others which address the question of excess consumption and the detrimental effect it might be having on the social fabric of western society.[6] Further, comparatively new areas of academic research such as ecofeminism and ecophilosophy draw upon our relationship with the natural environment as a way of approaching questions pertaining to individual identity, history and urban life from an alternative perspective.[7]

The perceived tide of consumerism and the insatiable desire for goods form the backdrop for the ideas presented here. I am specifically interested in those who are assumed to engage most frequently in shopping as a leisure activity, namely women. Why is it that *women* are traditionally associated with the activity of shopping? What mechanisms were involved in shifting women into the consumer limelight? How did advertisers of the past address their clientele and what assumptions were made about the characteristics of the female shopper? Finally, how was the female consumer represented and constructed in early advertising and trade journals?

4 See Sophie Kinsella, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, New York, 2001; Amanda Ford, *Retail Therapy: Life Lessons Learned While Shopping*, York Beach, 2002; Nicole Müller, *Kaufen! Ein Warenhausroman*, Munich/Vienna, 2004; *Absolutely Fabulous*, screened on the BBC (UK) from 1992 until 2004; *Sex and the City*, broadcast on HBO (USA) from 1998 until 2004. These television series and books use consumerism or shopping either as the primary theme and/or as the background for the storyline.

5 It is worth noting that the modern 'anti-consumption' phenomenon is most certainly in itself a class distinction and generally the privilege of those whose financial means allow them to reduce their working hours such that they have more spare time without suffering too many financial restrictions. In economic terms, the opportunity cost of reducing work time (and therefore income) must not exceed the additional utility (i.e. satisfaction or happiness) gained by a reduction of time spent at work. As Baudrillard states, anti-consumption is "(…) a meta-consumption and acts as a cultural indicator of class." (Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi, 1998, p. 91)

6 See for example Clive Hamilton, *Growth Fetish*, Crows Nest, 2003; Naomi Klein, *No Logo!*, London, 2000.

7 See Constant J. Mews and Kate Rigby (eds), *Ecology, Gender and the Sacred*, Clayton Vic, 1999; Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen (eds), *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context, and Religion*, Lanham, 2003; Freya Mathews, *The Ecological Self*, London, 1991; Freya Mathews, *Reinhabiting Reality: Towards a Recovery of Culture*, Sydney, 2005.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

From the late-eighteenth through to the mid twentieth century and arguably to the present, it has been assumed that a woman shopped because it was her prerogative or because she was fulfilling a social duty by taking on the responsibility of family consumption.[8] The sophistication of marketing and retail techniques, the establishment of an organised ready-made clothing industry and the consolidation of a system of publicity that redefined the role played by women in the representation of consumption contributed to the acquisition and display of items for personal adornment taking on heightened feminine connotations during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[9] Against this historical background, this book addresses the construction and representation of the bourgeois female consumer in contemporary advertising strategies in Munich from 1900 until approximately 1914. Of primary importance is, first, the way in which an active female consumer was created through advertising and, secondly, how the activity of shopping provided the female consumer with new social and cultural influence, and in doing so re-defined the social realms and avenues of her activity.

The primary sources drawn upon in the subsequent analysis consist of sales literature in the form of journals specifically for retailers, along with the historical advertising material of four Munich firms – *Roeckl*, *Loden-Frey*, and the department stores *Kaufhaus Oberpollinger* and *Warenhaus Hermann Tietz*. The sources are used in order to examine the process by which the bourgeois woman as consumer and shopping as a leisure activity were ingrained in the public consciousness. The main focus is the emergence of contemporary ideas about the relationship between women and shopping. Situated in the body of the analysis will be an examination of the way in which these ideas contributed to the social sedimentation and acceptance of shopping as a gender-specific leisure activity. The questions which form the research framework are as follows: How were contemporary concepts of gender intertwined with advertising strategies in order to encourage women to shop? Which methods were employed to stimulate female consumption? How was an image of the female consumer constructed in this process? In other words, to what extent was the role of the female consumer solidified and justified by the representation of shopping as a female privilege and even a female right? To what degree did consumption allow the bourgeois woman to fulfil her responsibility as the arbiter of cultural and aesthetic norms and ideals? Applying a cultural-history approach allows the female consumer in a nascent consumer society to be studied from an actor-oriented perspective. This means placing the female consumer as an active individual in relation to the social practices carried out within a society. It thereby becomes possible to ask to what extent consumer activities were ascribed to the bourgeois woman and how her consumer activities influenced her position within the social spheres and urban spaces of her daily life.

8 Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860–1914*, Manchester/New York, 1999, p. 1.

9 Ibid.

The period 1900 until 1914 – the prehistory of German mass consumption – saw a wider distribution of increasingly sophisticated advertising manuals as well as the establishment of department stores in most cities and larger regional centres. Significant shifts in commercial structures, such as more efficient methods of production, new products, improved advertising techniques and new retailing methods were fundamental for the creation of a consumer society. As a novel and innovative retail form, the department store in particular opened new consumption opportunities that not only brought with them a broad range of products, but also allowed the rise of the concept of shopping as a leisure activity. Subsequent and increasingly refined advertising strategies represented a heightened and deliberate attempt to communicate directly with potential consumers. At the beginning of the twentieth century, an increasingly large minority of people were able to choose what and how they wanted to consume. While for the lower classes consumption was still a matter of acquiring the items necessary to meet basic needs, the middle-classes began to enjoy the freedom that a consumer society offered to fulfil desires over and above their everyday requirements. The development of a system of publicity redefined the role played by women in the representation of consumption, and influenced the way in which the acquisition and display of clothing and items for personal decoration took on heightened feminine connotations.

The nature of consumption for personal pleasure can function as an element of self-realisation and contributes to the formation of a social identity within the context of mass leisure and mass consumption. This study is, therefore, primarily concerned with assumptions about women's buying instincts and the attempts of advertisers and retailers to capture the attention of women. The focus on female consumer behaviour contributed to a 'feminisation' of fashionable consumption resulting, in part, in the subsequent relegation of its moral worth. Excluded in the period under investigation are the economic disruptions and related advertising developments caused by the First World War, a period which saw a fundamental shift in the role played by women as consumers.

The study hinges upon the concept of a consumer society which presupposes a range of specific characteristics. At the turn of the twentieth century the circulation of images and meanings of goods on a mass scale was only possible in an urban environment. As a result, consumer culture became a distinctly urban phenomenon appearing within the context of expanding commercial centres and linked to unprecedented large-scale production and technological innovation. Other characteristics of the nascent consumer society included marked social changes caused by the reorganisation of working life and the growing division between public and private life.[10]

10 Lisa Tiersten, *Sisterhood of Shoppers: Bourgeois Women and Consumer Culture in Late 19th Century Paris*, Ann Abor, 1991, pp. 8–9. Expanding commercial centres through population growth came about especially as a result of migration from the surrounding regions and due to an improved ratio of births to deaths. See also Alan J. Kidd, *The Making of the British*

Both interdisciplinary consumer studies and tightly focused studies originating from a particular discipline – e.g. the history of tea and coffee, or the consumption of fashion and art – can benefit from the application of concepts such as 'consumer society' or 'consumer culture' in order to analyse these micro-narratives from a common theoretical perspective. These concepts identify typical or dominant characteristics and relationships relevant to a wide range of consumer-focused studies and therefore act as a framework around which specific consumer histories can be developed. A consumer society requires the availability of a wide (or growing) range of products to which the majority of social groups have ready access; it assumes the existence of communication systems as well as categories of goods which are influenced by fashion, style and taste. Additional prerequisites for the growth of a consumer society are an emphasis on leisure over work as well as consumption over production and, most importantly for this study, the development of the consumer as a distinct category within the demand-supply equation. Equally necessary is a certain amount of hostility towards consumerism as well as public debate about its ramifications.[11] A consumer society also implies political action, the ability to adapt to new situations and a shift in the moral code of a society.[12] As a concept, the *consumer society* encompasses a broad range of elements which enable it to function as a common point of reference according to which various consumer studies can align themselves.

Bürgerlich and *Bürgertum* can be roughly translated as 'bourgeois' and 'bourgeoisie'. However, for the purposes of this study the original German terms have been retained where possible. Where the terms *Bürgertum* or *bürgerlich* cannot be used due to grammatical restrictions, 'bourgeois' has, in most cases, been substituted. This term is generally more appropriate than 'middle-class' in this context as it implies elements of class difference as well as the social hierarchy that are implicit in term *Bürgertum*. The German *Bürgertum* consisted of groups with various educational and socio-economic backgrounds. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, those who would have considered themselves members of the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (bourgeois society) would have been entrepreneurs, managers and employers (members of the social formation *Wirtschaftsbürgertum*) as well as lawyers, doctors, academics, civil servants and so on (members of the so-called *Bildungsbürgertum*).[13] In contrast to the term 'middle-class', *Bürgertum* denotes not only a position on the social ladder, but also the cultural orientations and behavioural norms shared by the different groups

Middle-Class, Stroud, 1998 and Jürgen Kocka and Allen Mitchell (eds), *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford/Providence, 1993.

11 See Hannes Siegrist, 'Konsum, Kultur und Gesellschaft im modernen Europa', in Hannes Siegrist, Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Kocka (eds), *Europäische Konsumgeschichte. Zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)*, Frankfurt a.M./New York, 1997, pp. 13–48.

12 Detlef Briesen, *Warenhaus, Massenkonsum und Sozialmoral. Zur Geschichte der Konsumkritik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a.M., 2000, p. 25.

13 Jürgen Kocka, 'The European Pattern and the German Case', in Kocka and Mitchell (eds), *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 3–39, pp. 6–7.

belonging to it – examples are a shared respect for individual achievement, emphasis on education and an appreciation of aesthetic pursuits, such as music and the arts. Bourgeois culture with its common values and cultural emphasis was dependent on an urban environment. Cultural events, clubs and meeting places were necessary for the cohesion of bourgeois life, and could most readily be found in larger towns and cities.[14] By the turn of the twentieth century, consumption had added a further and very different component to everyday life. Membership of the bourgeoisie no longer hinged purely on intangible values and interests, but also on consumer goods and shopping as a leisure activity. Thus, membership of the *Bürgertum* could, to a certain extent, be bought as well as earned so that bourgeois culture tended to expand beyond the social boundaries of the *Bürgertum* itself.

Along with the workplace and public life, organised leisure was one of the most important areas influenced by bourgeois culture. Obstacles which might have made entry into bourgeois society difficult were prerequisites such as a stable, sufficient income and time to pursue leisure interests.[15] However, cheaper consumer durables and the introduction of the concept of 'browsing' meant that those excluded from the traditional definition of '*bürgerlich*', such as the lower middle-classes including master artisans, small merchants and clerks, had access to more affordable durables, the display of which could provide them with entry to bourgeois society. Few other areas reflect social determination more than private consumption. As a primary expression of a class-specific lifestyle, consumption offers various lifestyle alternatives from which an individual can choose, depending on his or her social standing or preferred construction of self. The choice of commodity is not only influenced by needs or utility, but is also socially determined. Consumption patterns, therefore, constitute a fundamental dimension of social differentiation and social inequality.[16]

1.3 Why Munich?

Cities are the places in which dreams and hopes are realised or denied, leaving powerful legacies on the urban landscape. While urban space is the most commonly experienced feature of the city, it possesses different meanings and serves various purposes for the individuals engaging with it. The urban landscape is thus a space moulded according to the influences of its inhabitants. As a dynamic space, it carries the narratives and symbolic meanings of the past, present and future. The economic, social and cultural uses of space create a collage in which concepts of space, its creation and use, play a central and defining role. A city is not only shaped by physical structures, residential areas and public spaces,

14 Ibid., p. 7.

15 Ibid.

16 Toni Pierenkemper, 'Der bürgerliche Haushalt in Deutschland an der Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert – im Spiegel von Haushaltrechnungen', in Dietmar Petzina (ed.), *Zur Geschichte der Ökonomik der Privathaushalte*, Berlin, 1991, pp. 149–185, p. 159.

but also by its inhabitants and the activities in which they participate. City residents imprint their own mark on urban spaces through everyday interaction with the environment in which they live – a thematic framework defined not only by the question of how cities are designed, but also how they are experienced to produce a specific visual profile, a conglomeration of influences from the past and present.

In the world of fashion, the city is a stage on which the newest trends can be followed. In the early twentieth century, fashion promised its devotees social mobility and narcissistic rewards beyond the boundaries of traditional self-promotion. The consumer of fashion moved through the city street with the intention of being seen. More than just clothes, the products of a new industrial age also adorned display windows, advertising pillars and posters, and formed a visual tapestry to catch the eye of the city dweller. Moreover, the urban context provided the backdrop for a growing consumer society where shopping was no longer merely a necessity, but also engaged in for pleasure.

Despite regional differences in the onset and rate of development, mass consumption was a phenomenon which influenced daily life in all cities in Germany in the period being studied. The end of the nineteenth century in Munich was a period of dramatic growth. Between 1885 and 1900, the city's population grew by approximately 52%.[17] This population expansion marked Munich's transition from a regional centre to an urban metropolis. The rise in population resulted in a considerable expansion of the commercial and retail sectors and saw the development of petit-bourgeois sectors of the population in addition to the considerable number of senior public servants living in the city.[18] Furthermore, at the turn of the twentieth century, Munich was host to numerous exhibitions such as 'Die Ausstellung zur Verbessung der Frauenkleidung' in 1903, which also served to stimulate consumer demand. The city maintained a primarily bourgeois social character, the development in the industrial sector during the Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth century notwithstanding. This makes it particularly well suited to an examination of the kind undertaken here.[19]

The year 1900 saw an overhaul of the Munich city centre to accommodate the demands of an ever-growing population. The primary aim was to re-design the city according to the requirements of 'modern life', changes that appeared neces-

17 Munich grew from a population of 261,981 in 1885 to 499,594 in 1900. See Ludwig Hollweck, *Was war wann in München*, Munich, 1972, pp. 137 and 150.

18 Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Soziale Räume – Stadtentwicklung – Städtebau. Soziale Räume und politische Herrschaft. Leistungsverwaltung, Stadterweiterung und Architektur in München, 1870 bis 1914', in Wolfgang Hardtwig and Klaus Tenfelde (eds), *Soziale Räume der Urbanisierung. Studien zur Geschichte Münchens im Vergleich 1850 bis 1933*, Munich, 1990, pp. 59–154, p. 65.

19 In 1905, 61.4% of the Munich population belonged to the lower or upper middle-class. See Ekkehard Wiest, *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft in München 1830–1920*, Pfaffenweiler, 1991, p. 95.

sary for reasons related to transport, hygiene and commercial interests.[20] One aspect of this inner-city expansion was the planning of a transport and road network. In 1888, this included the acquisition of land which would become Munich's majestic 'Prinzregentenstraße'. The 'Prinzregentenstraße', along with other major inner-city thoroughfares such as the prestigious 'Maximillianstraße', was also built with the intention of providing the pedestrian with a variety of viewpoints from which to observe the city.[21] The wide streets created during the process of re-design rendered attractive locations for shops and ensured higher profit margins for owners and neighbouring businesses.[22] The Munich city centre, small enough to allow the pedestrian to maneuver around relatively easily on foot, was serviced with a system of trams electrified in the late 1890s and expanded in 1900. Access to the city was important in order for the centre to serve as a hub for commercial and consumer activities.

Today, Munich is a city still characterised by its social diversity and liberal attitudes on the one hand, and by conservative and traditional powers on the other. These two poles of modernity and traditionalism already existed during the *Prinzregentenzeit*, where the differences were often more acute than elsewhere in Germany.[23] Munich saw itself as a city that offered its citizens and visitors more than most, promoting itself as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as a city of cheerful *Lebensfreude* and as a village-like *Weltstadt* – images still perpetuated today in slogans such as *Weltstadt mit Herz* (cosmopolitan city with a heart).[24] Its city lively cultural centre has always played a major role in attracting visitors from outlying regions, and in particular drawing a wealthy public who spend their consumer dollar – or *Reichsmark*, as was the case at the turn of the twentieth century – on entertainment, culture and shopping. The issue of consumerism acted as a catalyst for the tensions between the intellectual and cultural traditionalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its perceived destabilising confrontation with modern industrial society. This juxtaposition of traditionalism and comparatively rapid modernisation makes Munich an ideal case study for an analysis about the construction of the female consumer in advertising strategies within the context of an expanding city entering the throws of modern consumerism.

20 Uli Walter, ''Altstadt' oder 'City'?', in Friederich Prinz and Marita Krauss (eds), *München – Musenstadt mit Hinterhöfen. Die Prinzregentenzeit 1886–1912*, Munich, 1988, pp. 98–106, p. 98.

21 Stefan Fisch, 'Die Prinzregentenstraße. Moderne Stadtplanung zwischen Hof, Verwaltung und Terraininteressen', in Prinz and Kraus (eds), *München – Musenstadt mit Hinterhöfen*, pp. 82–89, pp. 83–83. The only drawback of the Prinzregentenstraße was that those heading down the large road on foot became firmly ensconced between the noise and grime of the traffic.

22 Walter, ''Altstadt' oder 'City'?', p. 98.

23 Heidi Karch, 'Das München-Bild und seine Vermarktung', in Prinz and Krauss (eds), *München – Musenstadt mit Hinterhöfen*, pp. 316–320, p. 317.

24 Ibid., p. 320.