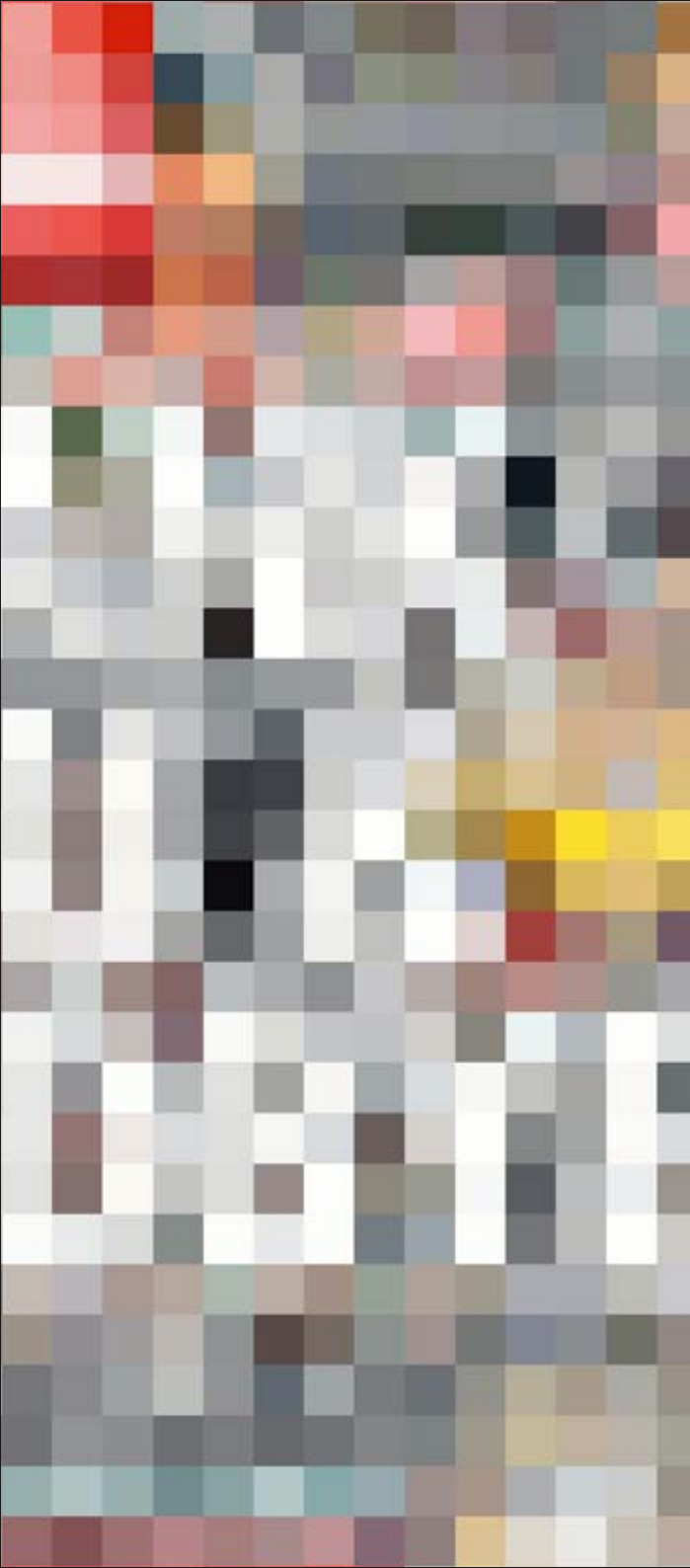


**Fashion**

**VESTOJ**



**Shame**



ISSUE THREE

# VESTOJ

On Fashion and Shame

PARIS, 2012

# Table of Contents

## TEXTS

<b>Shameful:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 24</i>
Dr Niall Richardson in conversation with Buck Angel	
<b>The Green Shades of Shame:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 27</i>
How Shame Procrastinates Engagement with the Sustainability Imperative in Fashion by Dr Mathilda Tham	
<b>Lighten Up, It's Just Fashion!</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 38</i>
by Lisa Ehlin	
<b>Docile Bodies:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 48</i>
A Study of Prison Uniforms and the Dress of Subservience by Anja Aronowsky Cronberg	
<b>Shameless Trespassing:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 67</i>
On Cultural Transits, Immodest Exposure and the Grotesque Body by Dr Ane Lynge-Jorlén	
<b>Laver's Law</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 79</i>
by James Laver	
<b>Convulsive Beauty:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 82</i>
Some Notes Towards an Archaeology of Shame by Donatien Grau	
<b>Dressed Up and Laying Bare:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 90</i>
Fashion in the Shadow of the Market by Anna Arabindan-Kesson	
<b>The Dismembered Body:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 124 (Hidden)</i>
Notes on Fashion, Fetish and Shame by Marya Hornbacher	
<b>Fashion and the Fleshy Body:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 162</i>
On Dress as Embodied Practice by Dr Joanne Entwistle	
<b>Makeovers in the New Millenium:</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 180</i>
A Story of Shame and Salvation in a Different Key by Dr Brenda R. Weber	
<b>My Favourite Things</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 197</i>
by Hannah Smith-Drelich	
<b>Styling Modesty</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 210</i>
by Professor Reina Lewis	

## VESTOJ FLASH FICTION

<b>Mirror</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 80</i>
by Will Wiles	
<b>The Scarlet Letter</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 105</i>
by Nathaniel Hawthorne	
<b>Before the Great War</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 115</i>
by Adam Biles	
<b>Badge of Shame</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 178</i>
by Madelaine Levy	
<b>Red Petals</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 192</i>
by Erin Byrne	
<b>Good Wives</b> . . . . .	<i>Page 225</i>
by Louisa May Alcott	

## WITH ARTWORKS BY

Christian Coinbergh:	<i>Page 12-14, 23-25</i>
Annika von Hausswolff:	<i>Page 36-37, 228</i>
Scott King:	<i>Page 43-46</i>
Julie Roberts:	<i>Page 64-65</i>
Emma Löfström:	<i>Page 66, 71-74</i>
Camille Vivier:	<i>Page 82-86</i>
Tim Rollins & K.O.S:	<i>Page 104, 107</i>
Columbine Goldsmith:	<i>Page 108-109, 238</i>
Anuschka Blommers & Niels Schumm:	<i>Page 110-111</i>
Willem Andersson:	<i>Page 112-113</i>
Carlotta Manaigo:	<i>Page 114, 119</i>
Laurindo Feliciano:	<i>Page 120-122, 155-157</i>
Max Farago:	<i>Page 158-159</i>
Jen Davis:	<i>Page 160-162, 167-174</i>
David Dunan:	<i>Page 183, 185, 187, 189</i>
Thomas Engel Hart:	<i>Page 196</i>
Matthias Vriens-McGrath:	<i>Page 198-199</i>
Jessica Craig-Martin:	<i>Page 200-203</i>
Jason Evans:	<i>Page 204-205</i>
Marilyn Minter:	<i>Page 206-207</i>
Anthony Cotsifas:	<i>Page 208-209</i>
Julia Hetta:	<i>Page 210-211, 215-218</i>
Rick Castro:	<i>Page 229</i>
Tova Mozad:	<i>Page 230</i>
Lisa Rovner:	<i>Page 235</i>
Mason Poole:	<i>Page 236-237</i>

## Letter from the editor



*IN GOYA'S SKETCH* For being born somewhere else we see a man wearing a sanbenito and a coroza hat, the garments of shame during the Spanish Inquisition; he is turned away from us, covering his face with his hands. His body language is not so dissimilar from what our impulse would tell us to do, were we in his shoes. Shame is personal, but also universal: we blush, cast our eyes down, lower our heads and seek to hide from prying eyes. Whereas guilt causes us to feel regret about something we have done, in shame our very selves are up for painful judgment. Shame allows us to see ourselves in the eyes of others, and here its link to dress is at its most potent.

For us this journey began with Adam and Eve, banished from the Garden of Eden by a wrathful God – the beginning of consciousness, shame and also clothing. Our exploration of 'fashion and

shame' originates with the symbolic birth of mankind; from it we have attempted to delve into this multifaceted and complex subject matter in as many different ways as we have found interpretations of the theme. In all ages clothes have been used as a marker of shame. In seventeenth century England and Scotland the branks, an iron muzzle with a bridle, often spiked and pressing down on the wearer's tongue, was a common device used for punishment and public humiliation. We can read about the dunce cap in the 1840 novel *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens and a decade later Nathaniel Hawthorne gives a moving account of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, a woman in seventeenth century Puritan Boston, forced to wear the symbol of her crime stitched on her chest. We have seen the yellow Star of David and the pink triangle come and go as well as the striped and arrowed prison uniform, and not long ago we got used to spotting the orange Abu Ghraib jumpsuit on the backs of those detained at the Baghdad Correctional Facility. These are just a few examples we have come across; the list of garments associated with our shame is long and diverse.

\*\*\*

Our topic is, however, not restricted to clothing and accessories created to specifically shame their wearer. The clothes we wear in our everyday life are also full of shaming potential; garments meant to protect and provide confidence often fall short and leave us feeling vulnerable and exposed. Imagine, for example, the embarrassment of being turned away at a fashion show in all your finery or of turning up at an important event and finding that someone else is wearing the same dress as you. Or go back to that time when you left the bathroom at your lover's house, it was the first dinner with the parents, and your flies were undone. Or recall the moment that you, surrounded by friends, got out of the water only to discover that your new bathing suit had become completely transparent. Or maybe you remember when your favourite white trousers decided to turn on you and proclaim to the world that today you got your period. Fashion and clothing has this effect on us. It renders us self-conscious of our fashionable selves, or lack thereof, and the feel-



*ing of shame can surface all too easily when we see ourselves through the gaze of others. Fashion prompts us to judge ourselves and those around us. It forces us to face up to the shame of not belonging, the shame imposed on others for not dressing the part, the shame of not being able to participate in fashion because of a body type deemed 'wrong' or a wallet deemed too meagre.*

\*\*\*

*The system and industry born to cater to our desires is as paradoxical as it is complex and few are the areas so often shamed by outsiders. Child labour, overproduction and consumption, narrow ideals of beauty and environmental damage are just a few of the sore points that concern those of us who love fashion. Yes, fashion is indeed a system that is easily condemned. Superficial, fickle, frivolous and indulgent – there are few invectives that have yet to be hurled at fashion. Conscientious fashion lovers have no doubt asked themselves many times over whether fashion as we know it could survive without the material abundance we have become accustomed to or the ideals we have created that at all times egg us on in our quest to always be better, brighter versions of ourselves. Fashion seems to revel in being the rebel – it is a zone where even the most level-headed among us allow ourselves to be bad, irrational and slightly wayward. Perhaps we need this area as a zone to break out of an otherwise strictly conditioned existence. Through fashion we can be guilty of inconsistencies and misdemeanours and permit our better selves a momentary rest. Fashion is an area where we are allowed to hang our heads in collective shame, where it often feels good to be bad.*

*When Adam and Eve fell from grace they sewed their fig leaves before they did anything else – the shame of their nakedness had to be removed. As the children of Adam and Eve, we too have a lot to hide. Our lumps and bumps, both moral and physical, are our constant cause of shame, but, as Jean-Paul Sartre suggests in the quote on this issue's bookmark, it is in this shame that we can unveil the most intimate aspects of our beings.*

#

This is the third issue of Vestoj. It was published in spring 2012.

Vestoj was typeset in Arial, designed by Monotype and Georgia, designed by Matthew Carter. It was printed and bound by Strokirk-Landströms in Lidköping, Sweden. The paper stocks used are Arctic Gloss and Munken Print White 15, both provided by Arctic Paper, as was the paper stock used for the cover – Arctic Gloss 300g. The cover is embossed and decorated with a hot foil supplied and applied by Laminator, Sweden.

We have an ISSN number! It's 2000-4036. You can buy Vestoj from all the best (obviously!) newsstands and stores around the world, and also directly from us. Look at the website for details, [www.vestoj.com](http://www.vestoj.com).

The views expressed in Vestoj sometimes coincide with the editors', but then again other times they don't. Basically, if you want to complain, feel free to do so. We love a good ol' rant, but we'll probably, annoyingly, sit on the fence.

If you want to reproduce anything from the magazine, don't forget to ask permission first.

Vestoj HQ is still located on the beautiful rue Beranger, in the heart of Le Marais, in a house with heavy doors that goes under the number 7. The postcode is still 75003, and the city is still Paris. Now you can probably guess that this is Paris, France, not Paris, Texas, Paris, Ontario or even Paris, Kiribati. On another note, did you know that Kansas City is also called Paris of the Plains? And that Saskatoon is also known as Paris of the Prairies?

If you want to reach us to say something nice or to let us know that we could have done so much better, the address is [info@vestoj.com](mailto:info@vestoj.com). If you want more Vestoj and can't be arsed to wait around for another year (yes, that's how long it takes us!), you can stay updated on our Facebook account or at [www.vestoj.com](http://www.vestoj.com) and you can always follow the progress of the next issue on our blog, [www.vestoj.com/current/](http://www.vestoj.com/current/)

Vestoj is a non-profit organisation that consists of some extraordinarily committed people (you have to be to be able to work on a shoe string!). Our survival is dependent on selfless support from generous individuals and foundations. Please please support us so that we won't have to go on another diet for the next issue (diets suck!)? All donations, big or small, will be acknowledged and you can rest assured that you will get brownie points in heaven (or with Santa Claus, depending on what you believe in). Contact us at [info@vestoj.com](mailto:info@vestoj.com) – NOW!

For this issue we want to extend our humble gratitude to the following:  
Institute for Fashion Design, Academy of Art and Design HGK, Basel and Jimmy K.W. Chan of Semeiotics Inc – without them you would not be holding this issue in your hands right now.

**n|w** University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland  
Academy of Art and Design  
Institute for Fashion Design

**SEMEIOTICS, INC.**

We would also like to point out that Jimmy has very kindly donated 150 copies of Vestoj to Parsons The New School for Design. Thank you Jimmy!

There are some others too who have been worth gold to us, they are: Ciléne Andréhn of Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Terry Craven, Akari Endo-Gaut, Michelle Lamy, Danielle Dreier, Priska Morger, Palais de Tokyo and, as always, the Big Monkey. Thank you all one million times over, we bow to your generosity of spirit.

As we have no advertising we won't give you the usual blurb about who to contact to bribe us into featuring your products. Give unselfishly instead!

## VESTOJ ISSUE 3 IS

Editor-in-Chief & Publisher  
Anja Aronowsky Cronberg

Art Director & Designer  
Erik Hartin

Editor  
Ane Lynge-Jorlén

Fashion Director  
Sofie Krunegård

Literary Editor  
Anna Pook

Contact: first name @vestoj.com

Interns  
Anna Sundström  
May Putman Cramer  
Laura Scovell Gardner

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Professor Caroline Evans  
Reader in Fashion History and Theory, Central  
Saint Martins School of Art and Design, London

Professor Christopher Breward  
Principal of Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh

Olivier Saillard  
Curator at Musée de la Mode et du Costume,  
Palais Galliera, Paris

Dr Valerie Steele  
Director and Chief Curator, Museum at the  
Fashion Institute of Technology, New York

Professor Peter McNeil  
Professor, Centre for Fashion Studies at  
Stockholm University, Stockholm and University  
of Technology, Sydney

Louise Wallenberg  
Director and Assistant Professor, Centre for  
Fashion Studies at Stockholm University,  
Stockholm

Professor Elizabeth Wilson  
Visiting Professor of Cultural Studies at the  
London College of Fashion, London

Nathalie Ours  
PR Consultant, PR Consulting and ON  
Consulting, Paris

Neville Wakefield  
Curator of Frieze Project and Writer on  
Contemporary Culture, New York

Sarah Mower  
Ambassador for Emerging Talent, The British  
Fashion Council, London

Hamish Bowles  
European Editor-at-Large US Vogue, New York

Ingrid Giertz-Mårtenson  
CEO Swedish Vision, Stockholm

Jimmy K.W. Chan  
Chairman/CEO Semeiotics, Inc, Paris

Masthead



# Shameful:

A  
CONVERSATION  
WITH  
BUCK  
ANGEL

by Dr Niall  
Richardson

Pages 12–14, 23–25: CHRISTIAN COINBERGH





IT'S

AN

autumnal afternoon in London's Soho and I'm meeting porn-legend Buck Angel. I must admit, I'm more than a little nervous. Very few contemporary porn stars have inspired as much discussion – both academic and journalistic – as Buck Angel. As someone who was born female, and worked as a professional model, but then changed sex and pursued a career in pornography, Buck challenges many cultural and social expectations. Buck is, arguably, one of the first Female to Male (FtM) transsexual performers in the adult entertainment world and could even be credited with starting a new genre of pornography. He has since won a number of awards for his work including 'Transsexual Performer of the Year' (2007) and a special honour from the Feminist Porn Awards for 'Boundary Breaker of the Year' in 2008.

Known as 'the hunk with a pussy', Buck is famous for his 'red-neck' masculine appearance which is in stark contrast with his below-the-waist anatomical detail. He coined the phrase "It's not what's between your legs that defines you" and the erotic potential of his films all stress that gender performance exerts as much sexual allure as what is (or is not) between the legs. Many of us, who have often felt quite secure in our sexuality, have been amazed at how Buck's performances can be a solvent of our sexual identity. I certainly won't have been the first gay man to have been turned on by Buck's films.

When Buck arrives, he's extremely friendly – beaming an ear-to-ear smile of perfect, white teeth, gleaming beneath his auburn facial hair. To have a conversation about shame, with a man who claims to have no shame, might seem a daunting task but Buck was happy to talk frankly about anything from trans politics to his own particular performance of hard masculinity.

**NIAL RICHARDSON:** Your career has followed an interesting path in that it reverses the trajectory that a lot of performers would aspire to have. While many porn stars might aspire towards professional modelling, you started as a fashion model but then gave up a career in

"I felt more shame when working as a fashion model than I do working in porn."

professional modelling to move to the much less culturally respected arena of shameful pornography.

**BUCK ANGEL:** It's interesting you use 'shameful' as I felt more shame when working as a fashion model than I do working in porn. But then, I have no shame. Modelling was something I never aspired to – I really was put into it. Believe it or not, I was simply discovered on the street and really only followed through with all the opportunities as a dare. In modelling terms I was actually quite old – 26 – but I was very successful and made a lot of money from it. I could well have been a supermodel (although the term didn't exist at that time) as I was very influential in promoting the popularity of the androgynous look. However, it just didn't feel right. I didn't want to be a pretty woman; I wanted to be a handsome man.

**NR:** That story really emphasises how important it was for you to change sex. Many people would think that because you're told by all of society that your body is beautiful, and you're able to make a livelihood from it, that you'd be happy to just accept it. But obviously you weren't.

**BA:** Exactly. That's why I felt more shame in working in the 'respectable' profession of fashion modelling than I do in porn. I don't feel any shame for the representations I make now, I only sometimes get a sense of slight 'defeat' when people don't get the message from my work.

**NR:** And what is your message?

**BA:** My message is self-acceptance. I always do very basic sex scenes and try to represent Buck Angel as a positive sexual being. There have been lots of representations of trans bodies – she-male porn and stuff like that – but that's always been a curiosity and something appealing to a voyeuristic nature.

**NR:** Perhaps a big difference is that your representations emphasise Buck Angel's sexual pleasure rather than sensationalising a 'freak' body? Your work is not 'enfreakment' or a freak show.

**BA:** Yes. It's sexual pleasure for Buck Angel. But in that respect I always try to stress that I am an individual first and not a representation or

ambassador for a specific community.

**NR:** Ah yes, do you find that you're made to bear the burden of representation?

**BA:** Yes, I often find myself inspiring controversy from the trans community because of the things I say. Recently, I've been accused of being fat-phobic because I've cautioned FtM transsexuals about the need to take care of their body, especially when they're introducing testosterone into their system. As you know yourself from weight training, if you don't exercise and watch your diet, all that extra testosterone can cause the body to put on fat.

**NR:** It would be like doing a steroid cycle and not training? I see that all the time and guys just turn to flab.

**BA:** Exactly. And I'm not being fat-phobic when I warn FtM transsexuals about that – I'm simply stressing the need to take pride in your body. I always have a sense of pride in my body and always take care of myself.

**NR:** Well, let's talk a little more about the response from the trans community.

**BA:** A lot of things have changed in trans politics. In my day, we transitioned to become men – to identify as men. We didn't even have the term 'ciss-man' to describe someone who has maintained his birth sex; we used 'bio-man'. One big difference nowadays is that we now

“I didn’t want  
to be a  
pretty  
woman;  
I wanted  
to be a  
handsome  
man.”

## A CONVERSATION

find people who are transitioning so that they can identify as ‘trans’. That ‘trans’ is an identity in itself. That’s fine but it’s just not my politics.

NR: And do you think that trans politics could possibly be accused of asking too much of the everyday person? For example, many trans people now prefer to use the pronoun ‘they’ instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’. I can understand the political agenda of doing that but in everyday conversation that can make things rather difficult?

BA: Exactly. It’s like trying to reinvent the language.

NR: And for everyday people, who don’t have degrees in sociology or rhetoric, that can be asking a little too much.

BA: Indeed. My agenda has never been to reinvent the whole system but simply to show that you should love yourself and take pride in yourself and your sexuality – whatever it is.

NR: And to me that’s something you do very well. I think one of the first times I ever saw you was years ago, when I was a postgrad student and you appeared on *This Morning*.

BA: I loved that interview. I really felt I had a chance to do something positive.

NR: This Morning was a very popular show and would have reached a huge audience at that time. I remember being very impressed by the way you talked about trans issues

## WITH BUCK ANGEL

so matter-of-factly.

BA: Yeah, I always try to be calm and respectful. It doesn’t help to be aggressive.

NR: Well certainly looking the way you do, it wouldn’t help to be aggressive. I should think most people find your look intimidating enough!

BA: [Laughs]

NR: So let’s talk about your look then, your iconography. It’s obvious that you have a respect for masculinity – and a particular type of masculinity. You’ve been described as having a ‘red-neck masculinity’ by media scholar Katrien Jacobs or, in our British context, as representing ‘hard bastard’ masculinity.

BA: [Laughs] Yes, I’ve always aimed for hypermasculinity.

NR: But it’s a particular type of masculinity in that it’s particularly classed? In Britain we would simply call it ‘working-class’ masculinity. In the US you’d probably use the euphemism ‘blue-collar’. Why that particular iconography?

BA: My father. He was big influence on me. He was a working-class, blue-collar – whatever you want to call it – rough man. For me, that has always symbolised masculinity. Another influence on me was the imagery of Tom of Finland.

NR: And you’re very much settled on that particular style?



## Vestoj

**BA:** Yes, I always wear boots, jeans, t-shirts. I don't think I'd ever wear a formal suit – unless, of course, I had a special occasion which really demanded it.

**NR:** And what about your tattoos?

**BA:** Actually, those had started before I transitioned.

**NR:** Were they perhaps some sort of rebellion against the expectations of the fashion modelling world?

**BA:** Mmmmm, I don't think so. I think they were more about claiming my own body, demonstrating ownership of my own body.

**NR:** It's interesting that it's when people often feel their life is most out of control that they like to demonstrate control of their body. They might not be able to control their lives but they can control their bodies. And what about your facial hair?

**BA:** Very important for me. A symbol of masculinity.

**NR:** So what underpins your particular look? This is a difficult question, but would you say your look is driven more by politics or erotics? In other words, your performance of hard, rough masculinity: do you do it because you know it exerts an erotic attraction or is it about asserting masculinity? Or indeed, am I making a false distinction here? Is it ever possible to think of sexuality outside of gender?

## On Fashion and Shame

**BA:** Very interesting question. I think, for me, everything I do is inspired by eroticism. I find it OK that people look at me sexually – I like it. I would never simply grow a beard because I felt it made a point about masculinity unless it was also an erotic element. This is always the way I've felt about fashion. I wear tight jeans because they flatter my body and draw attention to sexy parts of my body – not because they're the fashion.

**NR:** In that respect, what do you think about the current fashion of middle-class boys emulating tough, working-class fashion? I suppose the main example at the minute is wearing the beltless jeans which all fall down because this was how people held in the police cell had to wear their jeans when their belts got confiscated.

**BA:** I think everything you wear should flatter your body. You should never wear something because it's cool and hip. For me, clothes are never just fashion but about asserting your individuality.

**NR:** Again, it's this idea of taking pride in yourself and what you do?

**BA:** Exactly. It's about working with your own body.

**NR:** OK Buck, so we've talked about porn industry shame, trans shame and class shame but I was wondering if you could speculate on a differ-

“My agenda has  
never been to  
re-invent the  
whole system  
but simply to  
show  
that you  
should love  
yourself and  
take pride in  
yourself  
and your  
sexuality –  
whatever it is.”

## Vestoj

ent type of shame often associated with your movies: the spectator's shame? Speaking personally, as a gay man, I would have no problem telling people that I liked the type of porn produced by Falcon or Titan but admitting to liking Buck Angel is something else.

**BA:** [Laughs] Yes! I am many people's dirty little secret. It is shameful for many people – gay or straight – as they think they're not supposed to be attracted to me or turned on by me. In gay culture it's all about the penis – gay men are supposed to be attracted only to that.

**NR:** I know, I've always been surprised by the number of personal ads on online gay dating sites in which people simply post images of their cocks and nothing else. No face pic; no body pic – just a cock. How's anyone supposed to be attracted to that? Why don't you just go out and buy a dildo?

**BA:** [Laughs] Yes, for me it's always about being attracted to a person's body rather than an organ. People are attracted to me for my masculinity rather than whether I have a penis or not.

**NR:** So for you sexuality is definitely built upon gender – the body's style and performance?

**BA:** For me, yes. But sexuality is a wide continuum. I hope that that's one of the things my work shows: that you

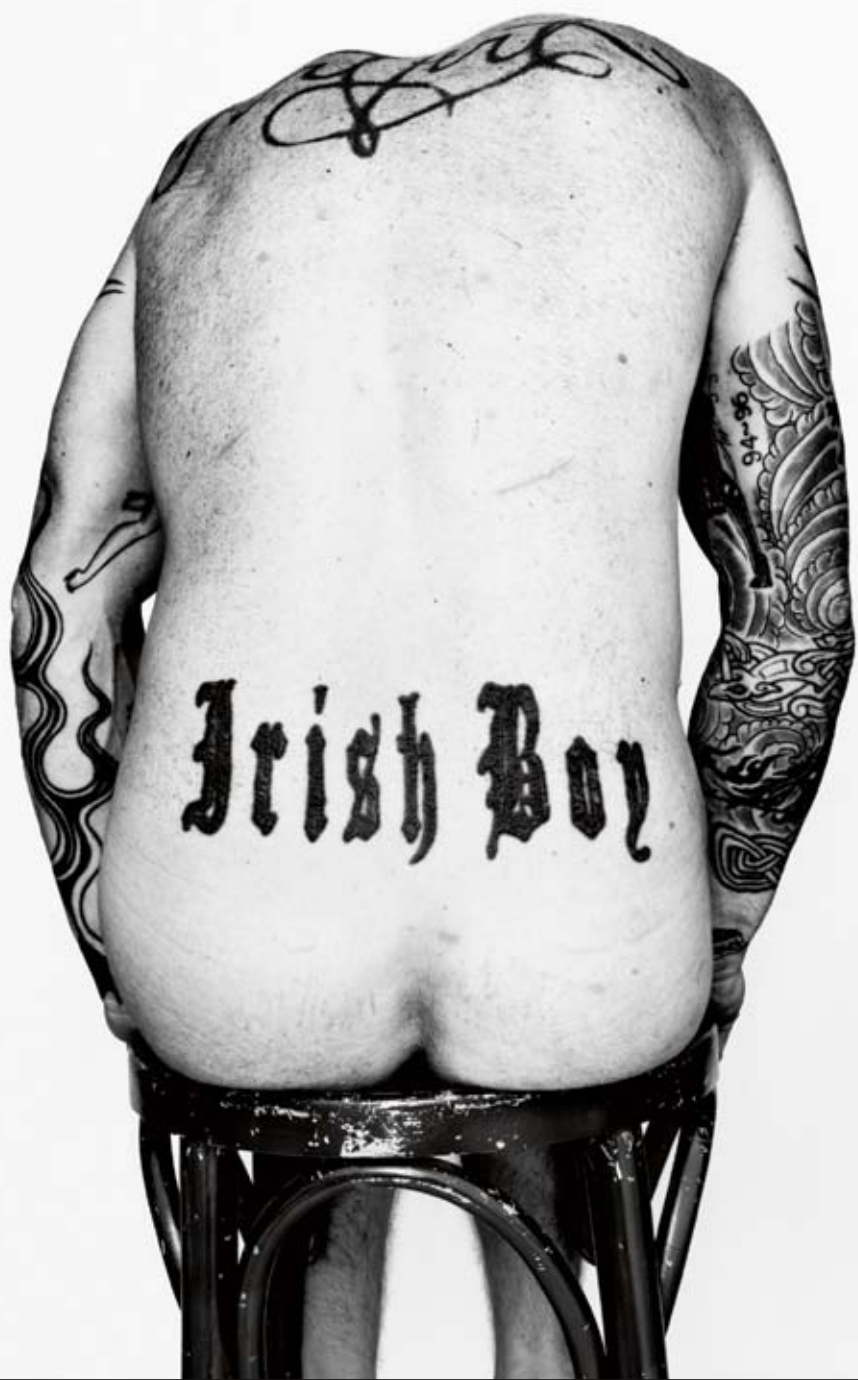
## On Fashion and Shame

should be OK with your sexuality. It's not about shame; it's about pleasure.

#







Shame: A feeling of distress or humiliation caused by consciousness of the guilt or folly of oneself or an associate.  
—The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995.

This paper addresses the theme of shame in fashion in the context of fashion's unsustainability. This can be exemplified by how fashion contributes to environmental degradation, how it has been known to use child labour, and how it systematically relies on overproduction and overconsumption to achieve profit.

An exhaustive discussion of the complex environmental and social effects of fashion, as well as the range of strategies for better practices that now exists, is outside the scope of this paper.<sup>1</sup> It suffices here to say that the last decade has brought tremendous advances in terms of formal frameworks for improvement, practices in

# The Green Shades of Shame

OR:  
HOW  
SHAME  
PROCRASTINATES  
ENGAGEMENT  
WITH  
THE  
SUSTAINABILITY  
IMPERATIVE  
IN  
FASHION

by Dr  
Mathilda  
Tham

the industry, as well as general awareness amongst both industry and public. However, we are still only at the beginning of a fundamental journey of change, where perhaps the biggest challenge – so far mainly untackled – concerns the very culture, mind-set or paradigm of fashion. So, yes, there is still reason to feel ashamed.

This paper specifically explores the role of shame in procrastinating engagement with the need for more sustainable fashion practices. I will argue that shame constitutes an important barrier to more pervasive changes, alongside more widely recognised obstacles relating to, for example, lack of knowledge, the complexity of the supply chain, limitations of legislation or financial incitements. If shame really plays a part in delaying a response to the dire environmental predicament, it becomes not a matter of just curiosity, but of survival, to understand it, and engage with it.

### Shame as a stage of a process

*There are three ways for designers to respond to the charge*

*that they are personally responsible for trashing the biosphere: argue the toss; cringe with guilt; or become part of the solution. I favour the third way...<sup>2</sup>*

Whereas the quote above suggests a list of options, from my experience the quote also describes a very common process that fashion designers (myself included), and indeed society at large, go through when they encounter the sustainability imperative. Our first instinct when faced with the environmental challenge is often to say “it can’t be true, the scientists got it wrong, and even if it were true, it’s got nothing to do with me”. The news simply implies too big an adjustment to be digestible, and puts into question too

much of what we have previously come to depend on and regard as truths. The second part of the process, when we have had a chance to make sense of and accept the facts, and readjust our previous understanding of the world to accommodate them, often involves feelings of guilt and shame. This again is an entirely normal reaction. The integration of new facts with our old worldview also sheds new light on our own practices, showing perhaps

ignorance, inadequacy and neglect where there was before skill and knowledge, satisfaction and pride. While this moment of shame appears normal, it constitutes an important watershed, where at best shame turns into action (as in the third option of the quote), or at worst prolonged inertia or even reversal to stage one – denial.

How then, can shame become action, and eventually even pride, perhaps the opposite of shame? Let us stay in the moment of shame and find out how we might achieve a shift.

### The pivotal role of agency in change

Feeling ashamed does not by necessity spur somebody into action. In fact, in our shame we feel cornered and we can often become angry, display defensive behaviour or seek to blame somebody else for our shortcomings. In both my informal and formal discussions with fashion designers, I have heard a range of explanations as to why they are not conducting environmental improvement: “our company is too big, our company is too small, I have not been given the appropriate education, this is actually the responsibility of the buyers, the chemists, the suppliers, the legislators...”

My own research into the integration of sustain-

ability in fashion provides some insights into what needs to happen for action to be the outcome. It indicates that the single most important factor for a positive outcome of an individual’s encounter with the sustainability imperative is the experience of agency. Immediately being able to act, albeit in a seemingly small way (such as washing clothes at a lower temperature – laundry constitutes a significant contributor to fashion’s effect on the environment), is more conducive to further engagement and action than increased knowledge, a better understanding of one’s own role in the bigger picture, or improvement in the perceived value or status of sustainability work. Naturally all these factors are desirable in a process of change, and indeed mutually supportive, but the experience of agency has a pivotal role.<sup>3</sup>

### Moving forward with fashion

Again, according to my research, remaining stuck at level two – cringing with guilt and shame, has much to do with an inability to envisage a constructive way forward with fashion. In the history of environmental improvement, fashion and sustainability have consistently been constructed as incommensurables, as anathema. This has occurred at several levels,



including language (qualitative vs. quantitative and reductionist), experience (luxury vs. frugality), and, of course, aesthetics (where many variations have existed, but where 'refined vs. earthy' has been a persistent stereotype since attempts at an environmentally friendlier fashion were made in the late 1980s and early 1990s).<sup>4</sup>

As previously stated, substantial progress has been made over the last decade concerning the pragmatic cleaning up of processes, and the range of expressions of environmentally friendlier fashion has also diversified. Yet, an integration of sustainability concerns at the deeper level of motivations and behaviour in fashion is still lacking. It is revealing and perhaps symptomatic where change has hitherto taken place:

The bigger mass-market companies have taken on a lead, such as in the development of code of conducts, and the integration of organic cotton, whereas few high fashion companies are known for engagement with sustainability.

Improvements are, in the main, still directed at the level of the process and product, substitution of harmful substance, process or material for a less harmful alternative consti-

tuting a dominant strategy.

In summary, fashion's engagement with sustainability, although increasingly widespread and noticeable, has not reached its core and system. This is understandable since seriously pursuing such a profound discussion would be so much more frightening. It would address fashion's speed and scale, thereby placing the business model under scrutiny.

However it would be even more frightening to ask if the allure of fashion can survive without material abundance, placing doubt not only at the level of our business, but also on our love. What if fashion is as superficial as they say? Choosing action before shame is therefore potentially

deeply coupled with fear. Moreover, while this fear prevents larger changes, changes that are urgent considering the environmental predicament, it also prevents fashion practitioners (here I include very interested users) from fully participating at the core of a remodelling of fashion – potentially a most exciting opportunity.

So far I have argued that shame plays a role in blocking engagement with sustainability. Possibly the shame is coupled with fear that fashion would not stand up to scrutiny

in the light, that there really is no future for fashion. I also want to propose that yet another reason for shame preventing action is that it to fashion designers is quite a familiar, and even comfortable state, to the point where perhaps shame even plays an intrinsic role in the fashion construct.

### Shame as part of the fashion construction

Shame's role in fashion seems to take place at two levels: shame ascribed to fashion by the world outside, and shame created by fashion internally. There are no doubt enough unsustainable practices to warrant feelings of shame in both fashion producer and user. However, shame in fashion preceded the dire environmental predicament, and it certainly preceded the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

In the words of Barbara Vinken:

*Fashion has rarely enjoyed a very good reputation. Despite its undeniable success as a social and commercial phenomenon, it remains the very exemplum of superficiality, frivolity and vanity... The philosophers and the sociologists take it up only in order to denounce it, or, at best, contemplate it with a wry and distanced amusement.*<sup>5</sup>

Endless pieces of literature and countless reports

have been dedicated to the shaming of fashion companies: for shoddy environmental practices, promoting unrealistic body ideals, or just plain indulgence. From the very onset of his or her chosen path, the fashion practitioner meets a persistent lack of being taking seriously from the outside world, with hints or direct accusations of frivolity.

Considering this, it is not strange that the fashion practitioner becomes, if not directly conditioned to shame, at least conditioned to accept not being popular and to devise strategies where she compartmentalises her life so that her otherwise sound values are not in direct conflict with her love of fashion. Choosing fashion as a profession or major interest seems to be accompanied by accepting a certain degree of, if not shame, at least the muting of an ongoing conflict.

In my study, an interesting theme of a high status/low status job came through, where on the one hand professionals were very proud of their fashion identity and celebrated for their creativity and perfect fashion pitch, and on the other expressed uncertainty of the value of their work. Indeed, from my personal experience in fashion, and according to my study, fashion designers and others internal to the industry even play a part in perpetuating a shallow 'brand' of fashion by, for example, semi-



“We need fashion as an area to be bad, either to personally engage in through for example strictly unnecessary shopping, or to be shocked by and indulge in moral self-righteousness, and in both cases we feel better for it.”

jocular use of mannerisms (see e.g. shrieks of ‘daahhling!’) and describing trend research as shopping (in a baby voice).<sup>6</sup> The high level of tacit knowledge in fashion practice, and lack of widespread formal framework for, for example, fashion design methodology, arguably contributes to an experience of powerlessness and even shame.

Yet, shame also plays an intrinsic role in fashion as a facet of its construction as ‘enfant terrible’. Throughout its history fashion has thrived and depended upon distancing itself

from, directly rejecting and subverting wholesome values and the establishment. (See e.g. Heroin Chic, Vivienne Westwood’s body of

work, sexualised teenage fashion, distressed jeans...) Whether it is its very ‘raison d’être’ or a prime source of innovation, fashion most productively keeps company with the deviants instead of the model citizens.

#### Society’s need for shame in fashion

Finally, I want to argue that society needs fashion as a zone of shame. It is a territory both convenient and delicious to single out to ‘love to hate’. There are definitely other

areas that are equally bad or even worse, but fashion is of course far sexier than, for example, the oil industry. At a personal level we take some delight in behaving badly in this so-configured zone of our lives. Fashion is where otherwise rational and good members of society can allow themselves to ‘leak’, and conduct a series of follies (see the definition of shame on p. 26). Perhaps it would be important to acknowledge that such a free-zone in our otherwise regulated lives fulfils an important role. We need fashion as an area to be bad, either to personally engage

in, through for example strictly unnecessary shopping, or to be shocked by and indulge in moral self-righteousness, and in both cases we feel better for it.

#### Discussion – conclusion

In order to transcend shame and to take action in the realm of sustainability, we need support and a collective vision. We know from other domains of shame, for example that of the recovering alcoholic, that the sharing of experiences of shame plays an important part in moving on. Yet shame is often lonely in fashion, as the industry is constituted of strong individuals instead of a cohesive collective.

6. M Tham, *Lucky People Forecast: A Systemic Futures Perspective on Fashion and Sustainability*, PhD Thesis Design, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2008.

The culture of fashion is not always one that promotes an easy sharing of doubt, fear or inadequacy. Without easily negotiable paths to address them, environmental degradation, child labour and over-consumption risk remaining uncomfortable areas to venture into.

A recurrent reaction to the workshops I set up with mixed fashion stakeholders on the topic of fashion and sustainability was the deep appreciation of a forum to discuss the issues together in an exploratory way, and with a shared love of fashion. The participants evidenced something akin to hunger in talking about these issues together. It was actually moving to witness the realisations that many concerns of individuals were shared, and new understandings built between, for example a manager of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and a fashion designer.<sup>7</sup>

What would a fully sanitised fashion system be like? Would it be devoid of elitism, lookism, environmental destruction and the capriciousness of one day abhorring fur and the next flaunting it? Would it be devoid of experimentation? Fashion should never be tame. It should provoke, it should strive for spectacular innovation and expression: the fashion moment

should hold magic. Fashion is risk, and should be. It should allow us untamed identity explorations, and it should allow endlessly new cultural juxtapositions.

Fashion as an area is vast, and its definitions muddy, encompassing everything from high-powered catwalk shows to an individual conducting style experiments in front of a mirror, and from conceptual proposals to shopping at a value chain. We can hope that the work of building theory from within fashion and from fashion practice, which is only in its early days,

will help to clarify to ourselves, and to the outside world some very complex emotions in and characteristics of fashion. Such an unpicking may be important in

assigning shame its right place, size and colour, and defining what types of risk sincerely have a place in fashion, and which have not.

#

7. M Tham, *Lucky People Forecast: A Systemic Futures Perspective on Fashion and Sustainability*, PhD Thesis Design, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2008.



**ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF**, *Untitled (skjortor)* 2001. Courtesy the artist.



**ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF**, *Untitled (skjortor)* 2001. Courtesy the artist.

# Lighten up, it's just fashion!



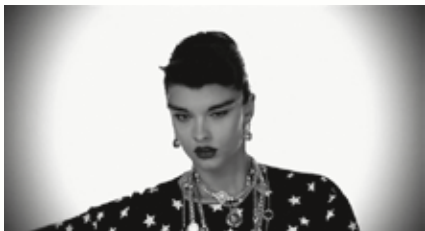
I'm flicking through the pages of the latest fashion magazines and all I see is white women, on every cover, in every fashion shoot, in every ad. Look around and you'll see what I mean; white is most certainly the new black. The exclusive vision of fashion is indeed painfully white. And in all that blinding whiteness, Vogue is its brightest star. Now a global franchise, it is more Western than ever.

A form of universal tagline has generally explained the lack of diversity of models in fashion magazines: "It doesn't sell". So what does sell? Let's consider a few interesting Vogue editorials of recent years: In October 2009, Vogue Paris published a series of photographs of Dutch model Lara Stone in which the naturally pale-skinned blonde's face and body are painted black. On the cover of the April 2008 issue of Vogue US, Brazilian model Gisele Bündchen is paired with the basketball star LeBron James, in a picture where he, according to some critics, looks like King Kong. In March 2011, Vogue Italia published an

by Lisa Ehlin



article online where they referred to jewellery as 'slave earrings', a term which, upon criticism, was later replaced with 'ethnic', as if the two were exchangeable. And finally, American model Crystal Renn's eyes were stretched and taped to look, one assumes, more Asian for a spread in the October 2011 issue of *Vogue* Nippon.



However, when asked about it Renn told the website Jezebel.com that taping her eyes was her own idea meant to help her get into character and not to imply racial imitation. She added: "We didn't even think about [the racial connotation] on the shoot"<sup>1</sup>. Whether cynicism or ignorance is behind this statement is perhaps not so important; what is baffling is that an entire industry keeps reproducing ethnic stereotypes in this manner.

Popular culture is filled with examples where ethnicity is mimicked, from black faces on

candy wrappers to 'the funny black guy' in countless TV shows. Racial overtones are racial overtones. So why play dress-up with ethnic essentialism? Why the refusal of using non-white models in fashion? It's hard not to construe Lara Stone in blackface or Crystal Renn's taped eyes as anything but a fashionable interpretation of Halloween where racial stereotypes are manifested through 'funny' costumes every year. Are these fashion spreads no better than bad racist jokes?

When people behind-the-scenes (photographers, stylists, agencies, clients) wish to use non-white models, they are usually turned down. In the documentary *The Colour of Beauty* (2010), photographer Dallas Logan states: "Black doesn't sell. Point blank. Money's green, and white people have the money".<sup>2</sup> This extends to catwalk shows where diversity is blatantly lacking. What's interesting however is that, regardless of which edition we are talking about, *Vogue* continues to reply to the criticism by feigning ignorance, claiming to be unaware that an editorial has caused racist offence. Or, to quote Priya Tanna, the

1. J Sauers *Vogue Editor Can't Be Racist, Says Vogue Editor* on Jezebel.com, published September 7, 2011.
2. L Peterson, *The Color of Beauty Looks At Institutionalized Racism in the Fashion Industry* on Racialicious.com, published May 13, 2010.
3. K Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2002: 4f.
4. L Peterson, *The Color of Beauty Looks At Institutionalized Racism in the Fashion Industry* on Racialicious.com, published May 13, 2010.

editor-in-chief of *Vogue* India, after the heavily criticised 'poverty' spread in their August 2008 issue that showed poor people daintily flaunting luxury goods: "Lighten up!" Lighten up indeed, as *Vogue* India continues to endorse light-skin models and several skin-lightening creams.



*Vogue*'s explicit ethnic stereotyping is complicated by its implied multi-levelled narratives incorporating imperialism and colonialism. *Vogue* Italia's use of the term 'slave earrings' is problematic because it reduces the struggle and suffering of generations to a mere aesthetic reference (for a white consumer). With this in mind the blackface sported by model Lara Stone in *Vogue* Paris needs to be put in the context of nineteenth century

minstrel shows. Through the use of blackface, the appropriation, exploitation and assimilation of African-American culture into white mainstream culture has taken place. There is a statement in using a white girl in blackface rather than an actual black girl. It is a performance of 'race' as a masquerade, not only by using and reproducing ethnic stereotypes, but also by reconstructing a history of domination through the imagining of the other (as black models are never cast to 'play' white in editorials, a fact seen as subverted for example in the documentary *Paris Is Burning* from 1992).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, most black models that we see have a very particular, statuesque and elegant look (not to mention narrow noses). As a model agent states in *The Colour of Beauty*: "They really look like white girls that were painted black".<sup>4</sup> You only have to look at the cover of *Vogue* Italia's All Black issue of July 2008 to see what he means. The stigma is undeniable. Regardless of how much the black girl looks white, regardless of her elegant features, she will never be white. This is an ongoing struggle and part of a much larger discussion on cultural ownership. Who is let in, and who is excluded from the dominant culture? I would argue that shame is at the core of this debate. The strong provocation caused by the way in which they deal with issues of race is due



partly to the fact that Vogue and Condé Nast seem shameless in their editorial choices, more often than not simply and actively resisting using black, Asian or Hispanic models. And when they do, they get it spectacularly wrong. Even if the All Black issue arguably broke a form of implicit taboo by featuring only black models, Vogue's overall attitude to black models make the issue appear more gimmicky than groundbreaking.

Leading black figures in the industry argue that discrimination has increased lately (levels of exposure for black women are among the lowest since the 1960s)<sup>5</sup>, and Vogue's All Black issue seems to highlight this fact rather than present

true diversity. Don't forget that this 'taboo breaking' happened in 2008, nearly forty years after Yves Saint Laurent used a black model on the catwalk! Seen in this light, the All Black issue is arguably just tokenism in paper form. It is limited inclusion. And Vogue, rather than representing and encouraging change, is the bastion of reactionary fashion. 'Reactionary fashion' should be an oxymoron, and yet, because of fashion images' ambivalent and ambiguous messages, I, the reader, am the one ending up feeling uncomfortable for once more buying the magazine with the blonde on the cover. And speaking of consumers, where is the future for the fashion market? In China, India and South

# VOGUE

Free Magazine AUG

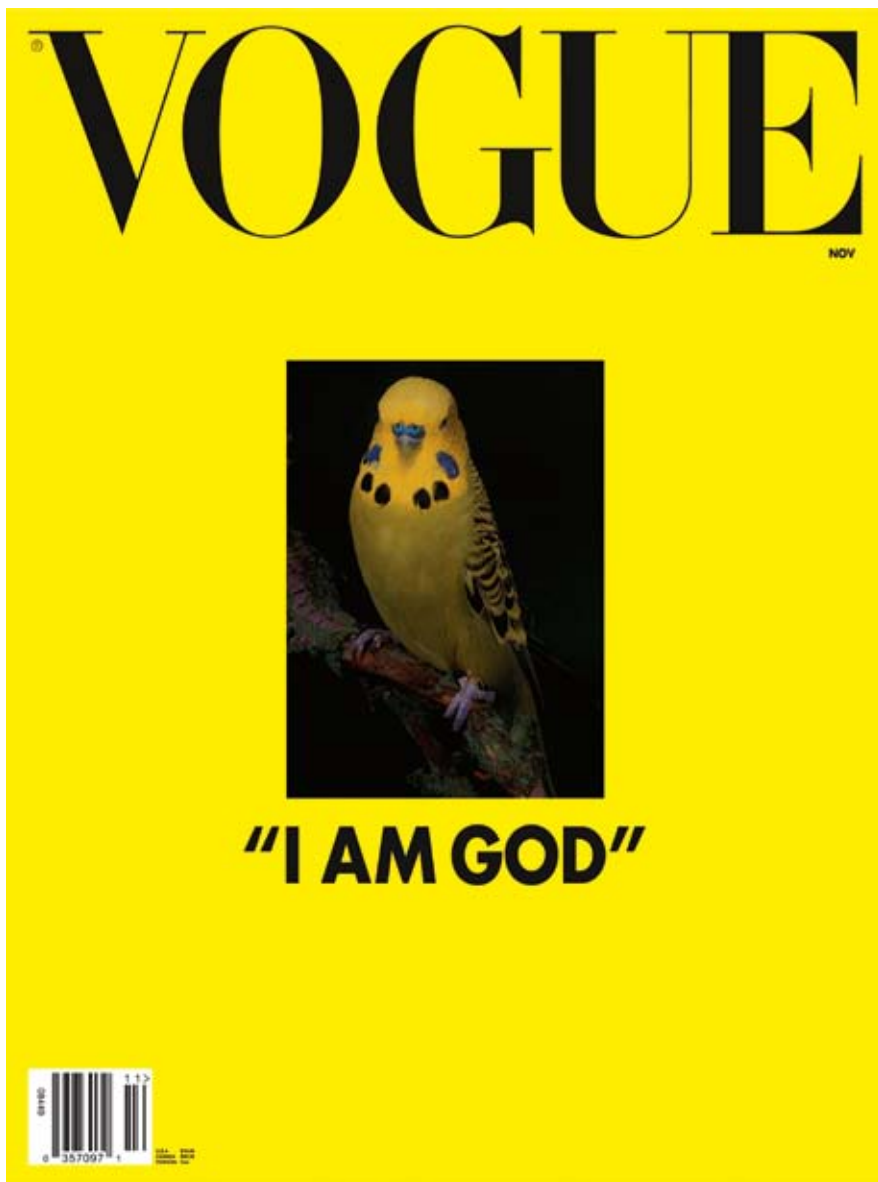
6

EXPERT TIPS  
ON HOW  
TO GET THAT  
TALIBAN LOOK  
THIS SUMMER



SCOTT KING, *How I'd Sink American Vogue*, 2006. Digital print on paper, 27.5 x 21.5cm. Courtesy Herald St, London.





SCOTT KING, *How I'd Sink American Vogue*, 2006. Digital print on paper, 27.5 x 21.5cm. Courtesy Herald St, London.



SCOTT KING, *How I'd Sink American Vogue*, 2006. Digital print on paper, 27.5 x 21.5cm. Courtesy Herald St, London.

America of course! So, if Vogue wishes to be current, the least they can do is try not to be irrelevant.

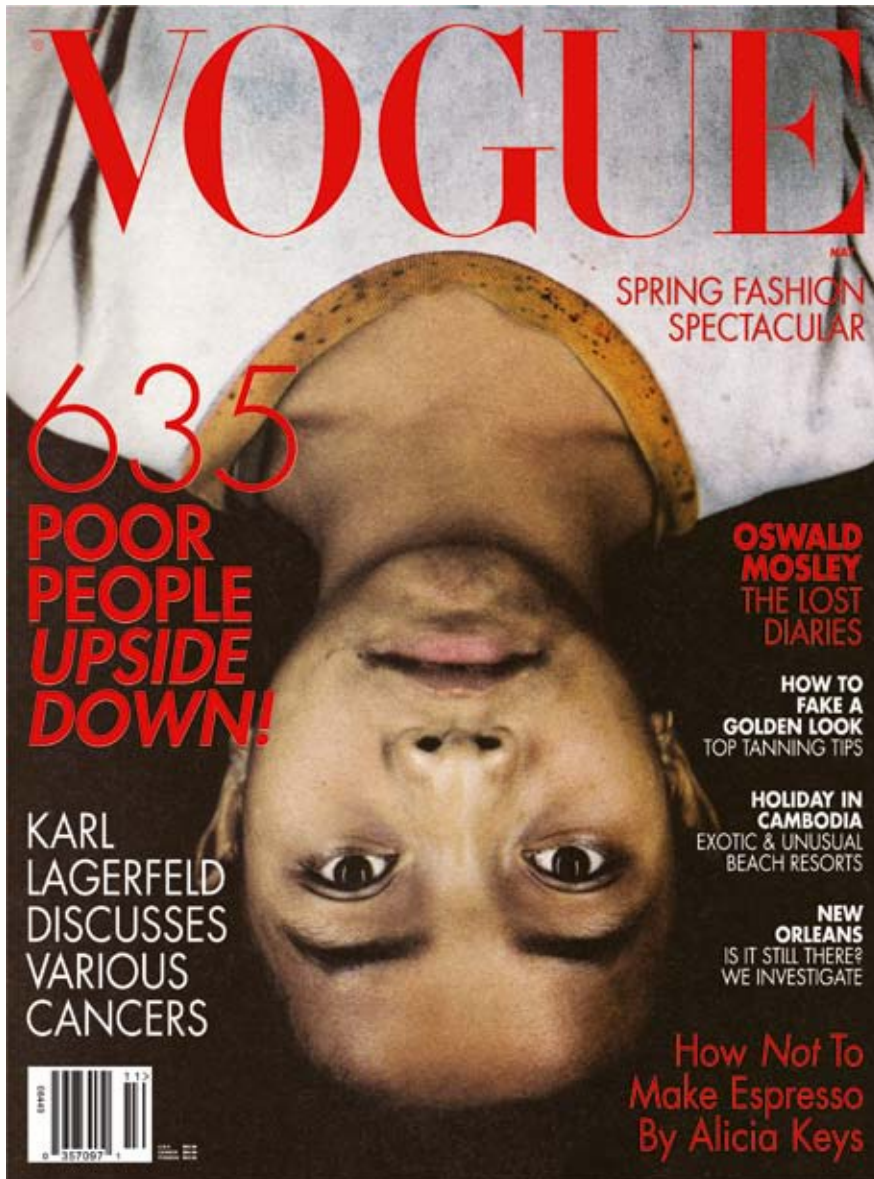
It has to be stressed that fashion magazines have an inherent power to really subvert certain norms and values. Vogue repeatedly plays with gender identity, with sexuality, with body, with art, with the natural and artificial, with horror, with beauty. When they manage

to get social commentary just right (as in Steven Meisel's *Oil And Water* editorial for Vogue Italia from 2010) it

5. E Pilkington, *Italian Vogue's Black Issue Breaks Fashion Barrier* in The Guardian Online, published 20 June, 2008.

can be as effective as a punch in the solar plexus. By its implicit and constant innovation, fashion can, and should, always go beyond what we expect. Fashion is the stuff of dreams. But by undermining the subversive with ignorance, so much potential for real change is slipping away. And that is perhaps the biggest shame of all.

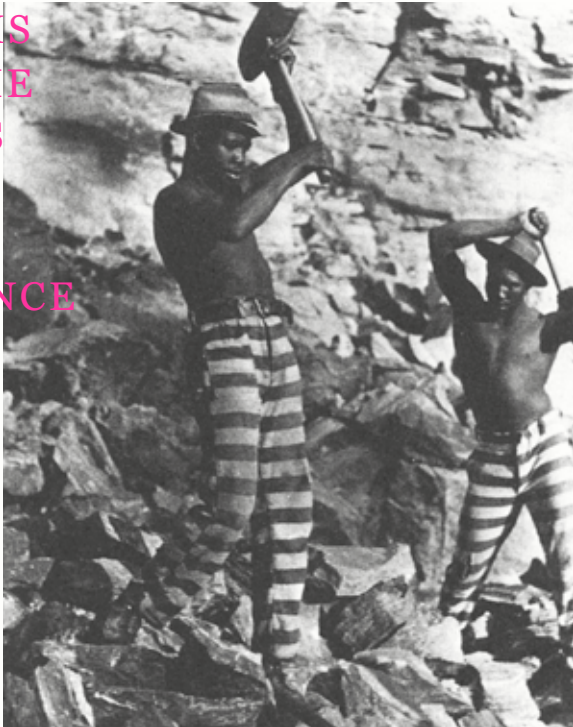
#



SCOTT KING, *How I'd Sink American Vogue*, 2006. Digital print on paper, 27.5 x 21.5cm. Courtesy Herald St, London.

## DOCILE

A STUDY  
OF  
PRISON  
UNIFORMS  
AND THE  
DRESS  
OF SUB-  
SER-  
VIENCE



by Anja Aronowsky  
Cronberg

## BODIES

Introduction

*Society Red was the first man on the yard that morning. He sidled out of the south cellblock, turning up the collar of his faded denim jacket as he squinted resentfully at the cold gray sky.<sup>1</sup>*

**T**his is how Malcolm Braly starts his novel *On The Yard*: with the convict Society Red turning up his denim collar to protect himself from the cold. These denim uniforms, or alternatively, the black and white striped pyjamas are most probably what most of us think of when we think of prison uniforms: rows of men or women in identical uniforms, emphasis being on the identicalness. The philosopher Michel Foucault has argued that our contemporary culture is one of supervision, a system that permeates institutions such as universities, hospitals and work places to name just a few. This system of supervision is perhaps most noticeable within our prison system, a structure designed to make convicts feel shame and remorse. With this in mind, the upturned collar is habitually overlooked. We often assume that prison is an environment so infused with control and discipline that the inmates have no choice but to bow to the authorities. This is of course not the case. Prison life is full of upturned collars and resentful squints, as well as a myriad of other ways to subvert the rules, however slightly.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim proposes that understanding the one who deviates from the norm one can learn to understand the norm itself. In other words, understanding the institutions that deal with the deviant becomes a way to understand all social institutions, and, consequently, society itself. Whereas early modern society dealt with its delinquents through public displays of punishment and shame, whether through pain, humiliation or indignity, today we have developed a system of punishment where, on the whole, the spectacle is reduced to the trial, and the punishment

Left: Chain-Gang Convicts Working in Georgia, US, 1937, *The Oxford History of the Prison*, ed. Norval Morris & David J. Rothman, Oxford University Press, 1995.



itself is served with the criminal behind bars, removed from 'civil society'. Prison life is largely a life of invisibleness. Due to factors such as the secrecy that all members of the prison service are sworn to upkeep, little of what goes on behind prison walls ever seeps out to the public. Instead we have to rely on special reports from the media or on accounts from the people who have either worked in the environment or been incarcerated. This has meant that we have had to rely largely on literature, prisoner's memoirs, or on journalistic accounts, to try to untangle the relationship between the prisoner and his uniform. Because of this we must bear in mind that these accounts are largely subjective impressions rather than factual information. Perhaps this is to be expected. The difficulty in finding the relevant information could be seen as part of the invisibility of our prison system, making the lack of evidence concerning prison clothing part of this issue of invisibility. The inmates 'invisible dress' forms part of the attitude currently assumed in our modern culture, whereby the conditions within the prison walls are an issue only for those that come into direct contact with it. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, there is truth to be found in the Durkheimian view that the issue of prison dress can tell us a great deal about prison culture in general, and, by extension, about society itself.



Above: *Convicts Exercising, Pentonville Prison, 1850s*, The Oxford History of the Prison, ed. Norval Morris & David J. Rothman, Oxford University Press, 1995.

### Uniforms – A Brief Theoretical Introduction

Before moving into the area of prison uniform and prison dress, it is important to look briefly at the issue of uniforms

in general. If following the interpretation given by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, uniforms can be read as a tool in the shaping of minds and bodies, whether it is to uphold an authoritarian stance as seen in police or military uniforms, or to adopt a submissive attitude, as when wearing asylum attire or prison uniforms. Each uniform has some sort of bearing on its wearer; with the putting on of the uniform, the body is transformed, and a persona is adopted. This is not to say, however, that the wearer inevitably takes to the persona imposed on his body without first putting up a struggle. Subversion and individual interpretation are common amongst uniform wearers, something that most people who have ever come in contact with a school uniform will have noticed. Nevertheless, the Foucault school claims that conformity and the suppression of the individual's personality, as well as order, hierarchy and status are all inescapable by-products of the adoption of the uniform. Uniforms tell us about power; the adoption or suppression of power, and about the control exercised by the uniformed self on our social as well as our internal persona. However, as well as being about control and discipline, uniforms are also about pride. Pride as what you feel when being a part of something larger than yourself, pride because you have earned the right to wear a certain type of uniform. This type of pride is normally associated with authoritative types of uniforms, such as soldiers' or police uniforms, although even convicts – society's lowest order of uniform wearers – arguably often wear their uniforms as a badge of honour.

### The Formation of the Prison Uniform

The prison uniform was brought into general use in the very late eighteenth century,<sup>2</sup> around the same time as Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an architectural structure allowing the prisoners to be under continuous surveillance, was being developed. It could be argued that these two bastions of discipline and constant visibility were a logical extension of one another, both reflecting the mood of patriarchal control so common in penal theory of the time. Nevertheless, it was to be another century until England's many prisons saw the introduction of boiler suits emblazoned with broad arrows. America, on the other hand, introduced their notorious black and white striped uniforms somewhat earlier, in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Enforcing discipline was a major factor in the introduction of convict's uniforms, but to shame and degrade, a sort of logical continuation of the publicly worn white shame shift dress

used in the early modern period as well as the branding employed in the early eighteenth century, was an equally important factor, as was the ability to easily spot the prisoners, should they attempt to escape.<sup>3</sup> England abolished the use of arrowed uniforms in the 1920s and in America prison stripes were formally eradicated in the early twentieth century, although, as a documentary from 2005<sup>4</sup> has showed, the black and white striped suits are still being used in some counties for prisoners on remand, with 'Sheriff's Inmate Un-sentenced' added in red to the front and back.

Prison literature and theory often focuses on the oppressiveness of the system, the callous discipline enforced on the prisoner, the strict rules which often seem arbitrary in their focus and the often patronising attitude of the authorities.<sup>5</sup> Yet this is not the whole truth. Just as *On The Yard's* Society Red through his defiantly upturned collar and resentful squints at the world conveys an attitude, not of suppression but of rebellion, and just as Gary Gilmore in Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* talks about the difference between being a *prisoner* and a mere convict, so there are always ways for the prisoner to show his contempt for the system that oppresses him. These ways can, amongst other things, be found in how a prisoner wears his uniform. It can be read in his posture, in subtle alterations to his uniform, in the expression on his face. Thus, the uniform can be worn also with pride; pride to be a prisoner, not a convict.

#### Case Study: The Dirty Protests, Northern Ireland, 1976

The Dirty Protests in Northern Ireland is a very direct example of a way in which appearance and care of self can be used as a tool of subversion and to express loyalty to a political cause and mark the – according to the protesters – distinction between a prisoner and a convict.

In 1976 the British government arrived at the decision to classify prisoners held in Northern Ireland for terrorist activities, not as political prisoners, but as 'common criminals'. This decision was to cause one of the most notorious prison protests in the history of the British prison system. When this decision was taken, prisoners charged with 'scheduled offences under the Emergency Powers Act'<sup>6</sup> had, since 1972, been allowed certain privileges traditionally

granted to political prisoners. They did not have to wear uniforms, nor did they have to work. They also received privileges in the form of more parcels and visits than 'ordinary' prisoners. However, four years later the 'total loss of disciplinary control by the prison authorities'<sup>7</sup> led to a withdrawal of all these privileges. Although women could by this time wear their own clothes, albeit with some restrictions<sup>8</sup>, the male prisoners had to give up their own clothes upon arrival at the prison, in order to be dressed in prison uniforms. One male prisoner, Kieran Nugent, sentenced a mere two weeks after the cachet of political prisoner had been taken away from the republican and loyalist prisoners, refused to obey the rules.

*He refused to put on a prison uniform. Asked what size clothes he took, he said, 'I'm not wearing your gear.' He was pushed into a cell and his own clothes were removed. A blanket was thrown in and this act, he stated, started the protest.<sup>9</sup>*



Above: Dirty Protesters in their Maze Cell, BBC, Friday January 9, 1998: [bbc.in/JpZfrm](http://bbc.in/JpZfrm)

Other prisoners joined in the protest – what has become known as the Blanket Protests or the Dirty Protests – thereby sending a very clear message to the authorities that they were not prepared to have "the dress recognition symbols of other tribes and their gods...paraded on [their] back[s]."<sup>10</sup> Or, as Louise Purbrick puts it in her essay on the Maze:<sup>11</sup> "To refuse to put on prison clothing was to refuse to enter the prison system; it was a rejection by prisoners of the understanding that its rules applied to them."<sup>12</sup> The wearing of nothing but blankets<sup>13</sup>, and the subsequent refusal to wash themselves or to clean their cells, as well as the later hunger

strikes were meant to give a clear message to the British government that although these prisoners were subjected to systematic surveillance and control by the authorities, they still retained the ultimate control over their bodies and minds. When the women and men in the Maze and Armagh prisons refused to follow orders regarding the care of the self, they implicitly told the authorities that when they were denied control over their bodies, their bodies became out of control. This is something that is particularly worthy of note when it comes to the female participants in the Dirty Protests. Although the women were not naked, but instead kept their jeans and loose-fitting tops which they refused to change or wash, the act of 'letting themselves go' becomes specifically pertinent when one considers the importance that has always been placed on a woman's looks. For a woman to cease caring for her appearance in such an extreme way as the women in Armagh did during the Dirty Protests carries additional significance when compared to their male counterparts. This was something that the Armagh women were well aware of:

*The more asexual we became with our loose-fitting jeans and streaks of dirt running down our faces, the more feminine [the screws] became, with their elaborate coiffures, their waists nipped in tightly, great whiffs of perfume choking our nostrils every time we left the cells.*<sup>14</sup>

Women, arguably more so than men, are taught to keep their bodies controlled. Women are taught the importance of 'looking your best', of 'maximising your potential', meaning that a refusal to adhere to these unwritten codes of conduct is doubly significant. The Armagh women's choice to cease to control their bodies, to instead flaunt their out-of-control bodies, becomes an important contribution to the notion of self-governance, as proposed by Foucault. To know yourself is to be able to control yourself, to be 'your own master'. In *The Care of the Self* Foucault writes; "The final goal of all the practises of self still belongs to an ethics of control."<sup>15</sup> Although Foucault writes about Greek and Roman customs, it is possible to draw parallels between these ancient cultures and our own modern one. The appropriate 'care of the self' requires self-regulation, or self-governance, meaning an attitude considered acceptable by society, towards the relationship of one's own body in interaction with society at large. These codes of conduct are so well-known in modern society that we very rarely need to be reminded of them, instead we have internalised the rules. Without needing to be told so, we know that we need to wash regularly, cut our hair and nails,

and generally conduct our bodies in a manner that will not be deemed offensive by our fellow citizens. These internalised codes of conduct are particularly apt for the female population – women, even more so than men, know the value of not smelling of body odour, of keeping their hair and nails tidy, of keeping their bodies in check. When the women in Armagh prison made a conscious choice to eschew these rules, they turned the rule of care of the self on its head. Although they could be seen as breaking the norm on an immediate level, they can also be understood to have acted beyond the immediate perception of the notion of self-governance. As these women were not mentally impaired, but instead fully aware of what they were doing, as well as the effect that their actions would have on their onlookers, they could be seen as, in fact, still operating



Above: Mairead Farrell, fighter of the Provisional IRA in the prison of Armagh, Northern Ireland, 1980, [bit.ly/lz9v20](http://bit.ly/lz9v20)

within the realm of self-governance. By deliberately displaying their bodies as out of control, the women did, in actual fact, remain in control. It was by showing the authorities that it was they, the prisoners, that had the ultimate control over their bodies, and their care, that made the Dirty Protests so successful in terms of restoring to the prisoners their rights as political captives. Although political circumstances changed considerably in the five years that followed the start of the Dirty Protests in 1976, and despite the fact that the evidence examined above is sympathetic to the prisoners, rather



than the authorities, the fact remains that after five years of protests and hunger strikes prisoners were once more allowed to wear their own clothes. This suggests that it is due to the fact that we all operate within the same bounds of self-governance, that attempts of transgression, such as 1976s Dirty Protests, can communicate so effectively.

#### Uniforms and the Creation of Docile Bodies



Above: *US Women in Prison*, Women in Prison, Kathryn Watterson Burkhart, Doubleday & Company, 1973

When both America and England made a shift from strict to casual uniforms in the mid-twentieth century, this was largely applauded as a liberal and progressive move, however there are a number of issues that spring out of this change. What the prison authorities saw as a step towards prisoner rehabilitation through encouraging individuality, and the building up of self-esteem, can also be seen as an exercise in social control, however subtle. As we inevitably show our personalities, consciously or unconsciously promoting a certain image of ourselves, through our clothing, it could be argued that the prison authorities, through the promotion of casual uniforms or, as in the case for women in England after 1970, civilian clothing, will more easily be able to know the inmate. Through this more intimate knowledge of the convict, they will inevitably also find it easier to predict their behaviour. Seen in this way, the tolerant and non-interventionist strategy of allowing prisoners to wear casual uniforms or their own clothes becomes a much more sinister way of additional surveillance. However, the use of conventional uniforms also brought with it a whole host of issues that are deeply uncomfortable to any advocate of body self-control. Compelling prisoners to wear uniforms

is an element of the 'degradation rites' that inmates face as part of entering a prison. As psychologist Philip Zimbardo's famous Stanford Prison Experiment showed in the 1970s, even prison uniforms arbitrarily assigned to non-convicts are likely to act as suppressants of individuality and self-esteem. The Stanford University students that took part in the experiment later recalled how they very quickly began to take on the suppressed character of a prisoner, as a result of these degradation rites – in the case of the Stanford 'prisoners' these were identical numbered smocks worn without undergarments, stocking caps worn on head to simulate a shaved head, and a bolted chain worn around every prisoner's right ankle – that each prisoner has to undergo.<sup>16</sup> Zimbardo was well aware that these tactics were necessary in order to get the optimal result of his simulated prison; that "power commands that the dress of subservience be worn."<sup>17</sup> When the convict enters the prison he is forced to take on another identity to the one he has on the outside, forced – to recycle an earlier quote – to have "the dress recognition symbols of other tribes and their gods...paraded on [his] back."<sup>18</sup> By making prisoners wear uniforms the prison authorities hope to create 'docile bodies', better performing and more well behaved convicts. It is also an aspiration to create new patterns of behaviour, and to instil new customs in the prisoner. The prisoner is always expected to keep his clothes 'suitable, clean and tidy', and any transgression to the upkeep of his uniform will be severely punished. Somewhat simply put, it is believed that through this diktat new codes of conduct will be introduced and that discipline in all areas of life will be enforced as a result. As far as female convicts in uniform are concerned, it seems as if, on the one hand, qualities such as conformity and discipline are encouraged, while on the other hand restraint and self-regulation are equally important. The creation of 'docile female bodies' has, debatably, often been more readily acceptable than the creation of the male equivalent, meaning that women are required to resign themselves to a higher level of repression and discipline than men. Women are, arguably, also more commonly equated with the body than men, meaning that issues concerning their bodies can be seen as more problematic. Dress reinforces body consciousness and the self-awareness that women feel in relation to their own bodies, something that is bound to have an effect on women in prison, whether they are in uniform, or in their own clothes. The decree that the female convict's own clothes must be kept 'suitable, clean and tidy' can be seen as a reflection of the idea that a disorderly exterior makes for a disorderly interior, indicating that perhaps there are still certain similarities between convicts in uniform and convicts without. In addition, although

women prisoners are no longer required to wear strict uniforms, they are not allowed exactly what they want either. They still face restrictions on clothing deemed 'too glamorous', anything too expensive or luxurious, as well as on anything that could remotely be deemed as a tool, used for hurting yourself or others, or for trying to escape.

Within a prison setting, much as in the outside world, status and authority are displayed through clothing. Prison dress forms part of the mechanisms of the prison spectacle, and the various levels of power, as well as the absence of power of the inmates, is clearly on display in the different forms of uniforms, or non-uniforms, used. The interaction between the convict in a casual uniform (men) or casual civilian clothes (women), the prison officers in their military-like uniforms, and the prison governor in his formal civilian clothing shows an intricate web of power relations demonstrated through dress.



Above: Female Inmates Dancing, 1950s, courtesy of Galleries of Justice, Nottingham

### Conclusion

*When you're in prison, time stops. You come out with the same problems you go in with – and start all over again with their twelve extra rules of parole in addition. While you're in there, you just learn to survive and manipulate any extra pleasure you can get.*<sup>19</sup>

—Jeanette, prisoner at California Institute of Women, 1970s

Part of the punishment that the convict faces when entering a prison is being removed from time as we know it in the outside world. The prisoner exists in a time and space that moves parallel to what he would have known on the outside. As such, he is forced to leave his identity, as he comprehends it, at the prison doors. Inside, other rules apply. Men and women who are normally

boisterous must learn how to bow to authority. The Prison Rules are a tool in this process, and clothing, whether uniform or non-uniform, are integral to the Prison Rules. Through having to adhere to rules regarding what to wear, how often to wash and the neatness of personal appearance, the inmate is thought to establish a code of behaviour that is meant to teach him or her how to behave as expected by the prison authorities, and consequently, the outside world.

Since the 1950s a gradual change has taken place in prison environments in both America and England, with strict, traditional uniforms being eschewed in favour of more individual interpretations of the uniform, or even civil clothes. The greater tolerance for difference that emerged in the West post-World War II, and the wider acceptance of individuality that this came accompanied by, as well as a general relaxation of protocol with regards to self-presentation and fashion helped make this possible. The change in society at large no doubt affected life also for those removed from society, since life behind bars, although seemingly removed from time, in actual fact exists analogous to the shifting movements in society. The gradual move away from traditional prison uniforms can, in this light, be seen as a result of a greater emphasis being put on individuality, and a gradual alteration of the control mechanisms exerted by society.

The sociologist Nathan Joseph writes that "the uniform as a control device is based upon the existence of certain societal contexts. These are especially relevant in the Western society where there emerged the modern bureaucratic structure and its concomitant ethos, the reliance upon a market economy and modern technology, a widespread division of labour, and urban anonymity. Conditions may change within these broad contexts and render the uniform less effective as an instrument of control. Bureaucratic institutions, after they achieve dominance, may become 'less total' in response to greater demands for individuality and lessen their control over members."<sup>20</sup>

Keeping this in mind, a case could be made of the fact that today, after roughly three hundred years of development as the main institution for punishment of crime, the prison has become sufficiently established as the dominant establishment for instilling discipline and submissiveness in the population, for certain reductions in control to be permitted. The abandonment of striped or arrowed uniforms in favour of uniforms that exist within the realm of fashion change are a part of this lessening of control, and the

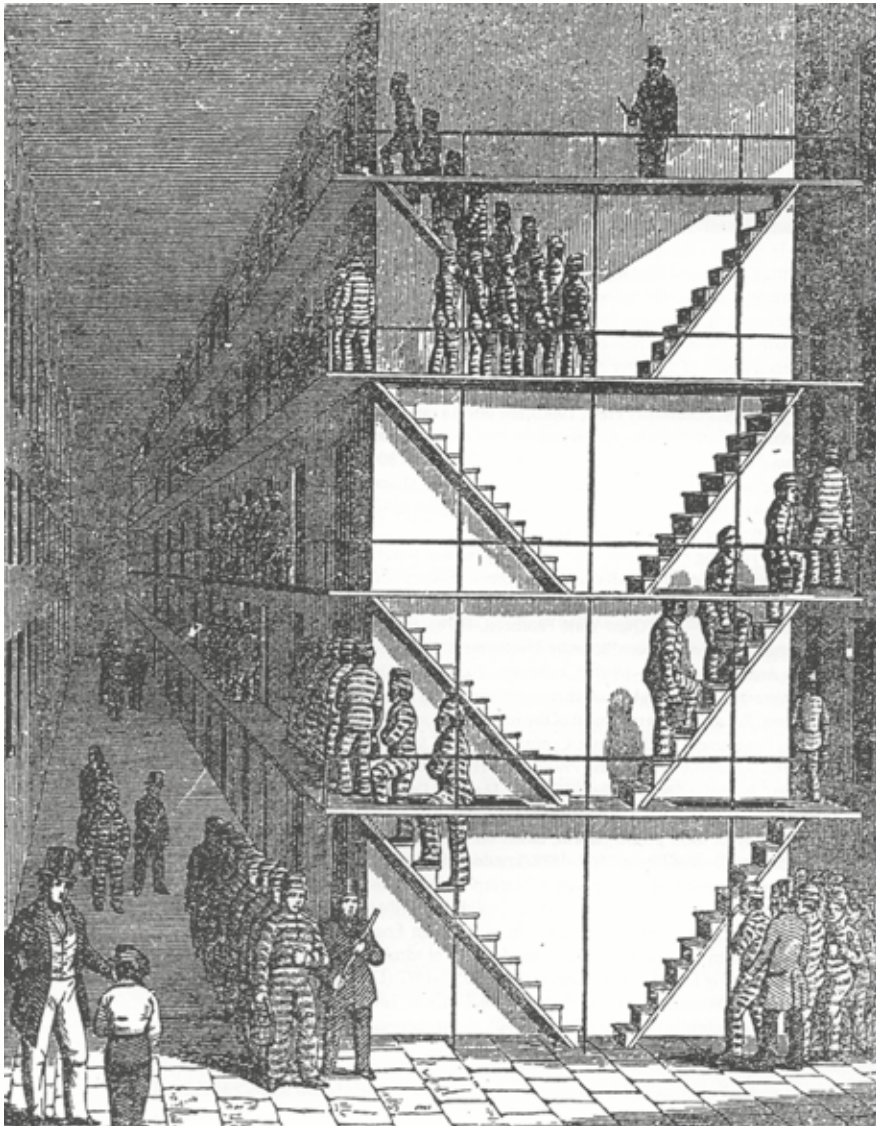
total abandonment of uniforms for female convicts in England since 1970 are a logical extension of this canon. Nevertheless, control is exerted through rules and regulations regarding personal appearance also for the convicts who are allowed the privilege of their own clothes. The importance in taking care of the prison uniform has been exchanged for the importance of taking care of the appearance of one's own clothes – keeping them, and yourself, 'suitable, clean and tidy' – indicating that the care of self deemed so significant is always imposed on the convict, never a choice. Yet the reading of the prison uniform can never be simplistic. As much as it is about control, it is also about the subversion of control; as much as the inmates are subject to discipline and codes of conduct, they manage to find ways of transgressing these rules. In the Dirty Protests we saw how the Northern Irish prisoners managed to turn the power structures against the powerful, and other, smaller, gestures can be seen in every prison memoir. Thus it could be argued that the changes in prison uniform codes since the 1950s, concluding in English female convicts wearing their own clothes post-1970, was ultimately a change in *what* was worn, rather than *how* it was worn. Looking carefully at a group of convicts in uniform we can see endless differences between them, endless displays of self. A uniform is, in fact, never uniform. Indeed, examining uniformed bodies we might even place more attention on the differences between the individuals than we would looking at a group of people all in different clothing, united instead by fashionability. Although the differences in clothing will be more obvious, the individual personalities might get lost more easily in the ambience of similarity that a group which follows the same codes of fashion displays. Looked at this way, perhaps the shift from traditional prison uniforms to casual or non-uniforms can be seen as a return to an environment of sameness where individual difference is downplayed in favour of fitting in with the group. Perhaps in this respect the casual or non-uniform does what the uniform *should have done* – create uniformity – thus turning the non-uniform into the uniform.

As Durkheim proposed, the issue of uniformity and prison dress can tell us a great deal about the way that we wear clothes. Whether in prison or in 'civil society'; whether in uniform or in civil clothes, our individuality is impossible to suppress. Even within the most imposing conditions we find ways for subversiveness to subsist.

#

1. M Braly, *On The Yard*, New York Review Books, New York, 1967 (2002).
2. See C Hibbert, *The Roots of Evil – A Social History of Crime and Punishment*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1963.
3. J C Pratt, *Punishment and Civilization: Penal Tolerance and Intolerance in Modern Society*, Sage, London, 2002, p. 76. "The distinctive prison stripes were abolished in 1904. [...] stripes had come to be looked upon as a badge of shame and were a constant humiliation and irritant to many prisoners' (Report of the New York (State) Prison Department, 1904: 22)".
4. *Torture, America's Brutal Prisons*, Channel 4, 2/3-05.  
See, for instance, J C Pratt, *Punishment and Civilization*, Sage, London, 2002; M D'Arcy, *Tell Them Everything*, Pluto Press, London, 1981; C Hibbert, *The Roots of Evil*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1963; M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin Books, London, 1991; J Henry, *Who Lie in Gaol*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1952; N Mailer, *The Executioner's Song*, Vintage Books, London, 1979; U Padel & P Stevenson, *Insiders – Women's Experience of Prison*, Virago Press, London, 1988; K Richards O'Hare, *In Prison, by Kate Richards O'Hare, Sometime Federal Prisoner Number 21669*, Alfred A.Knopf, New York, 1923.
6. To find out more regarding the conflict in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, read L Purbrick's *The Architecture of Containment* in D Wylie's *The Maze*, Granta Books, London, 2004.
7. Lord Gardiner, 1976, see L.Purbrick's *The Architecture of Containment*, p.96.
8. In order to find out more about the specifics, see M D'Arcy, *The Women in Armagh Said To Me Tell Them Everything and This I Have Tried to Do*, Pluto Press, London, 1981, p.44-5.
9. L.Purbrick's *The Architecture of Containment*, p.104.
10. W Keenan, *Dress Freedom: The Personal and the Political*, in *Dressed to Impress*, Berg, Oxford, 2001, p.187.
11. The Maze was the prison where most male republican and loyalist prisoners were held in Northern Ireland. The female equivalent was Armagh prison.
12. L.Purbrick's *The Architecture of Containment*, p.104.
13. It should be noted that whereas the male prisoners in the Maze were naked except for their blankets, the women in Armagh prison retained their clothes – jeans and a loose-fitting top – although they refused to wash or change their clothes. More about the female prisoners experience of the Dirty Protests can be read in M.D'Arcy's *Tell Them Everything*.
14. M D'Arcy, *Tell Them Everything*, Pluto Press, London, 1981, p.64.
15. M Foucault, *The Care of the Self, The History of Sexuality*, vol.3, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986, p.65.
16. To find out more about the Stanford Prison Experiment visit [www.prisonexp.org](http://www.prisonexp.org)
17. W Keenan, *Dress Freedom: The Personal and the Political*, in *Dressed to Impress*, Berg, Oxford, 2001, p.187.
18. Ibid.
19. Women in Prison, K Watterson Burkhart, Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, 1973, p.90.
20. N Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms – Communication Through Clothing*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1986, p.74.





Above: *US Convicts in Striped Uniforms*, 1850, Memorials of Prison Life, James Bradley Finley in *The Oxford History of the Prison*, ed. Norval Morris & David J. Rothman, Oxford University Press, 1995.





**JULIE ROBERTS**, *Restraining Jacket, Male*. 1995. Oil on acrylic on canvas, 152x152 cm. Tate Gallery, London. Courtesy the artist.



**JULIE ROBERTS**, *Restraining Coat, Female*. 1995. Oil on acrylic on canvas, 152x152 cm. Aberdeen Art Galleries and Museum Collection, Scotland. Courtesy the artist.

SHAMELESS



TRESPASSING

ON

CULTURAL  
TRANSITS,

IMMODEST  
EXPOSURE

AND

THE GROTESQUE BODY

by Dr Ane Lynge-Jorlén

Pages 66, 71–74: EMMA LÖFSTRÖM



Since the Renaissance, Western fashion has integrated exotic dress practices associated with a spellbinding Orient. Madame de Pompadour's Ottoman musings, Liberty's textile imports and Paul Poiret's cues from *Ballets Russes* – all flirtatious rag picking of orientalist dress – incorporated a sense of exotica into Western fashionable dress. Orientalism, and the related appellation orientalist, opens up to a wide debate on Western visions of the East, and has been used as an all-inclusive term to denote 'the impact upon Western dress and fashions of the clothing and customs of oriental nations across many centuries; Turkish, Indian, Chinese and Japanese fabrics and forms of dress influenced Western ideas of design and construction'.<sup>1</sup> When fashion's orientalist interpretations are paired with risqué baring of flesh or distorting of the proportions of the body, it creates ambiguous and haunting images of otherness that trespass the loaded terrain between the shameful and the shameless.

When high fashion borrows from the Orient, it often engages in acts of reversal where, put simply, the bared and displayed body becomes covered and concealed. The 'orientalised' body whether it is seen as exotically fascinating, stereotyped as an ethnocentric myth of an all-encompassing East, or displayed as inferior in relation to Occidental ways of doings, releases a sense of 'otherness' and 'difference'. Embedded in Orientalism, according to literary theorist Edward Saïd, are romanticised and simplified images, Western imperialist misrepresentations, of Asia and the Middle East. These often rest on Western domineering self-affirmation where the Orient "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea personality, experience".<sup>2</sup>

Orientalism in fashion straddles dichotomies of the covered and uncovered – and often stands at the crossroad of Western often skin-exposing fashion and traditional dress practices associated with modesty. What cultural theorist Stuart Hall calls "the spectacle of the 'Other'"<sup>3</sup> refers to how representations of difference, here an 'orientalised' body, are stereotyped in the media. Hall charts how 'difference' and 'otherness' are approached through, among others, anthropological and psychoanalytical theories. The anthropological approach to understanding things is through giving them different positions of social classification. Classifying things, or organising them into binary oppositions, are significant acts of attributing meaning to them, such as the West and the East, culture and nature, good and bad. This also provides symbolic boundaries between things, which help one to understand their differences. Psychoanalysis has approached the concept of the other through the argument that "the 'Other' is fundamental to the constitution of the self".<sup>4</sup> The idea is that one gains a concept of self, self-definition, through difference from others. Designers, consumers and the media often set up what Hall calls a "symbolic frontier between (...) 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them".<sup>5</sup>

These binary, often stereotyped, tensions remind us of the body's unruly ammunition. While to uphold a distinction between the West and the East, inside and outside, us and them, is anachronistic, as global fashion moves freely across the world from the East to the West and vice versa, there is something interesting to be found in the brackish water of the melange. It is here we find the complexities of modesty and immodesty as well as concealment and exhibition played out. The idea that the undressed body somehow corrupts moral standard runs like a paradoxical vein throughout Western culture, as precisely the undressed body, or rather parades of fashionable flesh, is also endlessly exploited for



its shock value. Nudity is everywhere both wicked and common. Not just Terry Richardson's Gonzo-style photography and Vogue Paris' porno chic pages, but also in wider culture we are bombarded with untiring images of exposed bodies that sell.

Exploring both the material and cultural functions of fashion, scholars have been preoccupied with these across practical functions, aesthetic or even moral qualities of clothes often arguing that the reasons why people wear clothes are based on protection, attraction, communication and modesty. Psychoanalyst John Carl Flügel<sup>6</sup> sought to understand fashion as a pendulum moving between modesty and eroticism with sex being repressed in civilised cultures. But what is deemed shameful and indecent by some cultures might be displayed with pride in others. The degree as to which the body and clothing are shamed is culture specific. Intrinsic to the work of many fashion scholars, and indeed to dress cultures, is how the body, as the structure of fashion, is civilised and cultured through adornment. Flesh on its own is simply less loaded.



Above: Givenchy Haute Couture A/W 2009

There are numerous examples of this dialogue within high fashion, and often designers appropriate Orientalism as a pot-pourri of Otherness. Richardo Tisci with his Autumn/Winter 2009 Haute Couture collection for Givenchy visited Berber tribes with drop-crotch trousers (which have been embraced by a variety of designers for many seasons), full-length skirts, hooded veils, draped transparency and jewelled headpieces. This was an aestheticised and romanticised take on Berber dress, adorning the Western body in connotations of ethnicity rather than releasing fashion's omnipresent paradoxes of shame and shamelessness.

Different is Hussein Chalayan's Spring/Summer 1998 *Between* collection. Evoking Daniel Rabel's enigmatic seventeenth











## Shameless

## Trespassing

century painting *Première Entrée des Fantômes* with four spectres clad in head-to-toe black cloth, *Between* casts a shadow of phantoms of extreme beauty on the screen of fashion. The finale of Chalayan's show saw six models wearing black chadors of different lengths, from naked to totally covered – all of them with their faces covered. Like “nudes... wearing ghosts of absent clothes”<sup>7</sup> the show can be seen as both spectacle and spectre<sup>8</sup>, throwing up a range of complex issues around shameful eroticism, modesty dress and cultural identity.

The practices of veiling have a long and complex history throughout the Arab world, and whereas countries like Turkey have banned the veil, it has enjoyed a revival from the 1970s amongst Egyptian women as part of a wider Islamic movement.<sup>9</sup> But covering is, of course, not a practice confined to Muslim modesty (as Reina Lewis argues elsewhere in this issue). Throughout the history of ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ dress practices, the distinction between dressed and undressed has been carefully guarded, and by now the exhaustive flaunting of flesh has somehow desexualised, overexploited and clichéd the body. Yet, it seems nudity triggers a certain consuming gaze, as the most private is made available to scrutinise without shame. According to Anne Hollander the nude in art was invented to both legitimise and idealise the otherwise profane nakedness.<sup>10</sup> While Chalayan's models are fashioned and idealised, and thus not naked, their nudity is uneasy precisely because they are also veiled – a dress practice widely associated with modesty. The juxtaposition of nudity and the veil is loaded with shock value and notions of sacrilege.



Above: Vivienne Westwood 1989.

Across cultures we learn from a young age what parts of the body are shameful, and the genitals are certainly one of them. The Fall of Man, with Adam and Eve and the fig leaves, is one

of the first examples to connect bodily exposure, more specifically the genitals, with shame and profanity. Vivienne Westwood explored the potency of this part of the body in 1989 with her fig leaf tights which instead of covering the genital area shamelessly drew attention to it. Chalayan's veils of varying lengths similarly charge the sense of nakedness further and capitalise on its shock value.



Above: Hussein Chalayan S/S 1998

Growing up in Cyprus, on the colliding frontier between the Muslim and the Christian world, implicit in Chalayan's wider work is an anthological inquiry into cultural difference and identity, exploring cultural exiles, people without identity in shadowing no man's land, inhabiting some sort of cultural transit in the interface of high technology and local ethnicity. The religious motif of *Between* was a continuation of his previous collection *Scent of Tempests* (A/W 97) which was an attempt to create attire for worship as Chalayan found it curious that "people who worship pray for bad things not to happen".<sup>11</sup> Further to *Between*'s obvious religious connotations, its transgressive power lies in questioning the issues of bodily identity, quite literally with 'faceless' models. Chalayan was exploring how through "the religious code you are depersonalised"<sup>12</sup>, and in doing so making yet another curious link between fashion, religion and identity. Chalayan is not singular in denying his models faces – Maison Martin Margiela has also utilised this to lengths. Surrealist photographers, like Man Ray and Blumenfeld, also embraced Freud's theories and used masks to play with hidden, dreamlike identities. Chalayan's collection not only comments on the seemingly replica identity of models, reducing them to mere unidentifiable, depersonalised bodies rendered by the veil, it also casts light on fashion's aggressive exposure of flesh and its worship of identity.

Chalayan's *Between* elicits questions about cultural melange and the exposure of seemingly binary dress practices

where the body is equally, if not shamed, then exposed as an ideological site of identities in motion. As such, the collection treads a loaded territory of the veiled, faceless, unidentified women and their exposed bodies. It renders visible both Western and Eastern approaches to the body and in doing so mirrors the other, becoming the spectacle of the Other. The concealed becomes the shadow side of the exposed, and vice versa, and herein lies the dynamics of the collection, exaggerating two inextricably linked approaches to the body – exposure and concealment – which is the core dynamics of fashion.



Above: Comme des Garçons S/S 1997

Another bodily representation of otherness is present in Comme des Garçons' Spring/Summer 1997 *Dress Becomes Body, Body Becomes Dress* collection where tight-fitted, transparent dresses with asymmetrical 'tumour piece'<sup>13</sup> padding made for unorthodox, almost alien bodies. Across dress and fashion history there are various examples of bodily alterations and augmentations, such as foot binding, cod pieces, neck rings, corsets and crinolines. Protruding stomachs seem particularly peculiar to contemporaneous eyes – such as the male peascod bellies of the sixteenth century – most famously represented by Jan Van Eyck's 1434 painting of the Arnolfinis. A normative fashioned body streamlined in proportion is absent, and *Dress Becomes Body, Body Becomes Dress* instead gives way to a transformed, almost pathological body, evoking the shamed hunchback and the leper wrapped in fabric. While this grotesque body may be uneasy, it is, as fashion curator Harold Koda notes, "nowhere near the exaggerated scale of the panniered gowns that were in vogue in the eighteenth century".<sup>14</sup> Kawakubo's

Japanese background affects her sense of aesthetics and also the way she approaches the body. In traditional Japanese society, sexuality is never revealed explicitly<sup>15</sup>, and Kawakubo argues that her take on the body is “different from the pleasure Western women take in showing the shapes of their bodies. It bothers Japanese women... to reveal their bodies”.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the underlying body in her wider work is different, and more enigmatic, to the exposed and sexualised body so often present in ‘traditional’ Western fashion. Instead the collection’s morphed, disproportioned form seems a carnivalesque, if not shameless, suggestion of a different body.

Shame is the shadow of fashion. Bodies and aesthetics not immediately performing to the ideal template of the time are so often consumed by a fashion system that instead internalises and reworks them into shameless reversals. Big bellies, disproportioned hips and, of course, exposure of pubic hair are but a few features considered disgraceful – albeit they are part of the very human body. Perhaps it is when fashion casts light on what is deemed human flaws, the imperfect, that we understand that “bodies are potentially disruptive”.<sup>17</sup> The work of Chalayan and Kawakubo provide us with a symbolically different perspective through which we fundamentally understand both our own body and the system of fashion. It is through such work that we come to understand fashion’s ability to make visible and capitalise on complex cultural values.

#

## NOTES

1. “Orientalism.” *The Berg Fashion Library*, (n.d.). (accessed 13 Nov. 2011).
2. E Saïd *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, New York, 1978. pp. 1-2.
3. S Hall (ed), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage, London, 1997, p. 225.
4. Ibid. p. 237.
5. Ibid. p. 258.
6. J. C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, AMS Press, New York, 1976.
7. A Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, Viking, New York, 1978, p. 86.
8. C Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 2003.
9. F El Guindi, “Veiling Resistance”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 3 (1). 1999, pp. 51–80.
10. A Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, Viking, New York, 1978.
11. P Golbin, “A Synoptic Guide to Hussein Chalayan’s Mainline Collections 1993–2011”, *Hussein Chalayan*, Rizzoli, New York, 2011, p. 271.
12. Ibid.
13. P Golbin, “A Synoptic Guide to Hussein Chalayan’s Mainline Collections 1993–2011”, *Hussein Chalayan*, Rizzoli, New York, 2011, p. 271.
14. Ibid.
15. C Evans, “Paris 1996”, *o32C*, issue 4, 2002/2003, pp. 82–83.
16. H Koda, *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2001, p. 113.
17. J Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 8.

## Laver’s Law

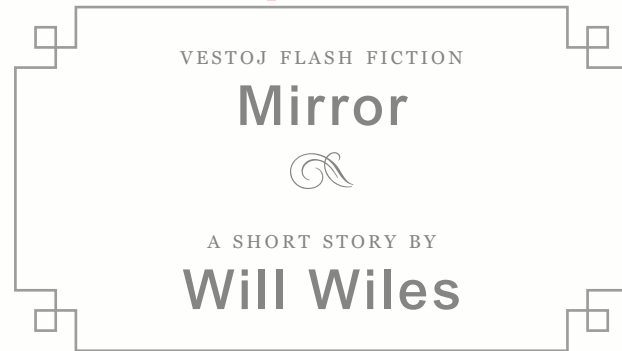
INDECENT	10 years before its time
SHAMELESS	5 years before its time
OUTRÉ	1 year before its time
SMART	‘Current Fashion’
DOWDY	1 year after its time
HIDEOUS	10 years after its time
RIDICULOUS	20 years after its time
AMUSING	30 years after its time
QUAINT	50 years after its time
CHARMING	70 years after its time
ROMANTIC	100 years after its time
BEAUTIFUL	150 years after its time

JAMES LAVER, *Taste and Fashion*, Chapter 18, London, 1937



THE REALLY NASTY ONES, the killers, the rapists, the child-killers and child-rapists; the ones who have been held in custody, denied bail, too dangerous to release, flight risk, suicide risk; they arrive in prison vans. They're tricky, the vans. The toughened plastic windows are tinted, and we all hold up our cameras and take shot after shot anyway, but almost all of the time the results are useless. Nothing but close-ups of a black plastic window.

So why go for it at all? Because once in a while, it works. The flash somehow bests the polarised plastic, the angle is just perfect for the burst of light to get in, bounce off the bastard's face, and out, back to the lens, and you get a picture. You get some help, because it's always noisy, people banging on the side of the van, and they can see the flashes, so they're often looking at the window. But you still need luck, luck on top of luck.



It's worth it, though. The plastic comes out like a frame of smoked glass, and you've got the fucker pale and haunted in the centre, like a Renaissance portrait being restored, the centuries of grime pushed back to the edges, revealing an ancient face.

The ones on foot, the lesser fuckers, they're easier of course. They come up in a car or taxi, and walk the short distance to the main entrance of the court. And that's where you get them, when they're forced out into the open. We're often held behind a metal fence put there by the police, especially for the big cases, but you still get a clear view. It's freedom of the press, isn't it? We're just doing our job.

Still, they try to cover up; they try to stop you getting the shot. They shield their face with a newspaper or their court files. Mostly, though, they use their clothes – they pull up their collar and shrink down into their coats, they wear big sunglasses on sunless winter days and thick wool scarves in summer. Or they put blankets

over their heads. Where do they get these blankets? Do they keep them in their cars? Do their lawyers provide them? That's the kind of considerate thing you'd expect an expensive defence attorney to do, I suppose. Monogrammed with the name of the firm, maybe. Or they pick them out at home before the trial. Darling, which of these blankets goes best with my suit? The tartan one we use for picnics, or the one from the dog's bed?

Whatever. It never used to make sense to me. Everyone knows they're going to trial. Guilty or not, their name and face are out there. Why cover up, why wear the hats and the shawls? There was one guy who dragged up, tried to sneak in dressed as a woman. Didn't work. All of this modesty doesn't spare them any attention – it just makes them look ashamed, and if they're ashamed, they're guilty, right? Which isn't a bad picture in itself, even if you don't get the face. As one of the older photographers said to me, son, they don't want to stop us seeing their face, they don't really think about other people seeing their face in the papers. They don't want to see themselves. That's why they don't want pictures. They see us with our cameras, and they see a mirror, and they can't look at themselves in that mirror.

It's a theory. Made me think. I didn't give it much credit, until...

\*\*\*

It's not important how I ended up in her back garden. Just wanted to get the pictures. Just doing my job, but a line might have been crossed. It'll all come out at the trial. The trial puts me in a pickle, of course. Now I can understand why they cover up. I don't want those other bastards getting my face. I'm not giving them the satisfaction. But sunglasses, collars, scarves, shawls – not my style at all. After all, I'm one of them, and I want to give them a shot. Be seen and not be seen, yeah? So I've been thinking on what the old guy said about mirrors. He was right. I'm going to get one of those disco mirror-balls, put a big hole in the bottom, a couple of little holes to see out... Should look fucking great under the flashes.

#



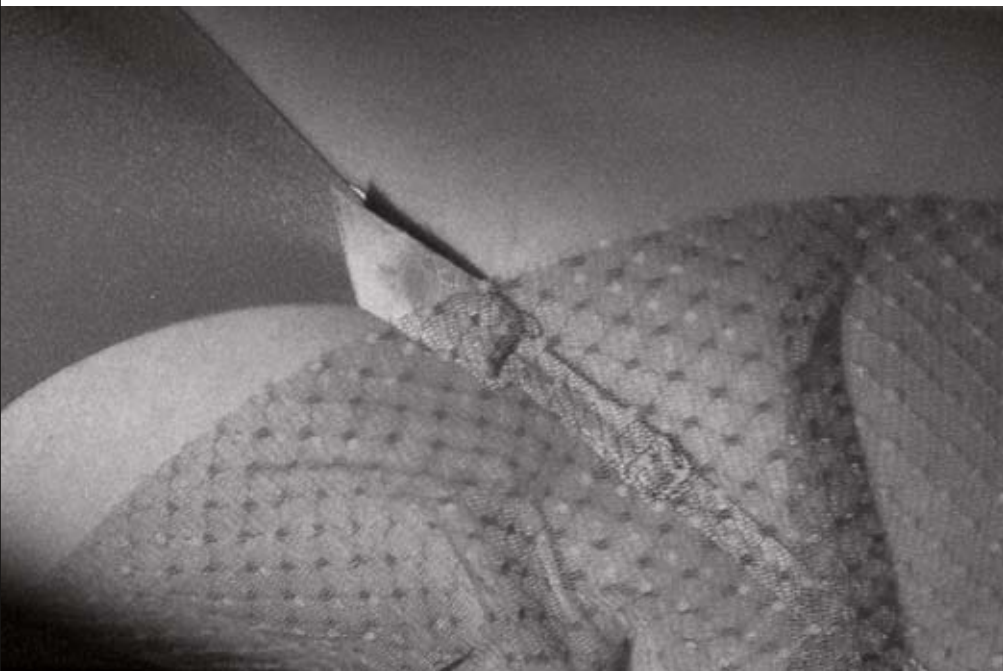
SOME  
NOTES  
TOWARDS  
AN  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
OF  
SHAME

**CONVULSIVE**

**BEAUTY**

by Donatien Grau





Pages 82–86: **CAMILLE VIVIER**  
Make-up: MEGUMI ZLATOFF | Callisté  
Hair: SERGIO VILLAFANE





The French writer Paul Valéry famously noted that the Western civilisation takes its roots in three cities and three cultures: Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, and one might argue that it is not irrelevant to refer to this comment in the specific context of fashion. Indeed, fashion, insofar as it goes beyond the pure act of dressing, is clearly a cultural construct – i.e. the result of progressive elaboration and invention. Dressing is the solution against the shame of being naked – a shame that is in itself a social construct (as attests the debate on *le bon sauvage* that took place in the eighteenth century).

But fashion is something else. It isn't purely sartorial. It has to do with aesthetics, and with artificiality. It has to do with identity. And it depends hugely on the conception each moment in history has of the body. Should the body be hidden? Should it be constrained? Should it be set free? Should it be worshipped? In fashion we find an answer for every question, a solution for every problem.

But focusing on fashion and the body here would be far

too broad a topic. Instead this text would like to raise the question of nudity and nakedness. It may be relevant to note that the English language has two different words to refer to the same reality, the bare body – although, as linguists tend to say, “there is no such thing as exact synonyms”. ‘Nudity’ then, to follow art historian Kenneth Clark’s well-known definition, is an expression of the Classical Greek ideal, and when we speak of the ‘Classical Nude’ and ‘Classical Nudity’ we are alluding to this ideal. But whereas ‘the nude’ is the ideal, the situated bare body admired and adorned in culture, ‘nakedness’ on the other hand, is the practical term used in order to describe the physical condition of the body; in other words, flesh with no clothes on.

The paradigmatic gap between these two nouns is considerable: in ‘nudity’, we have the glorious body, as displayed by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles. In ‘nakedness’, we have the materiality in all its awkwardness. The conception of reality is profoundly different and, perhaps, somewhat antagonistic. On the one side the ideal, and on the other reality.

Arguably the semantic shift from nakedness to nudity could be paralleled with a shift from ‘clothing’ to ‘fashion’. It is fascinating to see how certain iconic designers allowed their work to support an ideal,



if not idealised, perception of the body. Examples of this can be found in the work of Madame Grès (1909-1993) and Madeleine Vionnet (1876-1975) who, in several of their designs, deliberately and directly emulated Greek togas. With these twentieth century togas in mind, it is interesting to note that in Ancient Greece, i.e. in a pagan polytheist context, the controversy surrounding the human form was not in regards to whether the body should be naked or not, but rather *how* naked it should be. For instance, the Athenians thought the Spartans perverted because women were allowed to walk bare-legged and to exercise at the palestra. But the fact is that even in Athens, men competed fully naked. It is not surprising then that philosopher Michel Foucault entitled the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, the part devoted to Antiquity, not *La volonté de voir*, but *La volonté de savoir*. People were, more or less, able to see naked bodies yet they were still not allowed to know them in a passionate or sensual way.

In Ancient times, the naked body in its perfected form was an ideal that could and should be emulated by human beings, men in Athens, men and women in Sparta. Nudity then was the expression of this ideal. Consequently, the majority of Western Christian art has faced what we could call 'the imperative of nudity', an imperative re-

lated to the concept of beauty. So when Madeleine Vionnet or Madame Grès refer to it in the beginning of the twentieth century, they do so in a manner that denies the existence of the shame so germane in its historical context. In other words, by emulating the techniques of Ancient Greek drapery, these two designers inscribe in their work the continuity of a conception of the body that does not include shame. The body can be glorious because it is beautiful and harmonious. Seen in this light, the reference to Greek togas and the manner in which both Vionnet and Grès' designs follow the human curves, express a desire to illustrate the body conceived as ideal. Judaism and Christian religions are based on a simple fact: with the awareness of nakedness, i.e. the body, came shame, and it hasn't left us since. Much of dress history has played a fundamental role in covering it all up, both body and Original Sin. By returning to the Ancient sources of culture and clothing these two *grandes dames* of French fashion proposed an alternative way of dealing with the body, a way beyond shame and guilt, a way that focused shamelessly on the pure ecstasy of the ideal.

But as Spinoza famously stated: "nobody knows what the body is capable of". And as the concept of 'convulsive beauty' emerged during the

twentieth century, a mystical vision of physicality arose – a vision based on violent, traumatic, savage aesthetics. André Breton and his 'convulsive beauty' and W. B. Yeats with his 'terrible beauty' have both expressed a fundamental stream in art: what was once sublime could now be seen as a second, altered beauty – however disharmonious this might be. This paradigmatic shift in the definition of beauty is, of course, a direct answer to the Christian perception of the body, which itself in many ways inherited the Platonic statement that "the body is a tomb" (*soma sema*). As Christianity, which had shed such a negative light on this very body, seemed challenged and was increasingly considered *passé*, it appeared necessary to rethink the silence, the unease of the normal naked body – to turn unease into ecstasy and shame into glory. And that's what fashion, finally aware of its own existence, has been doing ever since.

One might argue that the most recent example of this shift is Rico, also known as *Zombie Boy*: the boy who modelled for Nicola Formichetti's Thierry Mugler collection in 2011. *Zombie Boy* bears his own skeleton tattooed onto his skin, a fact that makes him both distinctive and useful for Formichetti's aesthetics, fundamentally based on the dialectic reinvention of beauty. What we were, and probably are

still, afraid of – the ugliness of death – is here the source of a more profound and spectacular, albeit melancholic, beauty. What is particularly interesting with this skeleton tattoo is that it represents the most extreme degree of nakedness possible; it maps a sort of archaeology of the body. That is probably the best symbol of where fashion, or at least certain designers in fashion, now stands with regards to shame; what used to be shameful is now beautiful. What we feared and did not want to mention is now part of a big spectacular show. In that sense, fashion is the new Greek tragedy. It re-enacts, better than anything else, what Aristoteles called *catharsis*, the 'purification of shameful passions'. In this way, it is nothing less and nothing more than a tale, a fiction that can change lives.

#

FASHION  
IN THE  
S H A D O W  
OF THE  
MARKET:

DRESSED  
UP  
and  
LAYING  
BARE

by Anna  
Arabindan-  
Kesson

## SCENE ONE

A slave pen: Waiting

Above: Eyre Crowe, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*,  
Richmond, Virginia, 1861.

**I**n a plane of crisp sunlight that angles down through the door frame, and dissolves into rust-coloured shadows settling across the dark floor, unease spreads along the walls of this wooden interior. A woman in the centre hugs a small infant close to her breast. Next to her, another holds a child on her lap. To their left is a muscular man dressed in light yellow work trousers and a waistcoat: he watches them, his face expressively surly. Seated in a semi-circle the women stare intently at the stove, or let their eyes settle on something outside the room. The children scat-

tered amongst them are quiet; each woman is a study of composed concentration. They are dressed well in respectable printed cotton dresses, their sleeves billowing out from under stiff white aprons. Scarlet neckties that fasten their collars and silk bandannas add fancy touches, bright splashes of adornment. One woman crouched behind the stove is shown in even more luxuriant colours, a rich blue coat, a vibrant yellow head wrap and a striped crimson skirt. Through this evocative colouring we are guided in our inspection of the group on view. Four white men – one in the background and the other three conversing in the doorway on the left – like sentinels, stand watch. And as they watch and we watch them, these slaves, neatly arranged on rough wooden benches, quietly wait to be sold.

SCENE TWO:  
An alley: Waiting



Above: *Slaves Awaiting Sale, New Orleans*, The Illustrated London News, Jan-June, 1861, vol. 38, p. 307, also published as *Exchange Alley*, Harper's Weekly, January 21, 1863, p. 61.

A row of women and men stand in front of long windowed offices: above the women a sign *T Hart Slaves* hangs from the wall; the men are positioned closer to the foreground of the woodcut. Opposite the group a scattering of suited men stand in discussion. One stares intently at a woman in a long printed dress, her head adorned in a tight wrap. Under inspection, she looks down at her feet as do the other women and girls. The black men are closer to us: some sit on a low wall while others stand. One man stares straight at the viewer. In the midst of this visual exchange, it is the clothing that stands out: "the men [are] in blue cloth of good quality, with beaver hats; and the women in calico dresses of more of less

brilliancy, with silk bandanna handkerchiefs bound round their heads."<sup>1</sup> In repeated variations of the same costume these bodies – like the group in the painting – become merchandise, carefully arranged and fashioned for sale.

Dressed Up

In a publication that broadens our engagement and access to the meanings of fashion, what kind of space is there for a discussion of the politics of the slave market? If fashion is a system of choices in which we create (our) space for display, in what other space could systems of display play more of a role than one in which bodies were readied for sale? And another thing; in such a space where transactions were based on uncovering, how did covering-up work? In these two scenes of inspection and display, dressing up slaves for market is clearly crucial to the process of sale. And so we see something startling in the marketing strategy for selling bodies publicly: fashion aided in the unfolding of an extraordinary exposure. Local businesses in cities like New Orleans and Richmond, Virginia – both important centres of the domestic slave trade in the United States – advertised the numerous outfits they could provide for those about to be sold by traders and sellers in the various auctions around the city. Solomon Northup describes his own readying for sale, which began with a bath and was followed by the donning of "a new suit ... hat, coat, shirt, pants and shoes ... [and for] the women frocks of calico, and handkerchiefs to bind about their heads."<sup>2</sup> Another ex-slave explains "some of the traders kept ... uniforms for both men and women, so that the high hats, the riot of white, pink, red and blue would attract the attention of prospective buyers."<sup>3</sup>

Dressed well, slaves were arrayed to bring the maximum amount of monetary interest, and their clothes were meant to accentuate and highlight their physical features. In the scenes just described, these demure women and men are dressed to highlight their healthiness and their modesty, their cleanliness and their submissive nature. Some buyers added jewellery to the outfits or long-sleeved gloves, creating a more exotic and genteel 'look' to draw the buyers' eye. However, by dressing their slaves well – and similarly – sellers could also minimise differences between different bodies, especially useful for the selling of sickly slaves. Fashion provided a way of turning slaves into images of themselves: forced to dress up they had to embody the images of salability they also represented.



The buying and selling of slaves was a speculative venture that relied purely on reading externals that were then translated into the potential use value of a body. Solomon Northup goes on in his description to tell of a buyer who made him "hold up [his] head, walk briskly back and forth ... made us open our mouths and show us our teeth."<sup>4</sup> Women were often forced to strip and undergo all kinds of invasive forms of 'touching'. These humiliating corporeal encounters allowed prospective buyers to tangibly ascertain the possible value that the well-dressed body of a slave might only suggest, and in the process reduced black women and men into objects. But this language was integral to the act of dressing up too. Being put on display, being inspected, are invasive acts of exposure: processes of stripping back and making the immaterial, or essential, material. In the slave market slaves were alienated from their own bodies through acts as simple as dressing. In being forced to dress up, these women and men were also forced to partake in the marketing of their own bodies. This 'marketing' rested on the manifestation of their value as commodities: a manifestation that literally stripped away their humanity. So to wear these clothes in the slave market was also an act of exposure. To dress – to cover – was also to partake in market values of consumption and exchange and thereby reveal one's ultimate shame: the shame of being saleable, the shame of being property, the shame of being owned. Shame in the context of fashion is often linked to those acts of dress that involve misplacement, misunderstanding or when what we do up is – mistakenly or otherwise – undone. But dressing up for the slave market reflects something else entirely. Fashion was integral to its complicated process of laying bare where dressing up clarified the most shameful thing of all – the dehumanising transformation of bodies into chattel.

#### Laying Bare

Opposite: Edward W. Clay, *Life in Philadelphia*. 'How you find yourself dis hot weader Miss Chloe?...' Ca. 1828.

The paradoxical nature of dressing up could also be seen outside the slave market. In the late 1820s the Philadelphia artist Edward W. Clay published a series of lithographs entitled *Life in Philadelphia*, lampooning the fashion choices of free black Americans. Exaggerated and cruel, these lithographs revolved around the act of dressing up. Bourgeois black men and women are shown ungracefully, uttering malapropisms and wearing fashionable faux pas.

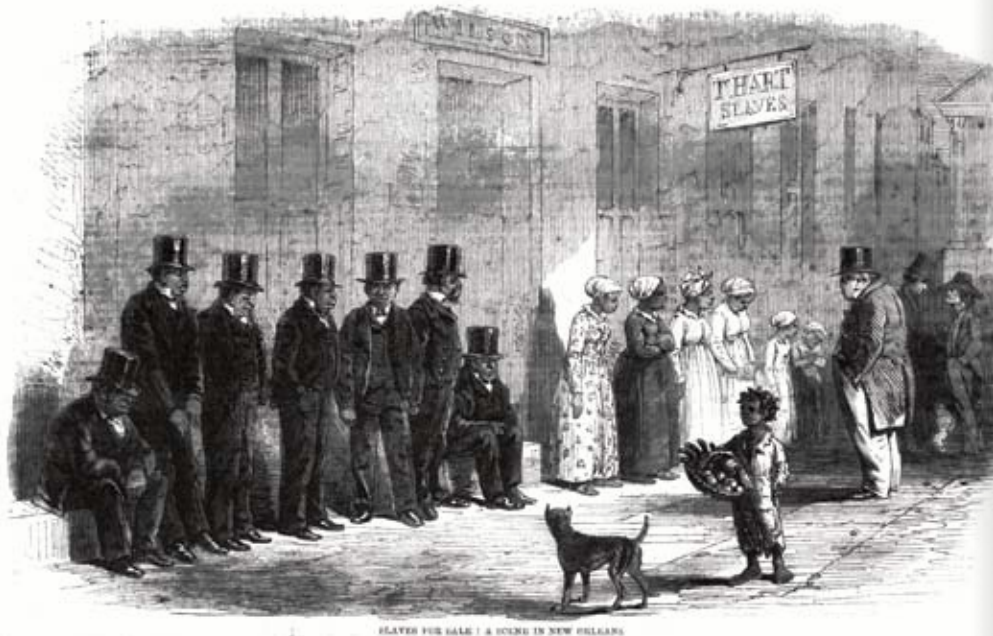


See page 94.









SLAVES FOR SALE: A DOCK IN NEW ORLEANS

See page 92.

## DRESSED UP

## AND LAYING BARE

Clay's point was that free black Americans would always remain out of place and inassimilable.<sup>5</sup> Clay's subjects wear too much and in this way they wear too little. In other words his gaudy and garish lithographs suggest that, as far as the black body was concerned, dressing up was ultimately a form of laying bare, of exposing that it did not measure up to fashion's imperative. Fashion's regulative function over the bodies of black Americans is here too closely tied to the materialisation of something immaterial. Clay's lithographs attempt to turn the accoutrements of bourgeois expression against the bodies that wear them in order to highlight the essentially inferior nature of blackness: a social construction of inferiority that underpinned and justified slavery itself. Clay suggests that by refusing to remain in their place, free black Americans ultimately expose themselves for who they really are, because their inferiority cannot be covered up.

In 1740 the state of South Carolina passed a new slave code that regulated in minute detail the everyday lives of enslaved women and men. The code effectively remained unchanged until the end of slavery in 1863 and made this relationship between fashion, bodies and shame explicit. Under the code, slaves were not allowed to "wear clothes ... above [their] condition ... [and] no owner ... shall permit such Negro or other slave to have or wear any sort of apparel whatsoever, finer, other or greater value than Negro cloth". Negro cloth quickly became a catch-all title for a range of fabrics distinguished by their coarse texture, functionality and cheap value.<sup>6</sup> In beige, grey or yellowish colours the material was often described by planters, travellers and the enslaved themselves as scratchy, uncomfortable and unflattering. The code did not just regulate the materials that could be used, it also enforced a pattern of behaviour: it was a daily reminder of a slave's status effected through the texture of fabric and was meant to ensure that neither dignity nor prestige could be accorded to them. Negro cloth was generally manufactured in factories and shipped to the plantations, but on some plantations it was made on the premises by slaves and called homespun. Letters between plantation owners and manufacturers describe the trade in cloth that connected factory workers and slave labour across the United States and the Atlantic. In this correspondence we see most clearly how clothing was another form of bodily control as planters describe the type, style and colour of cloth they require for their slaves. These letters also detail how shipments could be delayed, how clothes were made to generalised measurements according to age and gender, and planters' ideas of what constituted 'adequate' clothing differed from the experiences of the



enslaved themselves. Free slaves remembered how they were often forced to wear clothing that did not fit, that was too hot for the summer and too cold for the winter, or that they were not given enough clothing at all. These precise legal stipulations legislated the economic meaning of certain bodies at the expense of their humanity. And they were materialised in the industrial networks and plantation arrangements that shaped and limited the lives of the enslaved. As bodies valued for their labour potential, the enslaved required control physically, socially, and psychologically. Hot, heavy and formless, the material of slave clothing revealed its characteristics almost immediately and in doing so simultaneously revealed to others, while reminding its wearers of their status as property.

Dressing up, or even just dressing at all, was an intensely fraught, intensely regulated, act for black Americans in the Antebellum Era. We think of dressing as an act of self-control; yet for black bodies dressing was also a signifier of the opposite. Linked to a kind of shaming that was also a kind of psychical uncovering, fashion came to be one of the lenses by which one could see oneself through the eyes of another and be found wanting. This second sight was almost like a second skin, as dress became a powerful strategy of humiliation that could impress on black bodies – whether enslaved or free – their position of powerlessness. In a social system underpinned by slavery, dress played a crucial role in fashioning a whole series of relationships between self and society and between bodies and subjectivity that revolved finally around the question of ownership.

#### Fashion in the Shadow of the Market

Run-away slave advertisements from Antebellum newspapers often include detailed descriptions of the fashion choices of these fugitives. Interestingly, many note that slaves ran away with colourful jackets or trousers, patterned accessories and better quality garments. Dressing well could sometimes enable slaves to camouflage themselves and find freedom. But it is also likely that these run-away slaves took items they valued with them, items they may have coveted and that gave them dignity. Travellers' descriptions of plantations observed how on Sundays and special occasions, enslaved communities dressed up. Those who worked as domestics on larger, more successful plantations often had greater access to accumulating finer clothing and wore their elegant dresses and suits with care. Frances Kemble, the wife of a plantation owner, noted how field slaves also dressed up, describing the "flounces, frills

and ribbons"<sup>7</sup> of the black women as they gathered for their communal meetings. Collecting these clothes and accessories happened in different ways and often depended on the whims of their plantation master and mistress. On some plantations slaves were at times able to make their own clothing according to their own tastes, sometimes using techniques of dying and patterning that recalled African traditions passed down orally amongst slave communities.<sup>8</sup> Slaves relate how they were occasionally given bolts of calico for Christmas with which to sew Sunday clothes. Some were given cast-offs from their owners to modify, while others mention how it was possible to barter and trade items for cloth and accessories from travelling merchants or pedlars. It is also common to read about the gorgeous headdresses worn by black women, their brilliant colour and intricate arrangements, a vivid gesture that was both a remembrance of, and connection to, an African heritage. The 1848 escape of Ellen and William Craft from Georgia hinged on an ingenious form of dressing up. In tailored suits and top hat, the light skinned Ellen masqueraded as a slave owner while William played the part of her attentive valet as they travelled by train and steamer to freedom in the North. Off the plantation, newspapers in New York and Philadelphia include scandalised accounts of well-dressed free black dandies and belles who promenaded through the city, refusing to move aside for white pedestrians. These well-dressed women and men used fashion to proclaim their visibility and their worth, as gestures of defiance and self-expression and as a refusal to embody a position of shame. Making and modifying their clothes, black Americans found ways of asserting control and ownership over their performance, their bodies and their subjectivities by dressing up. Fashion wasn't simply a response; it was also an act of memory and self-creation: a space-making gesture. Black Americans knew that the act of dressing also meant entering into a system of value where meaning was shaped by an economic relationship of consumption and exchange. What was at stake was not simply the control of their image but also the meaning of their humanity.

These histories leave us with an impression of the instability of expression and the fragility of display. In writing of these politics of shame one risks emptying the lives of black men and women, inscribing them as only subjugated bodies, powerless in their subjection, and reifying the meaning of their resistance. Slavery's brutality was powerfully enacted in the daily regimentation of behaviour as much as it was expressed in terrifying expressions of cruelty and humiliation. These 'acts' of dressing up amplify our understanding of the violence of the everyday; they also freight

the meanings we might ascribe to something as simple – and as extraordinary – as dressing up. Fashion was one of a series of practices through which the system of slavery was implemented and had a daily impact on the bodies of black Americans. Fashion is also a material mode of expression, yet history shows us that some bodies are interpolated through a complex relationship of power in which strategies of resistance and self-expression are not always clearly defined, nor able to completely exist outside ambivalent processes of shame and display. The meanings of fashion within these relationships illustrate how for certain bodies, at certain times and due to certain historical conditions, self-expression was – and perhaps still might be – a precarious act.

As a contested and contesting set of practices, the process of alienation and shame of dressing up reminds us of the contingency of fashion. We need to understand how fashion worked in the fetishisation of black bodies and their conversion into commodities because it tells us something of fashion's material operations and the ways it makes meaning, differently, for different people. Confronting these meanings of shame and forms of alienation, while sometimes uncomfortable, enriches our understanding of the ways that fashion continues to be a process by which the immaterial, intangible, and interior are materialised: a process that continues to underpin the social, sartorial and economic relations that women and men enact daily.

#

1. "A Slave Pen in New Orleans" in *Harper's Weekly*, January 24, 1863, p. 61.
2. Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of S Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation Near the Red River, in Louisiana*, Miller, Orton & Mulligan, New York, 1855, p. 78.
3. R Tallant and L Saxon, *Gumbo Ya-Ya: A Collection of Louisiana Folk Tales*, Pelican Publishing, Gretna, 1987, p. 226.
4. S Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation Near the Red River, in Louisiana*, p. 81.
5. For images of Clay's lithographs see [tinyurl.com/7zeyzt3](http://tinyurl.com/7zeyzt3)
6. See C M Brown, *Scissors and Yardstick: Or, All About Dry Goods: Complete Manual, Giving a Detailed Description of Each Article included in the Several Departments together with Upholstery and House-Furnishing Goods; Also a List of All the Principal Dry Goods Manufacturing Cities and Towns of the World*, Brown and Jaqua, Hartford, 1872, p. 152; S W Beck, *The draper's dictionary: A manual of textile fabrics; their history and applications*, The Warehousemen & Drapers' Journal Office, 1882, p. 298.
7. H Bradley Foster, *New Raiments of Self: African American Clothing in the Antebellum South*, Berg, Oxford, 1997; L J Wares, *Dress Of The African American Woman In Slavery And Freedom: 1500 TO 1935* Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Purdue University, 1981.

By the nineteenth century these materials would have been manufactured either on the plantation or sent there from the New



THE DOOR OF THE JAIL BEING FLUNG OPEN from within there appeared, in the first place, like a black shadow emerging into sunshine, the grim and gristly presence of the town-beadle, with a sword by his side, and his staff of office in his hand. This personage prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law, which it was his business to administer in its final and closest application to the offender. Stretching forth the official staff in his left hand, he laid his right upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward, until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air as if by her own free will. She bore in her arms a child, a baby of some three

AN EXCERPT FROM

## The Scarlet Letter



A NOVEL PUBLISHED IN 1850 BY

Nathaniel Hawthorne

months old, who winked and turned aside its little face from the too vivid light of day; because its existence, heretofore, had brought it acquaintance only with the grey twilight of a dungeon, or other darksome apartment of the prison.

When the young woman – the mother of this child – stood fully revealed before the crowd, it seemed to be her first impulse to clasp the infant closely to her bosom; not so much by an impulse of motherly affection, as that she might thereby conceal a certain token, which was wrought or fastened into her dress. In a moment, however, wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm, and with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at her townspeople and neighbours. On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter 'A'. It was



so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore, and which was of a splendour in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony.

The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was ladylike, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterised by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace which is now recognised as its indication. And never had Hester Prynne appeared more ladylike, in the antique interpretation of the term, than as she issued from the prison. Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped. It may be true that, to a sensitive observer, there was some thing exquisitely painful in it. Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion in prison, and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity. But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer – so that both men and women who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time – was that Scarlet Letter, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.

#



**TIM ROLLINS AND K.O.S.**, *The Scarlet Letter - The Prison Door* (after Nathaniel Hawthorne), 1992-93. Acrylic on book pages mounted on linen.  
Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York





COLUMBINE GOLDSMITH, still from *L'île*, 2011





ANUSCHKA BLOMMERS & NIELS SCHUMM, *Class of 1998*.

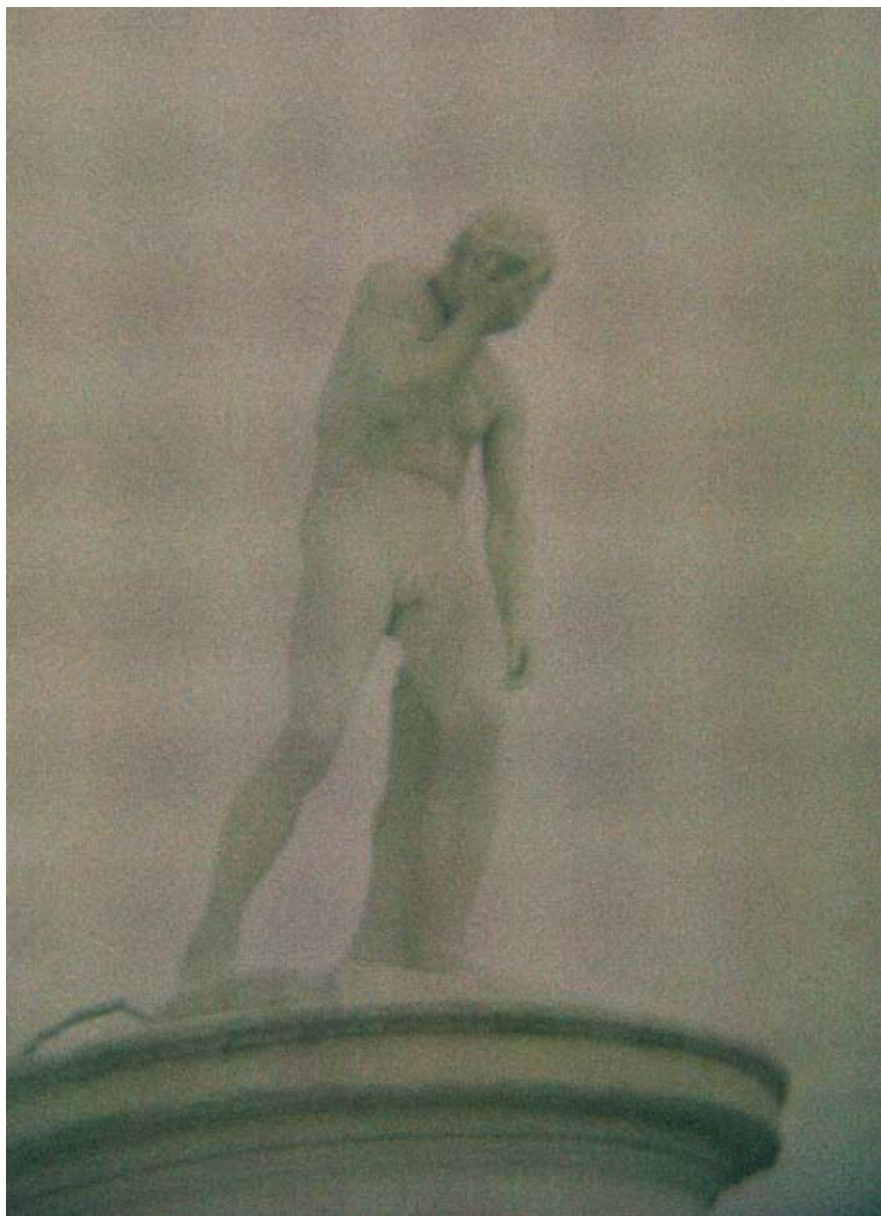




**WILLEM ANDERSSON**, *Dekorerad VI*  
(*Decorated VI*), 2011. Oil on wood, 38cm x 30cm.



**WILLEM ANDERSSON**, *No Title*, 2011.  
Oil on wood 38cm x 30cm.



CARLOTTA MANAIGO

WHEN YOU ASK HOW LIFE WAS before the Great War, forgive my uncertainty, but those were uncertain times. Men became as women, women as men, and machines were replacing both. Steam had been mastered and gravity had been overcome. Books lost their plots and music ceased to be composed for the pleasure of listening. Pictures and sculptures were no longer of anything. God's death (announced to such fanfare in Germany) had not been greatly exaggerated – although the majority still sought desperate succour in the crumbling moral edifice he had bequeathed them.

And memory? The new century did for that too. The diary of the spirit began shedding pages, or having them torn out, doctored and displaced while we lay in bed at night or reclined on the analyst's couch.

VESTOJ FLASH FICTION

## Before the Great War



A SHORT STORY BY

Adam Biles

So when you ask how life was, what can I offer with any certainty? Nothing but a single recollection, which, for reasons unclear to me, has endured. Although I make no claim that it has endured unaltered.

\*\*\*

It happened when I was working as a journalist, covering the hearsay and back-fence chatter about the cabal that passes for an elite in a small town like H——. An invitation was delivered by hand one night. It contained only a time and place – the Corn Exchange, seven o'clock Sunday evening – foil-stamped in gold on the velvety card. It was addressed to the editor, but as he was of the breed of heathens still yet to relinquish the crutch of attending mass, he passed it onto me. I told him I'd go. Not so much because I'd sniffed out the



spoor of a story, but because the invitation resonated like the final call for a long put-off engagement, or like the denouement to a drama in which I had, until then, no idea I'd been cast.

I took my seat at the back of the large, vaulted room just before seven. Unheated, no warmer than the crisp winter evening outside, with hundreds of chairs arranged in concentric circles, emanating from a monolithic plinth. The lighting was dim, and it was impossible to tell who else from the town had come. Come they had, though. Barely any chairs sat empty.

A nearby church tolled a lazy seven and the lights cut out. Seconds later, the plinth was illuminated by a single intense spot. Where, moments before, there had been nothing but empty space, a statue now stood. An unclothed male figure, life size. The white marble had not been hewn in the Renaissance mould – this was no David poised for combat, no brawny, rapacious Pluto. Instead the figure was starkly, angularly, modern: very thin, though not emaciated, the contours of ropey muscles picked out in fine, but intensely dark shadows. The knotted legs were planted an obstinate shoulder-width apart and between them a penis bowed; very large or semi-erect.

The auditorium grew agitated: Susurrations of shock and surprise, some nervy laughter, discomforted coughs and, somewhere, the sound of a child's quiet, but insistent, sobbing. Mostly though, the atmosphere was one of silent reverence – as we had all been educated to believe was the appropriate response to art.

Five minutes we sat there and would perhaps have stayed so much longer, if, moments before the spot was shut off, the statue's eyes hadn't flickered open, the arcing organ throbbed, and the nose discharged two tremendous maelstroms of steam.

The crowd, delivered of their restraint by the darkness, vented in sudden uproar – as if the aliveness of the male form had conferred on it, somehow, a new and brutal obscenity – and if the doors to the square hadn't been unbolted and thrown open just then by unseen hands, they would surely have been torn open by the wrathful crowd inside. Before the tide of people carried me out I cast a final glance in the direction of the plinth. It stood empty once again.

What impressed me first, in the square, was the unlikeliness of the attendees. There were judges and clerks I recognised from the courthouse, a group of school children with their mistress,

and another group in the black frocks of the seminary. Businessmen, market traders, housewives and storekeepers completed the cross-section of the town.

Many left in a hurry. Fists buried in pockets, they stalked into the cover of surrounding streets. I recognised one of the fleeing figures at once. The dilapidated frockcoat, the crumpled felt trilby, the limp that made him list like a schooner on turbulent seas: my editor, barrelling off into the night.

Others seemed reluctant to disperse at once. I caught fragments of conversations, most condemnatory in tone, a confetti-shower of words still immature and malleable in the provincial consciousness: Urbanism was to blame (for something *had* to be!), Bolshevism, Industrialisation, Feminism, *Ballets Russes*... Doctor Freud was indicted, in knowing whispers, as if Lucifer himself was being evoked. Nijinsky too, and other 'sodomites'.

When I accosted one of the seminarians, he just shook his head, decried how shameful it was to put on such a show, and mumbled something about Eden. A young woman smiled with complicity when I approached her and said that it was undoubtedly some new art form – a new *ism*, perhaps – but she didn't understand what, if anything, the artist meant to convey. It was certainly extremely beautiful, however. Her thinner, sterner friend disagreed. She had been seated close to the stage, she said, close enough to see the expression on the man's face, and believed he was not there of his own free will. She had concluded that the spectacle was a penance, conceived as retribution for some kind of humiliation inflicted. Overhearing this a man with a professorial beard, interjected to propose that if it had been a penance it was, most likely, one the subject had inflicted upon himself. He was, in this man's eyes, a modern day flagellant, who had understood that public opprobrium stings far more than the Discipline's tails when atoning for some sin of the flesh or other.

The oddest comment, though, came from the school mistress. When asked what she imagined was the meaning of putting a naked man on display in such a fashion, she feigned surprise. The sculpture was indeed very lifelike, she said, and she could see how, from where I was seated, I might mistake the figure's leather wine gourd for – what she called – his 'shame'. She could assure me, however – as she had already assured the children, and would later reas-



sure their parents – that any rumours of the statue’s coming to life were greatly exaggerated. Hadn’t I ever heard of Vaucanson’s Digesting Duck?

*“At length the crowd dispersed until I stood alone in the square, in a sea of hundreds of invitations abandoned to the cobbles. It felt as if the people of H—— sought, collectively, to erase any evidence of their participation in last night’s events.”*

It was with that sentence I ended my report. For reasons he never made clear, however, my editor – who denied it was him I had seen scuttling away from the square, for he had attended mass, as he had told me he would – never turned it over to the typesetters.

I took up the issue with him several times in the following weeks, but each time he feigned forgetfulness, until the cycle of news had moved on. Then came the deluge, and the memory of that night in the Corn Exchange, when considered from the desolate shores of this raw new world, reached after a four-year voyage across the inky seas of industrialised slaughter, seems almost not worth writing about at all.

#



CARLOTTA MANAIGO



LAURINDO FELICIANO



LAURINDO FELICIANO





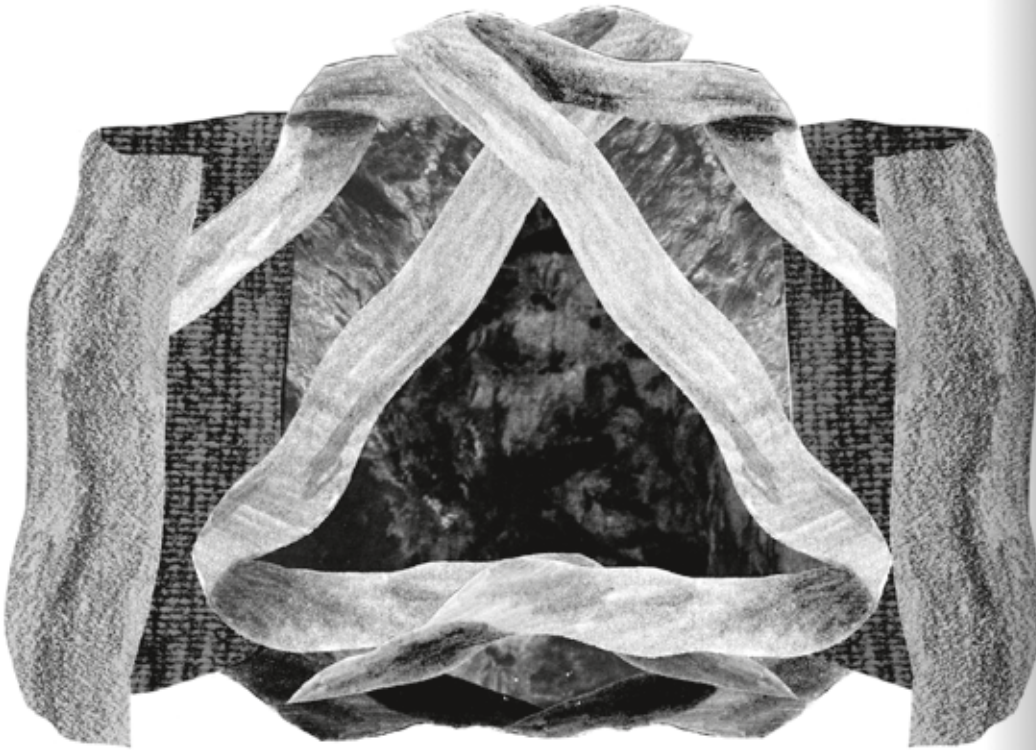
LAURINDO FELICIANO

by Marya



# The Dismembered Body

NOTES ON  
FASHION,  
FETISH  
AND  
SHAME



by Marya Hornbacher

Illustrations by OLOF SVENBLAD

## I. THE BODY, IN THEORY

### ABSTRACT

The price on stripper shoes has dropped precipitously. From the display on the mirrored wall, I pick up an open-toed shoe in red satin, with a dainty ankle strap, a three-inch clear plastic platform sole, and a five-inch stiletto heel: \$45. Insanely cheap. I take my own shoe off, put on this one, jack my pant leg up to my knee, and turn around to see if the shoe creates a nice wavy line from ankle to ass, which it does,

*(as much as it can, really, considering; the shoe does its best with a body this age and at this point in the slow reverse-simian process by which we devolve from upright to hunchbacked to all fours to the belly-down slither back into the grave, where our rapid deconstruction from the complexities of self to the simplest sort of cell begins, proceeds, and ends with a maggot, a memory, a quark)*

which is to say that, as far as the shoes can make my ass look good, they do.

And they're only forty-five bucks! Which I swear to Christ is half what the same shoes would have cost ten years ago – these ridiculous, anti-ambulatory shoes, which are worn in one industry only, but in that industry are universally worn, more stilt than shoe, unwearable outside the club or off the set – these are not your day-to-evening-wear shoes, ladies! These are special shoes, the shoes of fantasy and fetish. Watch this! I slip my foot into the red shoe: my clothes fly off! My face erases itself like an etch-a-sketch! These are the ruby slippers, the glass slippers, the magic shoes; they fit only Cinderella, Dorothy, and Barbie's plastic arched tiptoeing foot. They are photo-op ready, a perfect fit for any form of theory and critique. They are Chinese foot binding and a corset and liposuction and a nose job all at once. They are a chastity belt, a push-up bra, a ball gag and a babydoll negligee. They are original sin, the fall of man, the failure of feminism, the fault of feminists, non-feminists, anti-feminists, post-feminists, deconstructionists and poststructuralists. They are the errors of Barthes and de Bouvier, they are beauty myth and backlash, they are postmodernist jabberwock nonsense. They are a blight on humanity, evidence of social decay, death of the nuclear family, loss of family values, they are not shoes! Duchamp! Tell us: when is a shoe not a shoe? When it is a picture of a shoe. Right! When it is not a shoe but a sign. When it is a signifier worn by a sign. Then riddle me this: when is a woman not really a woman, but merely a sign?

When she is wearing these shoes. These are stripper shoes. These are the shoes of shame.

But actually I like them, and I am going to buy them. Christmas is ten days away; the stripper store where I am picking through the racks is full of red. There are Santa velveteen bikinis with white fur trim, red and black lace Merry Widows, there are red satin boy-shorts with black Santa buckles, which could be worn with red-sequined pasties with red satin swag that, if you are both large-breasted and talented enough, you can make swing in tandem, or even in opposite directions at once –

NB: I am neither large-breasted nor talented enough – so I skip the pasties, but take into the dressing room with me the boy shorts with black Santa belt, and the Santa bikini with white fur trim.

I close the door. I turn my back to the mirror. I unbutton, unzip, and strip.

## NOTES ON THE FASHION/ED BODY

1. We experience our physical forms as ornamental items we wear, not as bodies we are. And as Nietzsche would have it, “Body I am entirely, and nothing else” – the mind being an organ; the self finding its source in the brain; the body inseparable from the self, except insofar as we separate the two in the copula, in perception and language: they are not separable in fact.

But we do not say we *are* a body; we say we *have* a body. It is one of the things in our possession; one of the basic items in any woman’s closet, the little black dress, the well-fitting jeans, the white oxford, the suit of flesh and face. The body is subject to fashionable taste or distaste; to approval or disapproval, as may be the case, depending on how closely it adheres to the sartorial demands of the time.

The body as object is like any owned thing, in that it is intended to bespeak something about the owner. This creates radical dissociation of body from self, and perpetuates a fallacy of physical perfectibility, which in turn is intended to create the illusion of a perfect self. We see these body-objects we own, generally, as failures; they do not adhere to the fashion; and in this grand-scale Cartesian mind/body split, we create a psychic abyss in which festers shame.

2. At the intersection of fashion and shame are bone-deep beliefs about sexuality, the body as sexual object, and the woman as sexual creature, which lie at the heart of a culture, and cannot seem to be killed off. The fantasised, fetishised nature of (especially, but not only) the female body perpetuates a

culturally and historically specific varietal of shame, a doubled shame: for one’s failure to be object-perfect, object d’art, fashionably-bodied; and for having a body that is seen as a sexual object, *not* as fashion object or object d’art. The body-object is made up of fetishised parts that are alternately glorified and vilified, according to a visual and psychic vocabulary that compulsively reiterates the images of those parts. The body is broken down by our witness and internalisation of these images, until it is experienced as more part than whole, and the parts more empty sign than signifying entity. The attempt to amend the internal dissonance this creates is to fetishise oneself.

Today’s fashionable, fetishised body is, variously, sculpted, starved, shaved, waxed, toned, tight; childish, boyish; or, on the other hand, hyper-sexualised, performatively sexual, the epitome of sexual desirability, its sexual signs on display; but even this latter fashion requires upkeep and maintenance and perfecting and adornment and ornament – requires a certain sort of sexual performance even in repose – is not simply a sexual body, with sexual parts. It is a suit of sexual clothes. There is a way to wear it. It, like any other item of clothing, can’t just be tossed on and worn around; one must carry it off.

3. And so the body is a creature created, controlled, manipulated, subjected to dictates of fashion, whim, and will. The body is fashioned of pieces, is made; is both fashion object and fetish; and is experienced as dismembered, as monster, mannequin, as Venus di Milo, headless and armless, as di Chirico’s severed heads and hands. It is kept in the room in the basement of the museum where they keep the smashed and broken bits of former masterpieces, the room where things lacking aesthetic beauty and wholeness are kept.

Our sense of self is infiltrated, in some cases defined, by a sense of being a shattered, broken thing; this consciousness of our own brokenness deepens our sense of shame.

The shame of being in a dismembered body is the shame of being a disintegrated self: a self without centre, without content, without worth.

This is not shame *for* something, some faux pas, some sin, for something done or left undone, not even for the failures, faults, and flaws of the body; the shame is deeper, more amorphous, and pervades the entire experience of embodiment. The shame is this: not only does my body fail to conform to fashionable norms; it fails as a body *as such*. It is not a body at all. It is pieces of a body, each inscribed with separate instances of shame. I am trapped in this cobbled-together creature’s form, and the fact that I can neither correct nor escape it causes both panic and shame.

I am not that body.  
I am nothing *but* that body.  
I am a thing less than the sum of its parts.  
I am a surface, a scrim, a skeleton decked out with Christmas lights, a structure wearing a skin stretched taut over the empty hollow of what would be self.  
I am not the self I seem to be.  
I am not who I am.  
I am not.

## FASHIONING A BODY

So I must construct a semblance of self, or at least a place where one would be kept. Generally this means there is need for a body, a visible structure; one must be at least perceptible to the naked eye. The body should be fashioned of parts, the parts should be perfect, should be in keeping with the fashion of the time, should be placed correctly, none out of place, none marred; none worn out or old or past its prime.

Fallacies under which we labour: that the parts are not really attached. That we can replace the parts at will. That all parts must be perfect; that the parts we have are inherently flawed. That their flaw is our failure. That the flaw of the part ruins the whole. That a deviation or scratch or mar in the object ruins the object's beauty; for example: as with a diamond, or a dog. Each is examined for the perfection of its disparate parts; the whole is judged on the presence of perfection in each.

As nice as a diamond might be, looked at from afar, if it is imperfect, it loses its value. Same with a dog; good dog, maybe, but imperfect, and therefore without value. The valuable dog is one whose parts all meet the standard of perfection of the breed.

The valuable woman is one who, peered at under the jeweller's glass, has no inclusions, no marks, no scars. She is the one whose parts are compared to the parts of the phantasmal perfect woman, and are found to match. She is as good as a made-up woman: all perfect parts.

The valuable woman is clear as a diamond, good as a very good dog.

## BEAUTY V. BEAST

Q: How to distinguish between fashion and fetish, object of fantasy and object d'art? Between a thing of beauty and a thing of shame? Between a woman who wears, as fashion, the objects of fetish, and the one who wears them as costume, and takes them off? Does one cast a shadow of shame on the

wearer, while the other does not? Does the shame lie in the willingness to participate fully in fantasy, to subject one's identity to the projection of the fantasising eye? Is donning a fetish object an erasure of self? Is it shameful, or is it playful, or is it pathetic, or is it an aesthetic choice, selecting the fetish-body from the array of women we keep on hangers in our closet? Where does the aesthetic (beautiful) end and the fetishised (shameful) begin?

A: I don't know.

But shame goes deep, is sensed as self, is sensed as innate. Beauty is experienced as superficial, separate, projected onto the screen of one's body by the scanning eye. Shame lies coiled in the core, is the raw sore of self; beauty skims the surface, rests lightly on the tensile skin of the water. Beauty – as we experience it – is only our portrait, our pose.

Q: Where do the crosshairs of fashion and fetish meet? On the female body, I'm asking. To what extent do we freely choose our aesthetic, our fashion; and to what extent is it a compulsory performance of body as fetish? What is the precise, pinprick-sharp site of shame?

## FASHIONING A FETISH

Actually, what's funny – the valuable woman, one who can exchange the disclosure of her parts for cash (the I for the eye) – need not have parts that match the standard of perfection of the breed. She need only have fetishised features; it is the fetish that pays. Some of these are exaggerations of the breed's features: the ballooning breasts especially, but also the big ol' ass. Some are derivations of societal fashion: the boyish hips, the barely-there breasts. Long hair is the more common fetish, but short hair has its fans; defined muscles are a drawback or an asset, depending on the taste of the viewer; they do not mean the same thing in the fashion of fetish as they do in the fashion of society (in the strip club, they are invested with meaning about feminine sexual willingness, not about personal power or self-control). Long legs are popular, but the exaggeratedly long, toothpick-straight, biologically impossible leg of the Victoria's Secret catalogue is not required; curved thighs, a certain softness, a more Gibson Girl look, legs that may actually occur in nature, are cash-worthy as well. Each ethnicity has its fans; each of those fetishised bodies, in turn, has a fetishised fashion, which usually consists of a hyper-realised fantasy of a culture's traditional garb. A pretty face is critical, of course, and calls a higher price; but the face is not a fetish object in itself; it need only have the requisite parts: primarily, a mouth that can make an O.



The only absolute in the saleability or valuation of the fetish body, more important than 'beauty', more significant than a given trait, is youth – but this is imperative. The individual parts can be flawed, varied, deviating from or exaggerating the fantasy of perfection. But the body and face marred by the passing of youth are worth nothing at all.



## II. THE BODY, IN PRACTICE

### A B S T R A C T

They were plain shoes, unremarkable had they been simply shoes, had you seen them on the feet of a woman walking to work, or down the hallway of the standard-issue office to her cubicle, where she might sit down, kick off these unremarkable shoes, rub her nyloned toes together in the dark under her desk, sit for the day doing her work.

They were that sort of shoe, what used to be called a 'pump', about a 2.5 inch heel, maybe 3. They were, one could tell at a glance, uncomfortable because cheaply made, with no arch support. They were made of dull black leather, though probably the leather was not dull when they

were purchased, but now that the shoes had been worn and worn, day after day, the leather (probably not actual leather) had lost its sheen and its shape, taken on instead the shape of the foot, and because the foot bends, the shoes were bent and creased as well.

Additionally, the shoes were scuffed, and showed the outline of the smallest toe where it had been pressing through the leather for who knows how many years.

The shoes, in short, were old.

The shoes were out of fashion. The shoes were a bore. The shoes, had they been worn by the woman settling into her chair in her fluorescent office cubicle, would have been of no note. Would have gone unnoticed and unremarked; they were unremarkable, not ugly so much as simply worn out, and therefore without value, had they been simply shoes on the foot of a woman wearing clothes.

But since she was naked, except for these shoes, they were noticed. They were not stripper shoes. They had no platform sole, no 5-inch heel, no ribbon, no strap, no bow. They were not a thigh-high pleather boot or a clear plastic mule with a spray of feathers in purple or pink on the toe. They did not cause the ass to bobble as the wearer sashayed between tables or swayed hips-out up the stairs. Walking in them took no special skill. They were not an astonishing feat of fetish or fashion. They did not hurt. They did not threaten to topple the walker. There was no sense of risqué or risk.

They were a pair of shoes. And just as a skin-tight black pleather boot and clear plastic feather-headed mule were objects of note for their daring, for the skill of the girl who slipped her feet into the fetish, the fairy-tale impossible shoe that none but the princess could wear, just as those absurdist gorgeous shoes bespoke something about the owner, these black (cheap) leather shoes with creases and the imprint of the little toe pressing outward were objects of note for their age, their lack of interest, their lack of any fashion sense whatsoever, their day-to-day wearability, their lack of nod to fantasy, their practicality, their sheer dullness in all ways, said something about the woman who wore them.

She was just a woman. She wore a pair of plain black pumps. She didn't even bother to try. You'd think she'd at least make an effort, the other girls said, whispering to one another about the remarkable shoes, the shocking shoes, the shoes that were, the girls whispered, *completely* old-school, and they sniffed.

(Just as there are men who like the old-school tattoo – the bluebirds holding a ribbon that reads MOM, the verse of Scripture on the bicep in jailhouse blue, the gray-scale skull on the muscular forearm – there

are men who like the old-school shoe. They like the woman who wears it. They like the faint scent of spilled beer and smoke and sawdust it carries, the Patsy Kline jukebox song they hear when they see a woman wearing it, the sort of dance she does, not shocking, just good old fashioned T&A, and enough of each to grab hold of and squeeze. These shoes are part and parcel of their fantasy, and are fetish objects in themselves: The real woman. The old shoe.)

Well, said one girl to the other, what do you expect? She's been stripping for like a hundred years. She's ancient. She has to work the split shift. She's married, has kids, goes home at night to make dinner, etc. I think she does, like, PTA.

This last caused pause; the cluster of girls around the small table, hidden in their haze of smoke, the hiss of their whispers drowned out by the drone of the bass that shook the floor and walls, stared at the woman in the unbelievable shoes, stunned.

The woman on the stage dispensed with her forgettable lingerie (underwear would be more the word) in a bored fluid motion, hooked one leg around the pole, spun, slid down, lay on the filthy stage floor, writhed, rolled, arched her back, and stuck one leg in its ridiculous shoe in the air, as if the shoe was triumphant, as if it had won, as if it said not *fuck me* but *fuck you*.

The shameless shoe.

Totally old-school, one girl breathed. How old is she, anyway? Like, thirty?

I think she's thirty-five.

The girls gasped.

The woman spun the old shoe on her big toe. The song ended. She got up, collected her dollar bills from the edge of the stage, turned her back, and swaggered naked through the swinging mirror, disappearing from view.

## PHILOSOPHICAL ASIDE

Of what does a woman consist? Where does her selfhood reside? In some Platonic form Woman, the theoretical perfection of the breed? If so, we human, embodied women are always compared, found wanting, found always lacking and excessive all at once. Or is she the grotesque creature of bodily function that Aristotle describes? Or is she dangling above the Cartesian mind-body abyss, kicking her little legs like Jane on a vine, or is she Hume's empty stage upon which perceptions play?

This is the impossible task: to enumerate, to number, to name

the things that make up a self. This is Leibniz's muddle of total description. He would say that the only legitimate indicator of identity would be a complete catalogue of a given self's perceptions: the sights, sounds, scents, tastes, sensations, ideas, thoughts, the entire onslaught of information taken in by a mind, a body, an eye: these perceptions make up the I. The perceiving eye, then, is the I. They are one and the same.

And so she consists of the dark room. The smell of sweat and cologne. The grit and stickiness of the carpet and stage on her skin. The pulse-like throb of bass that shakes the tables, and the sound of ice rattling in a glass. She consists of the feel of the hands on her body. She consists of those hands. She consists of those people, that place.

Hence the impossibility of total description, and the impossibility of her. She cannot be described, named, defined. She contains, as Whitman wrote, multitudes. She contains all that enters her body, her skin, her twitching eye. So do all the watching eyes. So do I.



## METHODOLOGY: CONSTRUCTION

I get up each morning and put on my suit of flesh and my face.

I arrange them as they should be arranged, straightening limbs, adjusting musculature, yanking at things that bag, tugging skin as taut as is possible without being inappropriately snug. This I can do in the dark. Next: I turn on the bathroom light and apply my eyes. I push at the putty of my face with fingers and thumbs, pressing cheekbones, chin, and brow bone into their proper protuberance. Then I put on my mouth, open wide, stick in my tongue and teeth.

Last, I colour myself in: scribble irises onto the eye orbs, make lopsided red bow-lips, give myself areolas.

I have never liked my areolas. Too pink. I would prefer more of a mocha shade.

I pinch my cheeks until they are ragdoll red. Thus attired, I go flopping out into the world.

### METHODOLOGY: DECONSTRUCTION

But if we are to show how a thing is put together, constructed and fashioned from disparate objects into a seemingly singular Object, if we are to see how the magic is made and the illusion of integration pulled off, we need to take the thing apart, strip it of paint and adornment and this year's fashions and the thinning skin that holds it together, to see the workings of the machine, how hinge and joint are joined, how a seam is sewn. So instead of putting myself together, as one does, as one must, I will take myself apart. I will unhinge and detach my parts, lay them out, articulate each, examine them in the dressing room light, where they can best be seen for their imperfection, their flaws, their fashion faux pas. I am a child pulling Barbie's limbs from her torso and cutting off all her hair and chewing off her arched little feet. This is dissection. Watch this! I lay myself out on the table, split open my belly, label my parts with their Latin names. There will be a quiz after the striptease. I will get closer to the disembodied core, the elemental, integrated, unshattered self, the single cell, the quark that cannot be further reduced, and I will whip off the final veil: Look! No self!

*Oh! my dead grandmother gasps. For shame.*



### III. PARTS

#### F E E T

My feet are unlovely and Hobbitish, square, squat, and toad-like. The toenails are also square and squat, but obsessively pedicured, painted red, so that the titbit of toe that peeps through an open-toed shoe at least pays homage to the need to keep one's feet neat, the need to complete the look, and not leave one's raggedy-ass toes hanging out all unfinished; to leave the part incomplete would ruin the whole.



There is no accounting for the fact that the rest of my feet are rough and dry as rawhide, covered with peeling skin, and faintly orange.

A foot fetishist would find my feet repulsive. But those who fetishise the shoe would find my slavish adherence to footwear fashion, a foot-crucifying fixation on pointed toes and needle-thin heels, quite delicious, for reasons of risk, self-impediment, the forgoing of comfort or practicality in favour of presenting oneself in, and as, a fetish object.

When I have unimpeded myself, unbound my feet, at night, curled up in bed, I rub my feet together, one over the other over the other, like an old woman worrying her hands, or a child stroking the side of her face with the smoothest corner of the sheet. Because of the aforementioned texture of my feet, this rubbing sound goes *whoosh, whoosh, whoosh*.

I find this sound comforting, as I find the action comforting, as I find the shoes comforting, and generally things related to my feet bring me pleasure, rather than shame.

## L E G S

I yank myself apart at the hip joints like a turkey: here we have a drumstick, detached, with its naked white gristly knobs, round muscular centre, and the handy little bone that serves as a handle so you can sink your teeth into the meat of it like Falstaff at a feast.

The thigh is the best, densest, most savoury part. The fashion magazines do not agree with me on this point. But have you ever bitten someone, for example a woman with good thighs, on the thigh? For example, on the inner thigh? There is a salt and a sweetness to the skin. There is a softness between the teeth that gives but does not give way. There is a strength to the thick muscle that runs from knee to hinge of crotch, a tension to the tendon that lashes hipbone to pelvis, and holds the centre of gravity in place.

There: the centre of gravity hangs like a pendulum, swinging steady, keeping time, deep in the centre of the female body, which is whole, which is not hollow, which does not shatter, which aligns itself with planets and galactic tides.

In fact, the centre holds.

## H I P S

They are heart-shaped, bow-shaped, shaped like an apple or cello: they are shaped, formed, they are a shape, a form, a building block such as one might find in a child's toy box, the box of body parts we get when we are

small, along with the rest of the shapes, your usual triangles, ovals, and squares. From our set of blocks, we construct constructions. We stack block on block, balance oval on its end. We turn into tiny surrealists, testing the way a shape works in the world, given gravity, angle, and curve. We melt clocks and send men with umbrellas raining through the air.

And we make woman after woman after woman, brows furrowed, trying to figure out where to put her hips. They must be included, of course. They are the sign *woman*, more even than the breast: breasts, as anyone can see in statuary, are detachable, fall off. But hips, the perfection of smooth curve outward from waist and inward to crook of knee, are a necessity.

The fashions in hips are more variable than any other fashionable part, these variations being culturally specific, and so saturated with multiple meanings about motherhood, sexual desirability, erotic beauty, wealth, willingness, control, that they warrant an essay in themselves, and so I say simply this:

The nude, the painting, the photograph, the aesthetic image of the woman's hip is not the same as the fetish object of the hip. The hip is not, in fact, a significant part of fetish fashion: for the fashionably fetishised body lacks hips. The fetish body is not a woman's: it is a girl's.

And so the fetish objects that adorn the girlish, high, tight hips of the fetish body are those that dispense with curve, dispense with the accentuation of shape and presence and taking of space, dispense with hidden places suggested by curve of derriere and inner thigh: instead the objects expose, grant access, place on display, and play up the childish nature of the fetish object: the g-string, the babydoll, the teddy, the schoolgirl outfit, bobby socks and all.

The eye that finds sexual satisfaction in the visual world of the strip club and pornography mostly has no need of hips. They signify the wrong thing. Instead, the desire sparked by fetish is as surrealist as a child's, and creates of random pieces the desirable, willing, yielding, the anti-vagina-dentata, a girl whose sexual desirability is exaggerated by the burgeoning, unfallen breast, but whose threatening sexual nature is negated by the absence of hips.

As for myself: I have hips. I settle back into them now: they are comfortable as a collapsing velveteen couch. When I stand up, they will sway, will swing – as Lucille Clifton wrote in her magnificent poem, “These hips are big hips,” – and will fall by slow degrees. But at least I can move. At least I am not a naked mannequin, impossibly posed, sharp ilium jutting out, hips thrust forward, white plaster hand gesturing casually at something no one has said.

## H A I R

Consider the Stieglitz photo of O'Keefe's midsection: from the base of her breasts to the middle of her thighs. Her pubic hair is thick and dark; her hands touch one another in a gesture that could be read as tentative, or not. The photo does not show the rest of her body or her face; some would say it's a dismembered torso; I do not entirely disagree; but I am speaking here of hair. The fashions of it; the meanings it carries, in having or not having it, in shaving v. waxing v. trimming v. shaping it; the intersection of fetish fashion and fashionable norm, the seepage of fetish fashion into commonplace sartorial trends: the porno patch, the landing strip, the Brazilian, the simple bikini wax, the coveted all-out bald; I am speaking of it because I did not know that one was tacitly *required* to perform these careful and sort of apelike self-grooming rituals until I was well past my pubic-hair prime – and this was because of the Stieglitz photo, and O'Keefe's hair, so lovely in their unassuming, gloriously, erotically real state.

But nowadays I understand. One must manage this most unruly part. One must manipulate, maintain, fashion, turn it into a work of art. So I, too, groom. Sit on the edge of the tub like a hairless monkey, peering down at myself, shaving and plucking till I'm satisfactorily smooth, and even my snatch is a snap-on, snap-off part like the rest.

## T O R S O , B E L L Y , B R E A S T S , B A C K

It is a fairly ordinary midsection, has the usual parts: breasts and ribcage, belly and back. These are parts I like, and they cause me no shame. But in this middle region of my body, I am never naked. I am always adorned.

I am heavily tattooed and pierced. I have yet to determine if that was a way of using my body as canvas, as site on which to inscribe the image and language I chose; or a way to inflict only chosen pain; or not to inflict pain at all but simply to ornament my flesh; or a way of staying hidden, dressed, even when undressed.

Choose from the following: adornment, claiming, marring, beautifying, mortifying the flesh. Fashion, fetish, self-injury, shame. Any or none or all of these may be accurate terms. But whatever is the truest term, those of us who wear 'body art' wear a second skin. It is a choice; and as with other choices of fashion, wearing and ornamenting the body in this way makes you a certain sort of person, reduces you to a certain sign, and places you somewhere in the social structure. There is some mobility to this; one can cover this part of the body, can don a Cinderella dress and go to dinner in a carriage without causing shock and being turned away at the door; but

if the sleeve slips to reveal the lover's name on the forearm, if the orchid's lip shows on the shoulder, if the scar is seen, the dress turns to rags. You are revealed as what you are: as what your body says you are and are willing to do, what fetish you choose, what sort of object you are.

## F A C E

Say, then, that Hume was right: the woman, the fetish body, but above all the face, is that stage upon which perceptions play. It is the blank canvas, the empty screen. It is the mirror in which you see reflected what you want: your own desire, projected into the empty eyes gazing back.

But this is the joke! The face falls. It moves. It no longer reflects. It loses its sheen, fails to be the still water where Narcissus falls for his own image, it goes from the smooth, taut, blank beauty of youth to a textured, eroded surface, deeply inscribed with things that signify, that say. It is not an empty sign; and so it is not a fetish as such. It defies the gathering eye. That eye skips over this face like a flat stone.

And that is the body's fatal flaw, isn't it? And its most egregious fashion faux pas: it grows old. And in that inevitable progression from smooth object of fetish, to textured human face, we feel a convoluted sort of shame. As we age out of the fantasy of the sexualised child, and lose our capacity to spark that kind of desire, our lifelong identity as fetish object slips. We slip. We falter. We wonder why we begin to feel invisible, faceless, unseen. Many of us, horrified by the crone we see taking our place in the mirror, cannot tolerate it, and attempt, at all costs to body and soul, to stop time.

But this is the point at which we transform, if we allow ourselves to, from object to subject, from fetishised part to integrated whole.

My various parts are arrayed in the dressing room light. The crackling fluorescent bulb casts in garish relief the lumps, the dimples, the hair, the scars. Bodiless, I bend, put the pieces back in place, fashion of my pieces a person – attach limbs at hip joint and shoulder, shrug into my skin, put my head on like a helmet. I stare at my face: so many parts! Where the blank screen was, now I have wrinkles and furrows and eye bags and eyelid folds and parentheses around my mouth and a web of laugh lines that make me look like I am laughing even in my sleep.

Then, intact, wearing the insane, absurd red shoes, I leave the store and stroll invisibly down the street.



LAURINDO FELICIANO





LAURINDO FELICIANO



LAURINDO FELICIANO





MAX FARAGO



MAX FARAGO



Pages 160–162, 167–174:  
**JEN DAVIS**, *Self-portraits*, 2002–2011



Fashion

and the

Fleshy

Body

ON  
DRESS  
AS  
EMBODIED  
PRACTICE

By Dr Joanne Entwistle

FASHION

AND THE FLESHY

BODY

“T

here is an obvious and prominent fact about human beings,” notes Bryan Turner at the start of *The Body and Society*, “they have bodies and they are bodies.”<sup>1</sup> However, what Turner omits in his analysis is another obvious and prominent fact: that human bodies are dressed bodies. Dress is a basic fact of social life and this, according to anthropologists, is true of all human cultures that we know about: all cultures ‘dress’ the body in some way, be it through clothing, tattooing, cosmetics or other forms of body painting<sup>2</sup>. Conventions of dress transform flesh into something recognisable and meaningful to a culture and are also the means by which bodies are made ‘decent’, appropriate and acceptable within specific contexts. Dress does not merely serve to protect our modesty and does not simply reflect a natural body or, for that matter, a given identity; it embellishes the body, the materials commonly used adding a whole array of meanings to the body that would otherwise not be there. While the social world normally demands that we appear dressed, what constitutes ‘dress’ varies from culture to culture and also within a culture, since what is considered appropriate dress will vary according to the situation or occasion. The few mere scraps of fabric that make up a bikini are enough to ensure that the female body is ‘decent’ on beaches in the West, but would be entirely inappropriate in the boardroom. Bodies that do not conform, bodies that flout the conventions of their culture and go without the appropriate clothes are subversive of the most basic social codes, and risk exclusion, scorn or ridicule. The ‘streaker’ who strips off and runs across a cricket pitch or soccer stadium draws attention to these conventions in the act of breaking them: indeed, female streaking is defined as a ‘public order offence’, while the ‘flasher’, by comparison, can be punished for ‘indecent exposure’. As these examples illustrate, dress is fundamental to microsocial order, and the exposure of naked flesh is, potentially at least, disruptive of that order. Indeed, nakedness, in those exceptional situations where it is deemed appropriate, has to be carefully managed (nude bathing in the UK and other Western countries is regulated and restricted; doctors must pay close attention to ethical codes of practice, and so on). So fundamental is dress to the social presentation of the

body and the social order that it governs even our ways of seeing the naked body. According to the art historian Anne Hollander, dress is crucial to our understanding of the body to the extent that our ways of seeing and representing the naked body are dominated by conventions of dress. As she argues, "art proves that nakedness is not universally experienced and perceived any more than clothes are. At any time, the unadorned self has more kinship with its own usual dressed aspect than it has with any undressed human selves in other times and other places."<sup>3</sup> Hollander points to the ways in which depictions of the nude in art and sculpture correspond to the dominant fashions of the day. Thus the nude is never naked, but 'clothed' by contemporary conventions of dress. Naked or semi-naked bodies that break with cultural conventions, especially conventions of gender, are potentially subversive and are treated with horror or derision.

However, while dress cannot be understood without reference to the body and while the body has always and everywhere to be dressed, there has been a surprising lack of concrete analysis of the relationship between them. In this article, which is part of a larger analysis of the dressed body, I want to suggest how we might think about the dressed body and suggest some useful theoretical resources for understanding the relationship between dress, embodiment and the self. I use the term situated bodily practice to highlight how our body is embedded within the social world and fundamental to micro-social order.<sup>4</sup> 'Rules' governing how we present our bodies are critically important and we risk shame, ridicule or simply discomfort if we do not present ourselves appropriately for the setting. Thus, in particular, my analysis focuses on dress and embodied subjectivity and examines the important dimensions of temporality and spatiality in our everyday experience of dress.

Nick Crossley<sup>5</sup> suggests that there are many fruitful connections to be made between the sociologist Erving Goffman<sup>6</sup> and the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>7</sup>, particularly their insistence on subjectivity as embodied. Furthermore, Goffman's concern with the temporality and spatiality of interaction provides another point of contact with Merleau-Ponty, whose work is concerned with these aspects of perception. In terms of providing an account of embodied subjectivity as experienced within the flow of everyday life, Goffman's concepts have some considerable potential for understanding the dressed body. They enable description and analysis of the way in which individuals, or social actors, come to orientate themselves to the social world and learn to perform in it, and recognise how the body is central to this experience. In Goffman's work,

the body is the property of both the individual and the social world: it is the vehicle of identity, but this identity has to be 'managed' in terms of the definitions of the social situation, which impose particular ways of being on the body. Thus individuals feel a social and moral imperative to perform their identity in particular ways, and this includes learning appropriate ways of dressing. Like so much bodily behaviour, codes of dress come to be taken for granted and are routinely and unreflexively employed, although some occasions, generally formal ones (like weddings and funerals) set tighter constraints around the body, and lend themselves to more conscious reflection on dress. Goffman's work thus adds to Mary Douglas's account of the 'two bodies' by bringing embodiment and actual bodily practices into the frame.

In considering the body as central to interaction, his analysis also lends itself to the understanding of the dressed body, and thus to an account of dress in terms of situated bodily practice. Not only does dress form the key link between individual identity and the body, providing the means, or 'raw material', for performing identity; dress is fundamentally an inter-subjective and social phenomenon, it is an important link between individual identity and social belonging. The sociologist Fred Davis argues that dress frames our embodied self, serving as "a kind of visual metaphor for identity and, as pertains in particular to the open society of the West, for registering the culturally anchored ambivalence that resonates within and among identities."<sup>8</sup> In other words, not only is our dress the visible form of our intentions, but in everyday life dress is the insignia by which we are read and come to read others, however unstable and ambivalent these readings may be.<sup>9</sup> Dress works to 'glue' identities in a world where they are uncertain. As Elizabeth Wilson puts it, "the way in which we dress may assuage that fear by stabilising our individual identity."<sup>10</sup> This idea is the basis of much subcultural theory on the symbolic work performed by members of subcultures, who, it is argued, deploy cultural artefacts such as dress to mark out the boundaries of their group and register their belonging.<sup>11</sup>

While Goffman does not discuss the ways dress is used and its role in the "presentation of self in everyday life," his ideas could however be elaborated to discuss the way in which dress is routinely attended to as part of this "presentation of self in everyday life." Most situations, even the most informal, have a code of dress, and these impose particular ways of being on bodies in such a way as to have a social and moral imperative to them. Indeed, clothes are often spoken of in moral terms, using words

like 'faultless,' 'good,' 'correct'. Few are immune to this social pressure, and most people are embarrassed by certain mistakes of dress, such as finding one's fly undone or discovering a stain on a jacket. Thus, as Quentin Bell puts it, "our clothes are too much a part of us for most of us to be entirely indifferent to their condition: it is as though the fabric were indeed a natural extension of the body, or even of the soul."<sup>12</sup>

Thus in the presentation of self in social interaction, ideas of embarrassment and stigma play a crucial role, and are managed, in part, through dress. Dressed inappropriately for a situation we feel vulnerable and embarrassed, and so too when our dress 'fails' us, when in public we find we've lost a button or stained our clothes, or find our fly undone. However, the embarrassment of such mistakes of dress is not simply that of a personal faux pas, but the shame of failing to meet the standards required of one by the moral order of the social space. When we talk of someone's 'slip showing' we are, according to Wilson, speaking of something "more than slight sartorial sloppiness"; we are actually alluding to "the exposure of something much more profoundly ambiguous and disturbing... the naked body underneath the clothes."<sup>13</sup> A commonly cited dream for many people is the experience of suddenly finding oneself naked in a public place: dress, or the lack of it in this case, serves as a metaphor for feelings of shame, embarrassment and vulnerability in our culture, as well as indicating the way in which the moral order demands that the body be covered in some way. These examples illustrate the way in which dress is part of the micro-order of social interaction and intimately connected to our (rather fragile) sense of self, which is, in turn, threatened if we fail to conform to the standards governing a particular social situation. Dress is therefore a crucial dimension in the articulation of personal identity, but not in the sense sometimes argued by theorists, for example, Ted Polhemus<sup>14</sup> and Joanne Finkelstein<sup>15</sup> who err too much on the side of voluntarism, dress as freely willed, 'expressive' and creative. On the contrary, identity is managed through dress in rather more mundane and routine ways, because social pressure encourages us to stay within the bounds of what is defined in a situation as 'normal' body and 'appropriate' dress. This is not to say that dress has no 'creative' or expressive qualities to it, but rather that too much attention and weight has been given to this and too little to the way in which strategies of dress have a strong social and moral dimension to them that serves to constrain the choices people make about what to wear. Efrat Tseëlon<sup>16</sup> has argued that dress choices are made within specific contexts, and provides good

















examples of the ways in which occasions such as job interviews, weddings, etc. constrain dress choices. Her work therefore points to an important aspect of dress that requires that it be studied as a situated bodily practice. Different occasions, different situations, operate with different codes of dress and bodily demeanour, so that while we may dress unreflexively some of the time (to do the grocery shopping or take the kids to school), at other times we are thoughtful, deliberate and calculating in our dress (I must not wear that white dress to the wedding; I must buy a new suit/jacket/tie for that job interview). Furthermore, dress is also structured in the West (and increasingly beyond) by the fashion system, which, in defining the latest aesthetic, helps to shape trends and tastes that structure our experience of dress in daily life.

Crossley<sup>17</sup> suggests that another point of contact between Goffman and Merleau-Ponty is that both take account of space in their analysis. He argues that while Merleau-Ponty is good at articulating spatiality and the perception of it, Goffman provides us with concrete accounts of how this occurs in the social world. Goffman's<sup>18</sup> sense of space is both social and perceptual, and provides a link between the structuralist/post-structuralist analysis of space delineated by Douglas<sup>19</sup> and Michel Foucault<sup>20</sup> in terms of social order and regulation, and the phenomenological analysis of space as experiential. Moreover, according to Crossley, Goffman takes the analysis of bodily demeanour in social situations further than either Merleau-Ponty and indeed Marcel Mauss. Goffman elaborates on Mauss's "techniques of the body," not only recognising that such things as walking are socially structured, but considering also how walking is not only a part of the interaction order, but serves also to reproduce it. For Goffman, the spaces of the street, the office, the shopping mall, operate with different rules and determine how we present ourselves and how we interact with others. He reminds us of the territorial nature of space, and describes how, when we use space, we have to negotiate crowds, dark quiet spaces, etc. In other words, he articulates the way in which action transforms space. This acknowledgement of space can illuminate the situated nature of dress. If, as I have argued, dress forms part of the micro-social order of most social spaces, when we dress we attend to the norms of particular spatial situations: is there a code of dress we have to abide by? Who are we likely to meet? What activities are we likely to perform? How visible do we want to be? (do we want to stand out in the crowd or blend in?), etc. While we may not always be aware of all these issues, we internalise particular rules or norms of dress, which we routinely employ unconsciously. I have

argued elsewhere<sup>21</sup> that the professional woman is more likely to be conscious of her body and dress in public spaces of work than at home or in her private office. Space is experienced territorially by professional women, who routinely talk of putting on their jackets to go to meetings and when walking around their workplaces, but taking them off when in the privacy of their offices, the reason being to cover their breasts so as to avoid unsolicited sexual glances from men. Thus spaces impose different ways of being on gendered bodies: women may have to think more carefully about how they appear in public than men, at least in some situations, and the way they experience public spaces such as offices, boardrooms, or quiet streets at night, is likely to be different to the way men experience such spaces. The spaces at work carry different meanings for women, and as a consequence they have developed particular strategies of dress for managing the gaze of others, especially men, in public spaces at work. Their strategies of dress both reflect the gendered nature of the workplace and represent an adaptation to this space in terms of their experience of it. In a similar way, women dressing up for a night out might wear a coat to cover up an outfit, such as a short skirt and skimpy top, which might feel comfortable when worn in a nightclub, but which might otherwise make them feel vulnerable when walking down a quiet street late at night. In this respect, the spaces of the nightclub and the street impose their own structures on the individual and her sense of her body, and she may in turn employ strategies of dress aimed at managing her body in these spaces.

When we get dressed we attend to these unspoken 'rules' (unconsciously most of the time) or ignore them at our peril, since we risk outrage, disapproval, ridicule or simple discomfort if we don't. Our embodied subjectivity, however personal or intimate, is therefore also always social. By analysing dress as a 'situated bodily practice' it becomes part of an on-going, daily and ordinary practice that connects the private, sensual and intimate experience of the body to wider social norms, moral codes and standards.

#

This article is a revised version of J Entwistle, 'Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice', *Fashion Theory*, Volume 4, Issue 3, 2000, pp. 323-348.

1. B Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985, p. 1.
2. T Polhemus, *Bodystyles*, Lennard, Luton, 1988.
3. T Polhemus, and L. Proctor, *Fashion and Anti-fashion: An Anthology of Clothing and Adornment*, Cox & Wyman, London, 1978.
4. A Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. xiii.
5. J Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000.
6. N Crossley, "Body Techniques, Agency and Inter-corporality: On Goffman's Relations in Public", *Sociology*, 129 (1), 1995, pp. 133-49.
7. E Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Penguin, London, 1971.
8. E Goffman, *Relations in Public*, Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, 1972.
9. M Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, Northwestern University Press, 1976.
10. M Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981.
11. F Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 25.
12. C Campbell, "When the Meaning Is Not a Message: A Critique of the Consumption as Communication Thesis", M Nava, A Blake, I MacRury and B Richards (eds), *Buy this Book: Studies in Advertising and Consumption*, Routledge, London, 1997.
13. E Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, Virago, London, 1985, p. 12.
14. S Hall and T Jefferson (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, Hutchinson, London, 1976.
15. D Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Methuen, London, 1979.
16. K Luck, "Trouble in Eden, Trouble with Eve: Women, Trousers and Utopian Socialism in Nineteenth Century America", J Ash and E Wilson (eds), *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, Pandora, London, 1992.
17. P Willis, "The Expressive Style of a Motor-bike Culture", Benthall and Polhemus (eds), *The Body as a Medium of Expression*, Allen Lane, London, 1975.
18. P Willis, *Profane Culture*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978.
19. Q Bell, *On Human Finery*, Hogarth Press, London, 1976, p. 19.
20. E Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, Virago, London, 1985, p. 8.
21. T Polhemus, *Streetstyle*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1994.
22. J Finkelstein, *The Fashioned Self*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991.
23. E Tseñlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, Sage, London, 1997.
24. N Crossley, "Body Techniques, Agency and Inter-corporality: On Goffman's Relations in Public", *Sociology*, 129 (1), 1995, pp. 133-49.
25. E Goffman, *Relations in Public*, Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, 1972.
26. M Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1970.
27. M Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*, Routledge, London, 1979.
28. M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977.
29. J Entwistle, "Fashioning the Career Woman: Power Dressing as a Strategy of Consumption", M. Talbot and M. Andrews (eds), *All the World and Her Husband: Women and Consumption in the Twentieth Century*, Cassell, London, 2000.

I

HE KNOWS THAT THE MIRROR IS THERE, right in front of him. But he can't bear opening his eyes. Not just yet.

Instead he lifts his hand to his heart and fingers the breast pocket of his coat. In his mind's eye, he sees the delicate cloths of his childhood. Lace, silk, and flimsy white layers of soft cotton that sway in the wind.

But war adds coarseness and weight, to fashion and to life. These days, shirts and trousers, brown and mousy grey, are all artificial rayon. Coats, black and long, in rationed wool with thick wadmal lining and doubled nylon stitches.



With his eyes still closed, he moves three fingers slowly over the fabric. When they reach an edge he stops and breathes. He feels ready to face the result of his actions. But is forced to realise, once again, that he cannot.

Instead he traces the hem of his badge with the tip of his index finger. One, two, three, four, five, six. One more time all the way around. One, two, three, four, five, six.

As he finally opens his eyes, he at once wishes that he could adjust his vision. That he could somehow make the mirror reflect only a grey, pear-shaped face – and blur out everything that lies beneath. But the yellow star and its thick letters in calligraphy remain.

II

A perfectly Aryan face. As to be expected from a perfectly Aryan pedigree. Each time this fact had been pointed out to him, his

lips had been glued together with dry horror.

Each time, until he'd finally decided to swallow his fear instead of his protest. So now he is standing in front of the mirror, the skin of his armpits damp and cold. He tries to escape back into his daydream. But he can't even close his eyes. The yellow star and its thick letters in calligraphy remain.

In an attempt to escape from his reflection he takes a few steps towards the window. Last night, pedestrians were still hastening down the street below, hunching their shoulders in the icy winds. But now he sees a young woman, swaying her hips in perfect eights, the skirt of her muslin dress dancing around her legs.

A glimpse of the springtime in her step is all it takes. He tugs violently at the arm of his coat, fighting it in panic before freeing himself of its weight. As he rushes from the room, the sole of his jackboot leaves a grey print on the lapel.

III

Beneath the hallway window, grains of dust dance in a trapezoid of sunlight. Running through their ballroom, he tries to remember the shape of a particular little tool, one his mother always used for ripping out crooked seams.

He steps out into the street. The weakness of his convictions sends a shiver of revulsion through his body. But the warmth of the new season is quickly soothing his mind. And soon he is walking down the street, whistling a tune with his shirt sleeves rolled up.

The thought of himself as a man of principle seems absurd now. Him, a dissident? A soldier of the Reich, donning the yellow star of shame? He shakes his head in disbelief.

And when he turns the corner towards the haberdashery he is already laughing the laughter of an adult. The older man telling his own immature self that it would have been a shame, wouldn't it, to burden the very first day of spring – with such a heavy coat.



# MAKEOVERS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

A STORY  
OF  
SHAME AND SALVATION  
TOLD IN A  
DIFFERENT KEY

by Dr Brenda  
R. Weber

ginning of a shameful consciousness about one's naked body in need of covering. From the utility of clothing evolved the style, colour, shape, and sheer prestige of fashion, but with fashion also comes the shame of failure that can result if our choices are bad, if our bodies are unworthy of fashion's draconian standards, or if our bank accounts are unable to support the astronomical cost of designer ware. But what if, in a twenty-first century mode of story telling, the Garden of Eden was not a powerful socio-religious cautionary tale about humankind's desire for forbidden knowledge but a reality television makeover show? How might this narrative of seduction, surveillance, scolding, and shame play differently if it were delivered through the auspices of television rather than through the pages of a sacred text? The answer tells us much about what is at stake in the interplay between fashion and shame in this contemporary moment.

## The great and powerful God

Of course, to start things off, in a reality TV remake of the Garden of Eden, the wrathful God would be replaced by a censorious style guru or a team of style experts, angered and offended not by Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge

**F** or the sake of argument, let's say that in the Judeo-Christian tradition, fashion was born when Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden. Banished from Paradise by a wrathful God displeased by Adam and Eve's disobedience and the seductive wiles of Satan in the guise of a serpent, Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden also occasioned the advent of clothing and thus the be-

“With  
fashion  
comes the  
shame of  
failure that can  
result if  
our choices  
are bad, if our  
bodies  
are  
unworthy of  
fashion’s  
draconian  
standards,  
or if our  
bank accounts  
are unable  
to support the  
astronomical  
cost of  
designer  
ware.”

but by their reckless ignorance manifest through a shabby style sense. More than likely, the style guru would be urban, male, and coded gay although not necessarily self-identified as gay (it’s a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ landscape on makeover TV except on shows rich in camp such as RuPaul’s *Drag U* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). Indeed, and ironically, it would not be Adam and Eve’s nakedness about which they would be made to feel ashamed but their coverings, fig leaves turned to clothing if not to fashion, that the style gods would denigrate as unflattering and distasteful. Like an omnipotent and all-seeing God, the style gurus would have full access to wardrobes, budgets, and even to the interiority of their makeover participants’ psychological woes. Concomitant with judgement, then, Adam and Eve as participants in a makeover show would be the subjects of a relentless being-seen-ness that is part of a twentieth and twenty-first century image culture, where it seems one is always caught in the camera’s eye (be that the television camera’s focal point or the CCTV surveillance video meant to patrol, police, and protect the state). Makeover television makes very little distinction between the kinds of gazes directed toward the subject – rule number one on its Ten Commandments: someone is always watching, and you never



“Although it is  
important that  
stories about  
women are  
predominant on  
makeover  
television,  
thus situating women  
as the most  
important feature  
of  
narrative  
interest, these  
stories almost  
always accentuate  
female shame  
due to  
feminine  
ignorance.”

Pages 183, 185, 187, 189: **DAVID DUNAN**

Stylist: SEBASTIAN KAUFMANN

Model: MILAGROS SCHMOLL | Hype

Hair: FEDERICO GHEZZI | CLM using Bumble & Bumble

Make up: AYAMI NISHIMURA | JULIAN WATSON AGENCY

Make up assistants: NAMI YOSHIDA and MIYUKI ISHIZUKA

Stylist's assistant: GRACE JOEL





get a second chance to make a first impression. Fashion always matters. Indeed, much as Michel Foucault's work has made clear, in this climate of optic governmentality, it makes very little difference if we are actually being seen or not. It is the potential for being-seen-ness that produces self-awareness; it is the likelihood of judgement that invites shame.

### Lessons in humiliation

As opposed to the Biblical story where Adam and Eve immediately comprehend their shame in a postlapsarian world, on a reality makeover show Adam and Eve would very likely have to be taught how to perceive and experience the enormity of their shame, since the hallmark of the style makeover on reality TV requires that subjects be confronted with 'secret footage' of themselves in public, the visual evidence provided by hidden cameras offering an incontrovertible proof of fashion disasters that the unwitting subject cannot deny. Unlike plastic surgery or weight loss shows, where subjects voice their experiences of abjection and shame seemingly without prodding from producers or television executives, style shows often involve pedagogical moments where subjects must be taken outside of themselves through cameras,

mirrors, or the judgements of others, so that they might finally begin to see the deplorable mess that others see. It is only at this moment of shared recognition – we both see the same sad thing – that subjects on style shows recognise how bad they look and how much they need a makeover. With awareness comes shame, and subjects often make statements, such as Saira on the BBC version of *What Not to Wear*, that reinforce the power dynamics between all-powerful style hosts and debased makeover subjects. "Clearly I need to be taken in hand," Saira says in tears when confronted with her image in the 360-degree mirror. When prompted to elaborate on why she feels shame, Saira confesses to the presenters Trinny and Susannah that her dowdiness is due to, "Not giving enough of a damn about what I look like. Not realising how important it is and how it diminishes me. I am ashamed." Awareness of her shame, as manifested through her poor fashion choices, her monochromatic colour palate, and her premature grey hair, thus justifies the 'saving' power of the makeover.

### The politics of women's self-care

If Adam and Eve were subjects of a reality television makeover, rather than

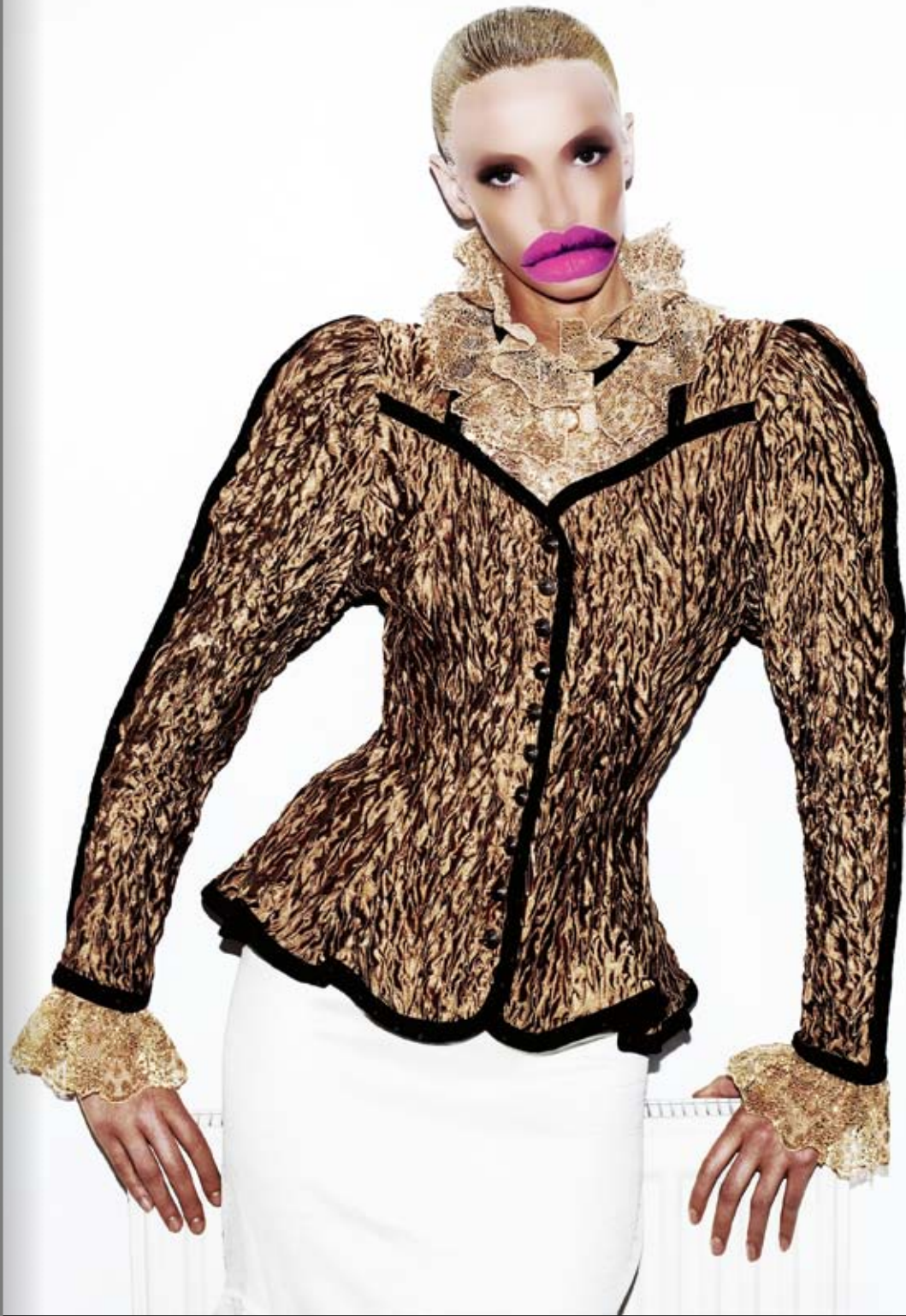


characters of Biblical lore, Adam would only figure as a body of shameful concern once for every ten times that Eve was targeted. In other words, the reality television version of this story would not begin with a male figure and then craft a secondary character out of his rib, but instead, the makeover would put Eve front and centre. Furthermore, it would continue to feature Eve, or Mary, or Madeline, or Joyce, or Yvette, in preference to lonely Adam. This favouritism for women is not, unfortunately, due to the makeover's woman-friendly politics. Although it is important that stories about women are predominant on makeover television, thus situating women as the most important feature of narrative interest, these stories almost always accentuate female shame due to feminine ignorance. Not knowing how to dress is often raised as a gender crime against biological women who allow their 'natural' hourglass figures to be obscured, or who simply inhabit the world in ways that code them as masculine. Such a body is referenced across makeover television by many terms, including 'sad', 'insane', 'mannish', and 'delusional', but the primary means of verbally indicting the Before-body in need of a fashion intervention is to say that the female subject is 'not herself'. In turn, this alienation from self is tacitly coded as deeply shameful, so that

the makeover subject is made to feel both humiliation and regret for the degree to which she has failed in the project of selfhood. The renovation of a woman's shabby style is thus positioned as bringing about a woman's reinvention of self. Put in these terms that situate selfhood as at grave risk, the officious, imperious, and demanding politics of the makeover seem not only humanitarian but also caring.

### The serpent

In John Milton's epic poem about the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, *Paradise Lost*, the part of the serpent is played by a dashing fallen angel named Lucifer before the fall of man, and renamed Satan after the expulsion from the garden. In the form of a serpent, Lucifer tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and she, in turn, offers this fruit to Adam, damning them both. The serpent, then, has come to represent all that is evil, dangerous, and duplicitous; the serpent is the agent that takes humankind from glory to abjection, the curse and suffering of daily living. What might be powerful enough within the makeover TV firmament to stand in for such malicious power? It seems that only shame itself is as potent in the stories of televisual transformation as is Lucifer in the story of Adam





and Eve. Indeed, as I've already suggested, shame stands at the heart of the style makeover, the evidence of poor choices, bad living, and poor self-governance written on the body in drab clothing, garish make-up, and shaggy hairstyles. Whether critiques are offered by intimates, strangers, or style gurus, shame-inducing assessments tend to be detailed and harsh ("You have yellow teeth!", "Your cellulite looks like cottage cheese stuffed in a polyester sack!"). Makeover subjects are often left with the unsettling realisation that any negative self-talk they might feel is minimal compared to the invective of others. These shows announce: the world is watching, and it is not pleased with what it sees. Indeed, across the makeover canon, the motivating necessity that initiates transformation reinforces that at all times the body and its behaviour are seen and judged. The gaze is always present, and shame falls on those who do not work hard enough to be pleasing to the gazer. The makeover intervention, as so imagined, serves not to avert the gaze but to convert judgements from negative to positive, so that subjects might somehow achieve the impossible: pleasing the critical gaze, a task that not only locks the makeover subject into a cycle of unending labour but inevitably invites increased self-scrutiny and shameful reflection.

To my mind, all of

these differences actually illustrate the degree to which the reality television makeover holds remarkable similarity to organised religion, particularly to the Judeo-Christian tenets that set up codes of transgression, shame, and salvation. Indeed, makeover TV functions as an insistent mediated site for the manufacture and display of such typically religious experiences as spiritual crisis, shame, penitence, surrender, worship, and transcendence. It offers a modality for improvement through conspicuous consumption, a protected zone of care and critique, bordered by a strict governing structure of rules and authoritative edicts. The makeover as theme has strong antecedents in both literary and religious texts as well as in women's advice literature and beauty magazines. The reality TV makeover similarly offers a place of redemption in the name of coherent gender identity, race and class signification, and self-improvement. A critical mass of programming now airs across global televised networks, each show offering modes of salvation that are predicated on class-specific principles of good consumerism and care of the self that offer the gateway to promised everlasting happiness and a relief from shame.

And so with my space remaining, I want to work through the ramifications of the end-point of most makeover tel-

## MAKEOVERS

elevision, 'the reveal'. I see these moments as a quasi-religious ceremonialisation of transformation, transubstantiation, and resurrection that promises some relief from shame. Most makeovers – whether of style, body, car, dog, kids, or house – require a scene of staged celebration that allows subjects to stand before friends, family, and style gurus (and, of course, the camera and us as viewers). The reveals are frozen moments in time that highlight the change from Before-body to After-body, and they are invariably accompanied by gasps, amazement, and enthusiastic approval – sometimes even by sobbing, fainting, and hyper-ventilating. Much like the religious convert, makeover contestants believe that their journeys of humiliation and affirmation will empower others to experience surrender, redemption, and rebirth. Makeover subjects have been granted the confidence to be visible, to have faith in their body, to be seen by public and private eyes without fear of shaming censure. Being-seenness in this regard functions as the locus and limit of salvation, there being no place where one can be out of the gaze since a new-found inner peace requires full focus on one's dress and appearance in order to access internal strength manifest through notions of the self and the soul. Indeed, if both selfhood and the state of the soul are at stake, as

## IN THE NEW MILLENIUM

"The gaze is  
always  
present,  
and shame  
falls on those  
who do not  
work hard enough  
to be pleasing  
to the  
gazer."

most makeover texts so powerfully, if tacitly, argue, a therapeutic salvation gospel of shame, surrender, and salvation through fashion might to many women be, quite literally, irresistible. For in this case the mandate is clear: surrender to transformation or face something worse than shame – the resignation to perpetual invisibility.

#



PARIS, MARCH 1947

*I have designed flower women.*

—Christian Dior, February 1947

CAROLINE LEANED TOWARD THE MIRROR and patted her black hair, sprayed to a stiff sheen. She had imagined this day since donning her first party dress at age five – white with a red sash. She spun, thrilling to the rush of air tickling her legs and the fall of cotton gently brushing down, and turned her head to see her inky hair curling on the sleeve. Now her reflection: her arm a white arc, her cheekbones high and sharp, collarbones gliding into bare shoulders above a tight



bodice and a blossoming skirt in luscious, ripe-cherry red. The joy of feeling pretty washed over Caroline like a clear, rolling wave.

Her heels clicked past girls whispering as makeup was dabbed on their faces. A redhead stared upwards as a woman stuck pins into the hem of her emerald dress. Another girl in a white girdle and bra lifted her arms into layers of white tulle. The room hummed with hairspray shushes, compact snaps, and the rustle of skirts.

Gliding through dashes of colour and whiffs of perfume, powder and sprays, Caroline remembered her 'good dress' during the war – a blue and white plaid garment that had faded and tightened as her figure bloomed.

A memory surfaced of a Nazi officer's wife she and her mother had seen one day emerging from Hotel Crillon, with blond hair swept back from haughty eyes. A dramatic square neckline smoothed down in black silk to a skirt tight over angular hips. She'd had a cold, diamond-cut beauty.

"Dior," Maman snapped. "Designer for Lelong; he dresses Nazi wives." Her eyes narrowed. His sister, Ginette worked for the Résistance and was taken to Ravensbrück. Dior dresses the enemy while his sister risked her life for France.

Caroline stared at the woman and wished *she* could dress like that.

After the Liberation, Maman had said Dior had been given sixty million francs to set up his house of couture on Avenue Montaigne, where Caroline and her friends peered into the windows at skirts like opened umbrellas.

The name Dior echoed with a new respect, of fabric pulled generously out of a bolt – thump, rustle, thump, the slow push-and-clip of scissors, of hushed gasps and quiet applause. The New Look.

One afternoon in January 1947, a man in spectacles and a gray suit marched up to Carolyn as she stood outside Dior's shop, nose against the glass, and asked her if she'd ever considered modeling. "We could train you in a few months," he said.

One March evening, she'd announced she'd been invited to model at a photo shoot in Montmartre, one of several Dior planned on the streets of Paris to show life after the war. She would be paid sixty francs. After her father sputtered, he'd given permission. Maman smiled indulgently.

"I'm pleased for you, Caroline." Her mouth tightened, "But Mon Dieu, *Dior!* Those dresses take a lot of fabric, a wasteful crime after such scarcity during the war; people are furious."

\*\*\*

Caroline knew Maman and her friends were outside in drab coats and thick brown stockings, whispering and pointing at the American photographers.

When Maman saw her she'd blush scarlet.

She took a deep breath and walked out into chilled, early spring air. A breeze stirred her skirt against the back of her knees, and her spirit fluttered. Sunlight made a spotlight on the sidewalk, lined with cameramen and the curious.

She raised her head and walked. Her dress ballooned out; she floated on a soft cushion of red.

Caroline felt a tug at the hem of her dress; perhaps a little girl dreaming of Someday.

She spun around into eyes filled with hate.

The tug became a pull. Jolt. Yank. She fell; her hip smacked the cobblestone, stinging. She was attacked from all sides by fingers reaching, clutching, grabbing.

Her body was slapped and spun by calloused hands, her hair snatched and twisted by the angry women of Montmartre. A rag doll ripped apart, she heard one word hissed above curses and exertions:

“Waste!”

She felt a rip vibrate through her being, saw strips of cloth brandished with victorious cries. More hitting, scratching, clawing at her thighs.

Suddenly she lay alone on the sidewalk in silence. She crossed her arms around her naked torso and curled up.

She saw torn bits of red, like petals, scattered on the gray stones. A flashbulb popped.

\*\*\*

*The street sank into an uneasy silence; and then, with a shriek of outrage, a woman stall-holder hurled herself on the nearest model, shouting insults. Another woman joined her and together they beat the girl, tore her hair and tried to pull her clothes off her.*

—Excerpt from *Paris After the Liberation 1944–1949* by Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, Penguin Books, London, 1994.



# CRAZZY

←  
**TUMMY  
TROUBLE**

## My Favourite Things

A POEM BY  
Hannah Smith-Drelich

Sweat rings and coin slots and slippage with pasties

A wig that's askew or an outfit that's hasty

A Halloween costume with slut angel wings

These are a few of my FAVOURITE THINGS.

Muffintop bulges and eating disorders

Partiers, recluses, crack cocaine horders

Celebs who run a small gambling ring

These are a few of my FAVOURITE THINGS.

Girls in white dresses with new noses and lashes

Flakes of dandruff on his shoulder in patches

A smile that is decked out with bling upon bling

These are a few of my FAVOURITE THINGS.

When {  
the dog bites  
the bee stings  
I'm feeling sad

I simply remember my FAVOURITE THINGS

and then I don't feel so bad.

Opposite: **THOMAS ENGEL HART**





MATTHIAS VRIENS-MCGRATH



MATTHIAS VRIENS-MCGRATH



**JESSICA CRAIG-MARTIN**, *Air Kiss* (Rita Hayworth Alzheimers Benefit Gala, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York), 1999.



**JESSICA CRAIG-MARTIN**, *Sequin Sisters* (amfAR Benefit, Cannes), 2000.

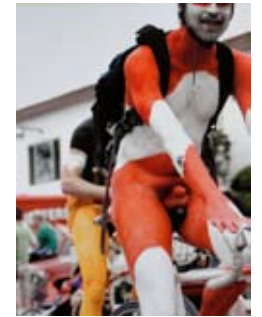


**JESSICA CRAIG-MARTIN**, *No Money, New Money* (amfAR Benefit, Cannes), 2000.



**JESSICA CRAIG-MARTIN**, *Small Bag* (Cancer Benefit, Southampton), 2006.





**JASON EVANS**, *Without Shame*, 2012. Found digital images.





**MARILYN MINTER**, *Prism*, 2009. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Gallery.



**MARILYN MINTER**, *Twins*, 2006. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Gallery.



**ANTHONY COTSIFAS**, *Evanesence*, 2011.



**ANTHONY COTSIFAS**, *Evanesence*, 2011.





Styling

MODESTY

by Professor  
Reina  
Lewis

Pages 194–195, 199–200 & 202 **JULIA HETTA** | LundLund  
Styling: **SOFIE KRUNEGÅRD** | LundLund  
Hair & Makeup: **IGNACIO ALONSO** | LinkDetails  
Models: **ELLEN W** | Stockholmsgruppen, **LOVISA** | Mikas  
Stylist's assistant: **TOVE ÖBERG-RUNFORS**

(sometimes through sumptuary legislation) minority communities. Why now do we see more and diverse forms of religiously affiliated fashion in territories that are not governed by state regulation of women's dress?

The last three decades has seen an increase in religious revivalism across major world faiths, and clothing is often one the most conspicuous indicators of increased religious participation (whereas eating halal or kosher food, or attending church can more easily remain imperceptible to outside observers). In the West, modest dressing presumed to be religiously motivated is most often associ-

ated with Muslim women wearing some form of head covering, hijab, or face covering, niqab/burqa. Yet women from Christian and orthodox Jewish communities in the West are also dressing modestly in greater numbers. The change in modest dress practices is not simply numerical. Modesty is now being achieved and asserted through an overt engagement with fashion.

The modest body, that external observers often presume to be understood within religious communities as an object of shame to be hidden away, is ever more spectacularly visible on the streets of the 'secularised' West and is seen increasingly fashionably styled in Muslim majority states (such as Indonesia and in secular Turkey). The image of the sartorially chic Muslim woman appears in print on the pages of specialist Muslim lifestyle magazines and is highly visible on the internet, seen in myriad forms on modest fashion blogs, discussed in fora, and marketed to on commercial websites serving the rapidly expanding niche market for modest fashion and associated lifestyle services.

My research project *Modest Dressing: faith-based fashion and internet retail*<sup>1</sup> has been looking at dress practices and related commercial activities that accompany and foster the expansion and diversification of modest self-presentation among women from the three Abrahamic faiths. This is not to presume that only women from these religions dress modestly, or that all women in these faith communities are even remotely concerned with dressing modestly. There are enormous variations within each faith, and there are

plenty of women who do not define themselves in religious terms who also dress in ways that might be regarded as modest. Like all dress practices it is impossible to discern from the outside the motivations behind a women's chosen clothing. But in cases of modest dressing that are sufficiently distinctive to be visible to the external observer the stakes in marking oneself out in these ways can be high.

The assertive wearing of modest clothing within the framework of fashion that has developed in recent years can be seen as a practice aiming to reclaim the positive associations of dress cultures that have been or often are still used as a form of stigmatisation. Like the 'black is beautiful' slogan

of the Civil Rights movement and the black power aesthetic that successfully recoded as hip previously disparaged untreated Afro hairstyles, or the slogans and public assertions of sexuality associated with all strands of LGBTQ Pride, the creation and parade of, for example, cool hijabi fashion is also a riposte to mechanisms of shame and shaming. This is the flip side of shame, an affect that is foundational in identity formation. Whilst different cultures might classify different things as shameful, to experience shame, Eve Kosofsky

1. *Modest Dressing: Faith-based fashion and internet retail* is part of the *Religion and Society Programme* funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Board and the Economic and Social Science Research Board. The project is based at the London College of Fashion. See: [bit.ly/gYXZ1P](http://bit.ly/gYXZ1P)

Sedgwick argues, is to have “a bad feeling attached to what one is: one therefore *is something* in experiencing shame”.<sup>2</sup> As Judith Butler demonstrated in relation to gay drag balls in the United States, the socially situated spectacle of drag allows marginalised subjects to counteract the experience of being shamed by revealing the constructedness of the very categories of gender identity in relation to which as gay and transsexual men they are judged to have failed.<sup>3</sup> Like all reversals, the ability to reclassify a stigmatised form of identity or

“For the fashion industry as a whole, as still for many commentators, religious dress suffers the same fate as non-Western or ‘ethnic’ clothing and is regarded as outside fashion.”

2. E Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Queer performativity: Henry James’s *The art of the Novel*’ *GLQ*, 1:1: 1993: 1–16, p. 12 (orig emphasis).

For my previous consideration of shame in relation to the formation of postcolonial ethnic and religious identities see R Lewis *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman harem*, I.B.Tauris, London, 2004, 2004, ch. 4.

3. J Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York, 1993.

4. S Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005.

modesty as a positive or empowering practice might relate to concepts of shame internal to cultures invested in modesty. Modest dressers have several audiences, within and without their communities, but it is important to remember that for religiously motivated modest dressers the presentation of the body is also, or for some, primarily about the construction and comportment of a spiritually appropriate self.

Anthropologist Saba Mahmood urges us not to focus only on political or social gains that might be made by assertions of modest dressing, arguing that the spiritual dimensions of modest dressing must be taken into account.<sup>4</sup> For religiously motivated women modesty can be experienced as simultaneously a requirement of their faith, a tes-

behaviour is likely to be temporary and partial, and can risk further strengthening the stereotype it sets out to undermine. In making this link I am thinking more about how new performances of modesty might intervene in the perceptions of non-participating majority cultures (that form one of the modest dresser’s key audiences) and less about how the positioning of









## STYLING

tament to faith, and a means to facilitate faithfulness. In her fieldwork with Islamic revivalist women in Cairo, Mahmood found that for many women the initial and repeated experience of dressing in hijab is fundamental to the construction and maintenance of the pious self. It is not that the subject is faithful a priori to donning the clothing, which might then merely clad the physical self. Rather, it is through the act of wearing, being seen in, and comporting the veiled body appropriately that the pious disposition is cultivated and exercised.

In other contexts and other faiths, women are electing to form themselves as pious subjects through a discourse of obedience to divine will that finds accommodation with the individuating validation of the fashion system. For Muslims this is seen most especially among a young cohort of modest dressers who are quite categorically choosing their modest ensembles from mainstream fashion rather than traditional or 'ethnic' clothing. This turn away from tradition is not simply sartorial, nor is it total: in the UK for example, many young hijabis of South Asian descent will still wear traditional clothing for family parties, events, festivals, and to the mosque. But it is ideological. The practices of fashionable modesty among Western young Muslim women are often rooted in

## MODESTY

a revivalist study of the holy texts and an affiliation to postmodern forms of what Olivier Roy calls 'global Islam' that prioritise international bonds with other Muslims over familial or community bonds with countries of parental origin.<sup>5</sup> Many of the young women I spoke to come from families where their mothers and grandmothers did not veil, or did so in a habitual and less stringent manner (the loosely wrapped *dupatta* of a *salwar kameez* ensemble would be a case in point). For these young women their practices of covering are distinct from their mothers in style (generally covering the head and neck/chest more completely and carefully) and in purpose. Based

5. O Roy, *Globalised Islam: the Search for a New Ummah*, Hurst, London, 2004

on religious study, young hijabis can assert to internal audiences a doctrinal validation for

their practices – often using this to challenge previously accepted community norms (be it about dress, movement outside the home or inter-ethnic marriage) as originating in culture not religion. The use of mainstream clothing in the fashioning and presentation of the modest self therefore plays to internal audiences as part of disputation within the religion. Creating alternative modes of religious interpretation and authority, new practices can be validated as more properly in accordance with Islam than inherited parental or local 'cultural' practices. Whereas Roy is talking primary about com-

mitted and active Islamists, especially jihadi young men, the practice of validating new behaviours as in keeping with true Islam has trickled down to many of today's under thirties. Growing up with global consumer culture and internet access, the desire to achieve modesty by adapting items from the high street rather than by wearing what is regarded as traditional can lead to new areas of potential conflict and disputation that are not the conflicts that majority observers might expect.

For the fashion industry as a whole, as still for many commentators, religious dress suffers the same fate as non-Western or 'ethnic' clothing and is regarded as outside fashion. Fashion and faith are often seen as mutually exclusive by the fashion industry just as previous generations of religious communities have often regarded fashion and consumer cultures as oppositional to the practice of faith. Yet with younger generations accomplished in the modes and forms of contemporary mass culture and mass fashion, many parents have come to regard modest fashions as a way to keep youngsters within the faith. As Shellie Slade of Utah-based Mormon brand Mod-Bod explained, her decision to start the company, initially offering long line 'shells' or camisoles

and T-shirts, was prompted by, *watching my girls [then aged ten and seven] just struggle with going into the teen, tween years and all of a sudden going from cute little lovely girls' things to very revealing short-cut, low-cut clothing... in our religion [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] we don't believe in showing certain parts of your body and so... we teach our children from a very young age to dress modestly... I just saw these types of clothing [low rise jeans, cropped tops] coming out from my girls and I'm thinking I just don't want to have to have my girls feel alienated by not having some of these fashion pieces that they can wear... Yes, it was really the Britney Spears era. I mean she'd just come out of Disney and gone crazy...*<sup>6</sup>

Jewish companies also often began with the design and distribution of 'basics' that could adapt regular products for modest requirements. Recently, across the faiths, companies are bringing out fashion forward clothing that is assertively on-trend. In this, designers and manufacturers share with journalists and bloggers the challenge of pushing the visual language of the field away from its initial deference to literal modes of reading in which fashion and lifestyle campaigns

and editorial were likely to face vociferous criticism over any depiction of the female form that conservative viewers might find insufficiently modest.<sup>7</sup> Now, newer websites are beginning to feature products in edgily styled shoots (a long skirt combined with only a bustier for instance) confident that they can address their consumer as sufficiently fashion literate to appreciate the aesthetic and as sufficiently modesty literate to understand how to combine items in situations requiring modesty. For Christian, Muslim, and Jewish companies and bloggers alike, concerns with how to picture the body are constantly negotiated with their changing sense of their various audiences and consumer groups.

When it comes to asserting preferred versions of modesty, and to judging the self-presentation of other women, style comes up against shame time and again. I see in blogs and social media (both 'independent' and corporate) a delicate set of manoeuvres as women try to assert their belief in correct forms of covering without appearing to criticise other women or to be controlled by comments of co-religionists. Discussing how their decisions as young adults to wear hijab made them more visible as Muslims to other Muslims, Onjali Bodrul and Nathasha Ali, interns at Muslim lifestyle magazine *emel* in London, noted:

NA: I get more acknowledgement, you know, you do get a

"Shame does indeed hover over modest dressing, but I do want to shift it from being the defining paradigm. Perhaps shame, and its obverse pride, can be put to use in the formation of new attitudes to the body in society."

lot more smiles. That's one thing that I noticed when I started wearing hijab, it was like, wow, people know I'm Muslim all of a sudden, it's like I'm part of a bigger community. I remember the first time I walked on a bus and a lady turned round to me and said, *Assalamu Alaikum*. I was like, oh, you know I am Muslim.<sup>8</sup>

But the glance of recognition can also bring judgement:

NA: They will look twice at you, more so than maybe if you weren't wearing a hijab because they feel like they have the right almost to judge you... You do get more surveillance... I don't really enjoy that when people kind of like give you that second look.

OB: No, no, because it's



the same kind of criticism. Just as non-Muslims are judging you on what you wear, the Muslims are doing it too.

These modes of informal internal community regulation point to an inherent conflict for all the religiously motivated modest dressers I spoke to, in that modesty is understood as both a divine requirement to which a believer should submit and as a personal choice. Within this discourse of choice, modest style leaders struggle to demarcate the boundaries of acceptable modesty without disrespecting the different choices of other women. Modest fashion blogger Jana Kossaibati of *hijabstyle.com*, one of the early and very successful British Muslim style blogs, invites photos for her reader style features, but treads carefully when she feels compelled to turn down a reader whose understanding of modesty does not cohere with her own.

One might be tempted to argue that the activity around modest fashion is an attempt to reclaim from shame practices that are intrinsically and irredeemably rooted in the distaste for the female body, and that are therefore

inherently shaming. This would attribute false consciousness to women – regarding them as only and ever unwittingly contributing to their own oppression. Or one might emphasise the socially liberating potential of modest dressing as a mechanism that allows women (in minority and majority contexts) to exercise greater public autonomy – and indeed, you can find examples across the

world of how wearing hijab acts as an alibi to allow girls and women greater social mobility, as well as inability to work or study outside the home because their modest dress acts as a presumed guarantor of their behaviour and reputation. This is sometimes the case, but it is never the only effect of hijab. Many of the key proponents of new modes of modest dressing are young women (including converts) with con-

siderable social, economic and cultural capital – who have always had the ‘freedom’ to move about the modern city, and the globe, as and when they liked.<sup>9</sup> For them the hijab does other work, creating forms of spiritual capital and social distinction.

The creation of a pious disposition does not in itself

require a fashion system – but in this day and age for women, especially young women, from different religions it is hardly surprising that these exercises of the self are conceptualised through the commodities and visual regimes of global consumer culture. Contemporary global Islam, along with forms of Jewish revivalism, is now understood by many young adherents in terms of personal spiritual fulfilment, a quest for self-development that has more in common with Christian confessional traditions and New Age spirituality than with the habitual and community embedded practices of their parents and grandparents. Among the under thirties who have grown up with neo-liberal consumer culture this interest in religious practices of self-improvement are developed, expressed, and communicated through consumption practices.<sup>10</sup> The attendant development of specialist commodities and services – modest fashion, halal food, Christian rock music – has attracted attention from the mainstream companies and marketers, who increasingly regard faith-based consumers as significant emerging markets.<sup>11</sup>

Staging their public presentation of religious modesty within the frame of global fashion was important to many women that I spoke to. For young Muslims, facing rising Islamophobia and constant press coverage linking Islam with terrorism, to be visibly Mus-

lim but visibly fashionable was a way to promote positive understandings of their community. As well as their own pleasure in fashion and style, these hijabis hope that by looking like other women on the high street they will move away from stigmatisation and towards social inclusion. For ultra-orthodox Jews, to position oneself outside fashion by wearing clothes that were spectacularly frumpy was to make oneself, and therefore one's community, negatively conspicuous to the majority culture. But, it was also ill-advised to render oneself overly conspicuous to co-religionists by being too fashionably dressed. Avant-garde fashionability was likely to read as attention-seeking rather than modest behaviour.

The niceties of getting it right but not too right, and certainly not too wrong, do not only apply to the orthodox or the religious. All women face potentially shaming forms of public scrutiny of their bodies and their dress. But modest dressers who are perceived to be religiously motivated face particular challenges.

### Conclusion:

The affect of shame is not activated only in those that are the shamed object. One may feel shame also at witnessing, let alone contributing, to the shaming of others. One response to this may be to project blame onto the shamed subject, another to feel

motivated to intervene. The mania in Europe at the moment to control through legislation the dress of Muslim women (most recently the tiny percentage of the European Muslim population that wears a face veil) activates mechanisms associated with shame. It is clear anecdotally that the experience of having co-religionists shamed is a motivator for many young women to up-veil (and has been the case in Europe since the first attempts in France to prevent school students wearing the hijab in 1989). It is also a motivator for non-Muslims to express solidarity on the grounds of discrimination (and the racism and xenophobia that lies behind these policies) even though for many, especially feminists, it is challenging to support a woman's right to dress as she pleases when modest dressing is understood as part of a wider cultural frame that seeks to regulate female sexuality. Apologias that honour codes (not to be equated with religion) and religious doctrines of gender segregating behaviour that impinge on men as well as women do not detract from the fact that in practice it is women's bodies and behaviours that are more closely regulated. But then, so goes the counter-argument, the same is true for 'secular' cultures and societies. Muslims who do not believe that Islam mandates a particular, or for some any, form of head and face covering risk being shamed through association, struggling to argue

for rights to freedom of religious expression and the multiplicity of Muslim interpretations and practices. Shame does indeed hover over modest dressing, but I do want to shift it from being the defining paradigm. Perhaps shame, and its obverse pride, can be put to use in the formation of new attitudes to the body in society. The development, diversification, and segmentation of a niche market in modest fashion demonstrate not only the emergence of taste communities within faith groups, but between faiths, and between the religious and the secular. Awareness of convergence and divergence not only creates a larger, generic modest market for brands, but also fosters social, political, and spiritual dialogue between women and between communities, whose boundaries like the modest styles of the moment can be seen as mutable and mutually created.

#

THAT AUTUMN THE SERPENT GOT INTO MEG'S PARADISE and tempted her, like many a modern Eve, not with apples but with a dress. Meg didn't like to be pitied and made to feel poor; it irritated her; but she was ashamed to confess it, and now and then she tried to console herself by buying something pretty, so Sally needn't think she had to scrimp. She always felt wicked after it, for the pretty things were so seldom necessities; but then they cost so little, it wasn't worth worrying about; so the trifles increased unconsciously, and in the shopping excursions she was no longer a passive looker-on.

But trifles cost more than one would imagine; and when she cast up her accounts at the end of the month, the sum total rather scared her. John was busy that month, and left the bills to her; the



next month he was absent; but the third he had a grand quarterly settling up, and Meg never forgot it. A few days before she had done a dreadful thing, and it weighed upon her conscience. Sally had been buying silks and Meg ached for a new one – just a handsome light one for parties – her black silk was so common, and thin things for eveningwear were only proper for girls. Aunt March usually gave the sisters a present of twenty-five dollars apiece at New Year; that was only a month to wait and here was a lovely violet silk going at a bargain, and she had the money, if she only dared take it. John always said what was his was hers; but would he think it right to spend not only the prospective five-and-twenty, but another five-and-twenty out of the household fund? That was the question. Sally had urged her to do it, had offered to loan the money, and with the best intentions in life had tempted Meg beyond her strength. In an evil moment the shopman held up the lovely shimmering folds, and said, "A bargain, I assure you ma'am." She answered, "I'll take it," and it was cut

off and paid for and Sally had exulted, and she had laughed as if it was a thing of no consequence, and driven away as if she had stolen some thing and the police were after her.

When she got home she tried to assuage the pangs of remorse by spreading forth the lovely silk; but it looked less silvery now, didn't become her after all, and the words 'fifty dollars' seemed stamped like a pattern down each breadth. She put it away but it haunted her, not delightfully as a new dress should, but dreadfully like the ghost of a folly that was not easily laid. When John got out his books that night, Meg's heart sank; and for the first time in her married life she was afraid of her husband. The kind, brown eyes looked as if they could be stern; and though he was unusually merry, she fancied he had found her out, but didn't mean to let her know it. The house bills were all paid, the books all in order, John had praised her, and was undoing the old pocket-book which they call 'the bank', when Meg, knowing that it was quite empty, stopped his hand, saying nervously:

"You haven't seen my private expense book yet."

John never asked to see it; but she always insisted on his doing so, and used to enjoy his masculine amazement at the queer things women wanted, and make him guess what 'piping' was, demand fiercely the meaning of a 'hug-me-tight', or wonder how a little thing composed of three rosebuds, a bit of velvet, and a pair of strings could possibly be a bonnet and cost five or six dollars.

The little book was brought out slowly and laid down before him. Meg got behind his chair, under pretence of smoothing the wrinkles out of his tired forehead, and standing there, she said, with her panic increasing with every word:

"John, dear, I'm ashamed to show you my book, for I've really been dreadfully extravagant. I go about so much I must have things you know, and Sally advised my getting it, so I did; and my New Year's money will partly pay for it; but I'd done it, for I knew you'd think it wrong in me."







**ANNIKA VON HAUSWOLFF**, *The Legacy of Beige*, 2002. Courtesy the artist.



**RICK CASTRO**, *The Goddess Bunny*, 1990. Courtesy the artist.



TOVA MOZAD

#### Willem Andersson

Today Willem spends his days in the company of a lot of pens and brushes, but he tells us that he when he was a little boy he wanted to become a professional tree house builder. That dream had to be shelved when young Willem discovered graphic novels, an ambition that was also side-lined when he discovered that you can actually make a living as an artist.

#### Anna Arabindan-Kesson

There is a special place in our hearts for Anna because she's one of the sweetest people we've met in a long time. She's currently finishing her PhD at Yale in the Art History and African American Studies Department and dividing her time between America and Great Britain and raking up the air miles as she goes!

#### Adam Biles

This is the second time Adam collaborates with us and we are so grateful to have found him! Adam is English but has lived in Paris for quite some time now and he claims to be particularly enamoured by the vile but intoxicating stench that wafts from the Seine. When he isn't walking by the river Adam works hard as a writer, translator and journalist.

#### Anuschka Blommers

Anuschka is rather softly spoken and often lets her creative partner, Niels, speak for them both. The duo met while studying at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam and after Viktor & Rolf asked them to take some photos for Purple in 1997 they became firmly ensconced in the world of fashion where their hyper-real images were a welcome alternative in a world so often defined by über-sleekness.

## CONTRIBUTORS

#### Erin Byrne

Erin lives in Seattle but professes to be magnetically drawn to Paris, a city that allows – hell, encourages even – debauchery such as wine with lunch every day. Erin is currently working on a documentary film called *The Storykeeper* and *Wings From Victory*, a collection of her essays, as well as mastering the correct pronunciation of *mille-feuille*.

#### Rick Castro

Rick lives in LA and loves it. We got to know his work through Michele Lamy, and boy are we grateful for that! Rick used to be a fashion stylist working with photographers like Annie Leibovitz, Herb Ritts and Joel Peter Witkin and publications such as *Vanity Fair*, *GQ* and *Interview*. Today however he's a photographer and film maker exploring the world of sexual fetishes, hustlers and fringe culture who claims to 'never want to deal with wardrobe ever again!'

#### Christian Coinbergh

Christian, or Coijan as he's known to both friends and foes, is a bit of an oddball (in a good way obviously). When small children see his long beard and colourful clothes for the first time they tend to either cry or squeal in delight. Coijan is mischievous and rather rebellious in his own way and he loves to laugh as much as he loves to take pictures.

#### Anthony Cotsifas

Anthony is one of those rare people who were actually born in New York City. When he was younger Anthony wanted to become a NYPD police officer so he studied forensic photography but before he received his gun and shield he relented and left the academy to study fine

art instead. Today he works as a fashion photographer who specialises in architectural and still life photography.

#### Jessica Craig-Martin

Jessica began her career as a fashion and party photographer but soon realised that it was way more fun to become an artist on the sly. Her unflinching images of the wealthy in various compromising positions expose those in society's higher echelons as vulgar, often greedy and most definitely not in good taste. But at the same time her work also reminds us of the human condition and the fragility that is at the centre of all we do, regardless of our socio-economic position.

#### David Dunan

David was born in Scottish Thurso, the northernmost town on the British mainland. He tells us that all throughout his childhood he would practice the art of the makeover on his sisters and their friends, in the process discovering his everlasting love of re-invention. Largely self-taught, his zeal for photography stems from this same impulse to recreate the world around him: a little more glamorous, a little more beautiful.

#### Jen Davis

Jen has a pretty impressive CV. She graduated from Yale in 2008 and has since won more awards than you can shake a stick at. Her work has been exhibited all over the world, from Milwaukee to Budapest, New York, Barcelona and Cape Town and even Sir Elton John has a veritable Jen Davis in his collection!

### Lisa Ehlin

When not a PhD student, Lisa consumes huge amounts of pop culture and then blogs about it. She tells us that fashion is at the heart of everything she does, and that Vogue is the ultimate dream factory of fashion. Lisa is one of those people who we think will always remain a kiddo at heart, the kind that gets their utmost pleasure from playing records in a dark corner of our favourite bar.

### Thomas Engel Hart

Thomas hails from New York but has the demeanour of a self-possessed Southern gentleman. A menswear designer by trade, Thomas has a past as the design chief at Thierry Mugler. He launched his own label in 2002 and has since dipped in and out of the fashion industry in a pace that is entirely his own.

### Joanne Entwistle

Joanne is a Senior Lecturer in Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College in London and has published lots and lots on dress and fashion. She is a sociologist by trade and many are those who find both her work and her person awe-inspiring. She is utterly charming and very well dressed and a bit of a social butterfly, which is no mean feat in a field where a certain social awkwardness is often mistaken for profundity.

### Jason Evans

"Jason Evans (born Holyhead, Wales 1968) is a photographer." That's Jason's official biography. We, however, would like to add a few things. Like the fact that Jason has lots of tattoos everywhere and looks rather tough. And that he's taken some of the most iconic fashion images of the early 1990s. And also that he's very good at making people smile as well as think.

### Max Farago

Max is a very dapper photographer who lives in New York City and looks a little like Cary Grant with a beard if you stand at a distance and squint a bit. He has taken pictures for pretty much every fashion magazine worth its salt, all the way from Vestoj to Vogue Paris and recently held his first solo show in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

### Laurindo Feliciano

Laurindo is one of those people who smile almost all the time and just generally love life. He was born in Brazil but has lived in Paris for almost a decade where he, with the help of some scissors, glue, pencils, old paper, found images and his computer creates the most beautiful universes, full of mystery and romance.

### Columbine Goldsmith

Columbine has the most amazing long brown hair that's just waiting to be cast for a shampoo commercial. At the moment she's hanging out in LA where she was born but she's known to be an intrepid traveller. In the recent past she's visited Iceland and St Barts and spent time in New York City as well as Paris, always accompanied by her faithful camera.

### Donatien Grau

Literary critic and journalist Donatien prides himself on knowing just about everybody. Tall and long-shanked, he is molding himself a little after his hero Hans Ulrich Obrist and like Obrist he loves to bring people together. At the moment Donatien is waiting for his book on Proust and Sainte-Beuve to come out.

### Annika von Hausswolff

Annika is one of Sweden's most inscrutable artists. Her work deals with the uncon-

scious and the unknown and often balances precariously on the line between sex, violence and (very) dark humour. You can see her in many of her photographs, but her face is always somewhat obscured, by some fabric, by her hair, by an awkward angle. And so she remains a mystery, which we suspect is just the way she likes it.

### Julia Hetta

Julia is that very best kind of photographer – the kind who is both curious and contemplative. She graduated from the Gerrit Rietveldt Academie in 2004 and has since dedicated herself to honing her craft. Her images are enigmatic with an almost quixotic quality; they make you remember Renaissance paintings you might have seen some time long ago in a dusty and somewhat forgotten museum.

### Marya Hornbacher

We stumbled on Marya's work almost by chance, the way you do when hours and hours of internet browsing actually results in something useful. We have since found out that she was twenty-three years old when she published her first book *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*, and that she, before long, became the voice of countless young women, alienated in their own bodies. Since then Marya has written ceaselessly, memoirs, essays and fiction, and we hope she never stops.

### Sebastian Kaufmann

Sebastian used to have a very different life – one where his studies in Political Science and International Relations brought him work as a political analyst for a major oil company and later as a communications consultant to his native

Argentinean government. Life, however, moves in mysterious ways, and following what can only be described as an epiphany Sebastian gave up his homeland, his security and his nine to five existence and moved to London to become the force in fashion that he is today. Wow.

### Scott King

Scott looks a little like a ruffian but we hear that he's actually a jolly good fellow. Once upon a time he used to be the art director of the now defunct Sleazenation where his Cher Guevara cover from 2001 helped remind people that fashion magazines can actually be quite cool sometimes. Today Scott works as an artist whose oeuvre is full of shrewd media savviness, seamlessly blurring the boundaries between product, message and consumer desire. Still cool in other words.

### Madelaine Levy

Madelaine is one of those people whom you just can't help wanting to ask for advice. She's wise and calm and prone to pretty much always doing the right thing. Once upon a time she worked hard in Aladdin's Cave at Eurodisney but at present she's the Editor-at-Large of Bon Magazine and also working on her first novel.

### Reina Lewis

Reina teaches as the London College of Fashion and has published an impressive amount on postcolonial theory, gender studies, queer theory and critical approaches to Orientalism and at present she's completely immersed in her project on fashion and faith. Her students tell us that she is thorough and sharp and has a hawk's eye for details as well as an impressive (and sometimes intimidating) presence.

### Emma Löfström

To those who know her Emma is a typical Swede in London, in the best sense of the word: punctual, pretty, reliable, hard working and blond. She spends her days creating mystical, magical atmospheres and tells us that when she draws she imagines the environment she's creating as an evolving space where her characters can grow and develop as if they were actors on a stage in a play you wish you had a bit part.

### Niall Richardson

Niall has an infectious laugh and the kind of face that makes you want to tell him all your secrets. He is a Lecturer in Film, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex and his interest lies in the representation of gender and sexuality in film and popular culture. He first wrote about Buck Angel in his book *Transgressive Bodies* and tells us that he's a 'great fan' of Buck's work.

### Lisa Rovner

Lisa is one of those people who looks like she's just stepped out of a documentary about The Woodstock Music & Art Fair. She's something of a jack of all trades but is probably most passionate about film and music. She's a devil at finding curious and long-forgotten archive material and she's a bloody brilliant dancer too.

### Carlotta Manaigo

Carlotta can be bashful and a little reserved when you meet her in person, it's almost as if she prefers her images to speak for her. And what a language they speak! In her work something exquisite and enchanted grows forth and the more you delve into it the more her dreamscape threatens to envelop you.

### Marilyn Minter

As a young student in Louisiana Marilyn was coached by Diane Arbus, who allegedly declared her work 'the only student work she liked'. Her unflinching photographs of her pill-popping, agoraphobic mother engaging in Hollywood-standard beauty routines set the young artist on her life's quest: to document the myriad of ways we try, and fail, to live up to an idealised standard of beauty.

### Tova Mozad

The image that Tova so graciously gave us for this issue of Vestoj was produced in collaboration with the fashion design duo Hernández Cornet and when we first saw it we were absolutely mesmerised. Who is this girl? What's her story? We have since found out that Tova is an unusually proliferate Swedish artist who works with photography, video and film and who has a profound curiosity about pretence and the various representations of reality. We remain intrigued.

### Mason Poole

Mason is a photographer originally from Texas who now lives between two very different, but equally alluring, cities: Paris and Los Angeles. He began his career as a newspaper photo-journalist, but tells us that the glamour of fashion was simply too appealing. Four years later, and after learning the trade as an assistant to some of the industry's top photographers, Mason was ready to take on the world. Today he never wears sneakers, drinks a lot of red wine, and always travels with hot sauce.



## Vestoj

### Julie Roberts

Julie lives in suburban Carlisle with her dog Shiner and her cat Black in stark contrast with the haunting world that she portrays in her paintings. She is fascinated by eighteenth and nineteenth century European history and in her work you can see an implicit critique of the history of painting as a narrative of money, power and institutionalised male dominance.

### Tim Rollins (& K.O.S.)

Tim studied fine art, art education and philosophy in the 1970s and shortly after graduating began teaching students at a South Bronx public school. Together the teacher and his students began producing works based on all sorts of printed matter, from the popular to the arcane and they have since exhibited worldwide. The group of students that go under the moniker Kids of Survival is ever-evolving but Tim still leads the way, like a captain of a ship on stormy waters.

### Niels Schumm

Niels is funny and often slightly sardonic. He works with his creative partner, Anuschka, whom he met while studying at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. In 1997 Viktor & Rolf asked the duo to take some photos for Purple and in the process they became firmly ensconced in the world of fashion where their hyper-real images are still a welcome alternative in a world so often defined by über-sleekness.

### Hannah Smith-Drelich

Formerly an Appalachian farm girl, Hannah now lives as a grad student in Brooklyn, studying taste theory, food history, and other wildly impractical things. A hipster in her spare time, Hannah enjoys asymmetrical haircuts and

## On Fashion and Shame

laughing at small dogs stuffed into purses. She is not known for her poetry (yet), except for a haiku to a chicken nugget composed in fifth grade.

### Olof Svenblad

Olof is a multi-talented young man. He is an illustrator, but also an artist and a composer who works in tandem with both image and sound. For his illustrations for Vestoj Olof has told us that he imagined wearing fabric as skin, as a way to counterbalance the idea that clothes can ever be something to hide behind. In his own life, he says, this is something that he needs to constantly remind himself of.

### Mathilda Tham

In Sweden Mathilda is the to go for person for all things related to fashion and sustainability and now we understand why. A former fashion designer, Mathilda today teaches at both Goldsmiths College in London and Beckmans School of Design in Stockholm and also works extensively as a trend forecaster since she believes that it can be a very helpful way of strengthening the commitment to environmental practice in the fashion industry.

### Camille Vivier

Camille is a very quiet and prudent woman in real life but her work is full of ambiguity. She has shot countless fashion stories for all the best magazines but it is her nudes we love the best. Quietly insistent Camille weaves a whimsical world where the abstract is the most solid thing we have.

### Matthias Vriens-McGrath

Matthias has had about a million incarnations. Once upon a time he was a ballet dancer, then an antiques dealer and at some point he even made

a living as a fitness instructor. Then, in the late 1990s he started Dutch Magazine and with it became firmly ensconced in the fashion industry. Today he is as full of beans as ever, and his latest incarnation as a photographer helps make the industry a little more irreverent.

### Will Wiles

Will is an architecture and design journalist and the Deputy Editor of Icon Magazine. His debut novel, *Care of Wooden Floors*, about a man being driven insane by minimalist interior decoration, has just been published and The Daily Telegraph called it 'smart and polished' and gave it 4 out of 5 stars. Buy it or be square!

### Brenda R. Weber

We found Brenda completely by chance but what a blessing it was! Her book *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship and Celebrity* confirmed many of our suspicions about the rather dubious makeover premise and her unbridled enthusiasm for our project made us leap with joy. One day we hope to meet Brenda in person but as she spends her time as Assistant Professor in Gender Studies at Indiana University we're going to have to save up a little longer for that ticket.



LISA ROVNER



MASON POOLE



MASON POOLE



**COLUMBINE GOLDSMITH**, still from *L'île*, 2011



- 1 All articles must relate to sartorial issues. We are interested in people's relationship to their clothes, and fashion's relationship to identity.
- 2 We must bridge academia and industry. We will place academia and industry side by side, and give equal significance to both. We will place the academic in an industry context and vice versa in order to increase the understanding and collaboration between these two fields. We will work for the greater good of our discipline.
- 3 Fashion must always be taken seriously. We must never be afraid to have pretensions. We are as interested in the minutiae of clothing as we are in the grand themes of fashion. We will see the trivial in the substantial and the substantial in the trivial, and ensure that all is given equal importance.
- 4 The tone must be inviting. We must never be excluding in language or approach. We will use humour to draw readers in and themes that many can relate to.

THE VESTOJ

# Manifesto

- 5 Text and image shall be given equal importance. We must always integrate word and picture and guarantee that there is an ongoing dialogue between the two.
- 6 Everything shall be questioned – nothing is holy. We must challenge the status quo. We must always ask why.
- 7 We must always remain independent in thought and action. We must actively encourage critical thought and never be satisfied until we have examined every theme intrepidly. We will keenly promote criticism and draw attention to the paradoxes within the fashion world.
- 8 Advertising is forbidden.
- 9 The reader's intellect must be as gratified as her aesthetic sense. We will encourage creativity as well as an intelligent discourse. We will take nothing for granted.
- 10 We will have an interdisciplinary approach. We will take care to examine each theme from various angles and make certain that we represent other lifestyles and ethos than our own. We will work from within the fashion world, but maintain an outsider's perspective.

