Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory

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Fashion

"Fashion," Elizabeth Wilson writes, "is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles. Fashion . . . *is* change."[1] Wilson is writing about modernity, but it was in the late sixteenth century that the word "fashion" first took on the sense of restless change. Indeed, "the fashion" as referring to "the mode of dress . . . adopted in society for the time being" is first recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* from 1568. As "fashion" begins to define the rapid shifting of styles in clothing, it does so largely negatively: fashion is "vnconfirmed"; it is "a deformed theefe"; it makes the wearer turn about "giddily." And yet its demands are inexorable. Not to obey fashion is to become oneself "stale, a Garment out of fashion."[2]

The innovative force of fashion was associated both with the dissolution of the body politic and with the exorbitance of the state's subjects. And this too was registered linguistically. "Fashion" extended its semantic field to include the sense of mere form or pretence ("worshipping God slyghtly for fashyon sake"). And at the very end of the sixteenth century, to "fashion" acquired a new meaning: to counterfeit or pervert. The Englishman's clothes, Thomas Dekker claimed, were not merely perverse but the epitome of treason:

> An English-mans suit is like a traitors bodie that hath beene hanged, drawne, and quartered, and set up in seuerall places: the collar of his doublet and the belly in France; the wing and narrow sleeue in Italy; the shorte waist hangs over a Dutch botchers stall in Utrich; his huge sloppes speakes Spanish; Polonia gives him his bootes; the blocke for his head alters faster than the feltmaker can fit him.[3]

As the clothes themselves condensed the geography of England's trading relations, they dismembered the body of the English subject. Critics of fashion nostalgically conjured up the "russet yeas, and honest kersie noes"[4] that had supposedly preceded the "traitor's body" constituted by foreign luxury goods.

There is nothing particularly surprising to us about this association of "fashion" with the world of expensive imports. But there was something surprising about the connection in the Renaissance. For "fashion" did not have changing styles of clothing as its naturalized referent; rather, it commonly referred to the act of making, or to the make or shape of a thing, or to form as opposed to matter, or to the enduring manners and customs of a society. It was thus the goldmith's "fashion" (what would later be called "fashioning") which added value to the raw material that he worked upon. One could marvel at the "fassion" (form) of the earth and sky. One could note that "the seed . . . receiueth not *fashion* presently vpon the conception, but remaineth for a time without any figure."[5] Above all, in its verbal

form, "fashion" had Biblical resonance. In the Geneva translation, Job says: "Thine hands haue made me, and facioned me wholy rounde about, and wilt thou destroye me?" And the Psalms repeat the notion that God's work is a work of fashioning: "Thine hands haue made me and facioned me"; "He facioneth their hearts euerie one."[6] The spelling of the Geneva Bible ("facion") emphasizes the derivation of "fashion" from the Latin *facio*, *facere*, to make.

But why, we should ask, did the notion of making come to bear both the glamor and the opprobrium of shifting styles of clothing? "Thine hands haue made me" – Job's response to God, but also and increasingly the response of the fashionable man or woman to his or her tailor. It has become a cliché that "the clothes make the man." Yet modern analysts of "fashion" have found it hard to think through the contradictory implications of the term. Focusing upon "fashion" as the rapid transformation of clothing styles, they have seen it above all as a dazzling play of surfaces. In doing so, they have repeated, even if to critique, the antithesis between clothes as the surface/outside and the person as the inside/depth. That antithesis is certainly not a new one. Indeed, it is embedded in classical theories of rhetoric in which the logic of the argument was its "body" and the figures of speech its "ornament" or "clothing." But this opposing of clothes and person was always in tension with the social practices through which the body politic was composed: the varied acts of investiture. For it was investiture, the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person as a monarch or a freeman of a guild or a household servant. Investiture was, in other words, the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a "depth."

At the end of *Henry IV Part 2*, Hal, even before he is crowned, imagines the assumption of monarchy as the assumption of clothes: "Maiesty" is, he says, a "new, and gorgeous Garment" (5. 2. 44 [TLN 2930]). And then, seeing his brothers' sorrow at their father's death, he assumes that, too, as if it were a garment: "I will deeply put the Fashion on, / And weare it in my heart" (5. 2. 52 [TLN 2938–9]). One could, of course, take this as a sign of Hal's emotional shallowness. But such a reading effaces what is so challenging about the passage to a modern perspective: the notion that "Fashion" can be "*deeply* put on" or, in other words, that clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within. This notion undoes the opposition of inside and outside, surface and depth. Clothes, like sorrow, inscribe themselves upon a person who comes into being through that inscription.

To understand the significance of clothes in the Renaissance, we need to undo our own social categories, in which subjects are prior to objects, wearers to what is worn. We need to understand the animatedness of clothes, their ability to "pick up" subjects, to mold and shape them both physically and socially, to constitute subjects through their power as material memories. Memories of subordination (e.g. of the livery servant to the household to which he or she "belongs"); memories of collegiality (e.g. of the member of a livery company with his or her guild); memories of love (e.g. of the lover for the beloved from whom he or she receives a garment or a ring); memories of identity itself. For it is through the coronation service – the putting on of a crown and of coronation robes – that the monarch becomes a monarch. It is through the eldest son's ritual inheritance, publicly staged in church, of his father's armor, sword, and shield that the son "becomes" his father (the dead Earl of Arundel transformed into the living Earl of Arundel). It is through the putting on of tire and mantle that the boy actor becomes Cleopatra.[7]

Clothing is a worn world: a world of social relations put upon the wearer's body. "I will deeply put the Fashion on, / And weare it in my heart," says Hal. Sorrow is a fashion not because it is changeable but because fashion fashions, because what can be worn can be worn deeply. That the materials we wear work as inscriptions upon us is an insight more familiar to pre- or proto-capitalist societies than to fully capitalist ones. Anthropologists often have to learn how to understand their own latent care for such materials if they are to understand the cultures they analyze. Panetan, a Tubetube man, asked the anthropologist Martha Macintyre to explain the ring she was wearing, which had been her grandmother's; in response, he said:

> When it was her ring it was to show that she was engaged, but you hold that ring to remember your Grandmother. You can look at it every day and keep her in your mind. It is the same with *mwagolu*, the hair necklaces our ancestors wore during mourning. You wear your ring and it shows people [something]. Our widows wore a *mwagolu* and it shows – it reminds – herself and others who look at it.[8]

Clothing (by which we understand all that is worn, whether shoes or doublet or armor or ring) reminds. It can do so oppressively, of course. Why, for instance, should women alone have to recall the dead? But, whether oppressively or not, memory is materialized. Both ring and hair necklace are material reminders, working even when what is recalled is absent or dead. And if they remind others, they also remind the wearers themselves. This is the significance of Hal's "put[ting] on" of sorrow: sorrow will permeate him only if it acts with as much force as mourning clothes.

It is Hal's view, not Hamlet's, that we need to understand if we are to make sense of the constitutive function of clothes in the Renaissance. Hamlet, in a saying which is all too familiar, "know[s] not seems."[9] His mourning garments "seem" but he has that within, he claims, which passes show. But even Hamlet has been misheard in our haste to find a modern subject, untrammeled by the objects that surround him. "'Tis not *alone* my inky cloak," says Hamlet, that shows grief. His grief nonetheless takes the material form of that very cloak. If he claims something in addition to his mourning clothes, those clothes are still a necessary part of his memorializing of his father. But Hamlet's appeal to inner depth, because of its very "obviousness," has less to tell us about clothes in the Renaissance than Hal's notion of "deep" wearing.

In *The Anatomie of Abuses*, Phillip Stubbes captures both Hamlet's sense of the literal superficiality of clothing and Hal's insistence upon the depth of the superficial. Stubbes reviles extravagant apparel as superfluous, a waste of money, a drain upon the English economy. But he dedicates such passion to apparel because it is a superfluity that has the power to constitute an essence. The physical presence of clothes makes them, in his view, more dangerous (more inward, one might say) than the inward workings of corruption. He writes:

> Pride is tripartite, namely, the pryde of the hart, the pride of the mouth, & the pryde of apparell, which (unles I bee deceiued) offendeth God more then the other two. For as the pride of the heart & the mouth is not opposite to ye eye, nor visible to the sight, and therefor intice not others to vanitie and sin . . . so the pride of apparel, remaining in sight, as an exemplarie of euill, induceth the whole man to wickednes and sinne.

Pride of the mouth, Stubbes continues,

> is not permanent (for wordes flye into the aire, not leauing any print or character behinde them to offend the eyes.) But this sinne of excesse in Apparell, remayneth as an Example of euyll before our eyes, and as a prouocatiue to sinne.[10]

Clothes, unlike the working of the spirit, leave a "print or character" upon observer and wearer alike. And, when excessive, they visibly imprint "wickednes and sinne." Through its ability to "print or character" the wearer, exotic clothing "*transnatureth*" English gallants, "making them weake, tender, and infirme."[11] Clothes give a nature to what previously had no nature; they take an existing nature and transnature it, turning the virtuous into the vicious, the strong into the weak, the male into the female, the godly into the satanic.

Not understanding this "transnaturing" power of clothes, modern commentators (pursuing the purified "spiritual" logic of a later culture) have been puzzled and embarrassed by the central Protestant conflict of Elizabethan England: the vestiarian controversy. According to this later logic, reformers should have been worrying about theology and the nature of the sacraments, not about what clothes the priest should or should not wear. Yet it was precisely the latter question that most exercised radical reformers in later sixteenth-century England. For the priest's clothes were not a matter of indifference, a question of social decorum; rather, the surplice and square cap that Archbishop Parker insisted upon were attacked as the materializations of the Whore of Babylon at the heart of the Church of England. Such vestments were, according to Miles Monopodios, the soldier-hero of a dialogue written by the puritan Anthony Gilby, "worse than lowsie: for they are sybbe [closely related to] the sarcke of Hercules, that made him teare his owne bowels a sunder."[12] Like Hercules's shirt, vestments would poison the wearer, corrupting his inner faith at the same time as they branded him with "the popes liverie."[13] Dr. Turner not only argued that no parishioner should listen to a priest who wore such livery; he also made an adulterer do penance wearing a "popish" square cap and trained his dog to bite the caps of visiting bishops off their heads.[14]

If the radicals believed that Catholics and Satanists placed "all their religion in hethen garments, & Romish raggs,"[15] they themselves saw such clothing as a form of transnaturing. They thus agreed with those whom they opposed on the animating and constitutive power of clothes.[16] As Edmund Spenser observed in *A View of the State of Ireland*: "mens apparrell is commonly made according to their conditions, and their conditions are oftentimes governed by their garments . . . there is not a little in the garment to the fashioning of the minde and conditions."[17] For Milton, the "free" and reformed subject could come into being only if one first discarded the "polluted cloathing" of Catholic ceremony.[18] And in *Areopagitica*, he wrote:

> I fear yet the iron yoke of an outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of a linnen decency yet haunts us.[19]

Clothing has the force of an iron yoke, enforcing conformity; clothing has the ability to leave a "slavish print"; clothing is a ghost that, even when discarded, still has the power to haunt.

The rapid development of "fashion" (as we now understand that term) in the Renaissance has obscured the sense in which clothes were seen as printing, charactering, haunting. The centrality of clothes as the material establishers of identity itself is apparent in the early modern institution of livery, the custom whereby people were paid for their services not in cash but in goods, especially clothing. Livery included food and drink; livery cupboards, also known as "dole cabinets," were built to contain the allowance of food and drink given to people working in a household each night. (One from about 1500, now at the Victoria and

Albert Museum, has an openwork wooden front to allow air to circulate around the edibles inside.) But cloth or clothes were so essential a part of such payments that the term came to have the predominant meaning of clothing that identified its wearer as the servant of a particular household or member of a particular liveried group.

Livery acted as the medium through which the social system marked bodies so as to associate them with particular institutions. The power to give that marking to subordinates affirmed social hierarchy: lords dressed retainers, masters dressed apprentices, husbands dressed their wives. But livery, as it dignified the institutions to which it identified people as belonging, also dignified the participants in such institutions. This mutually supportive interplay of loyalties is what was seen as being at risk by writers attacking sartorial anarchy, the tendency of modern Englishmen (and women) to dress as free-floating individuals rather than as representatives of groups defined by shared labors or loyalties. When Stubbes's Spudeus denounces vestimentary disguise, he does so because it is adopted to elevate single agents rather than to affirm the corporate entities that confer genuine social identity:

> And as for . . . priuat subjects, it is not at any hand lawful that they should weare silks, veluets, satens, damasks, gould, siluer, and what they list . . . except they being in some kind of office in the common wealth, do vse it for dignifying and innobling of the same. But now there is such a confuse mingle mangle of apparrell in *Ailgna* [anagrammatically, Anglia], and such preposterous excesse thereof, as euery one is permitted to flaunt it out, in what apparell he lust himselfe, or can get by anie kind of meanes.[20]

Stubbes wants to reserve sumptuous dress as the proper dignity of high office. He deplores the existing situation in which

> it is very hard to knowe, who is noble, who is worshipfull, who is a gentleman, who is not: for you will haue those, which are neither of the nobylitie gentilitie nor yeomanry, no, nor yet anie Magistrat or Officer in the common welth, go daylie in silkes, veluets, satens, damasks, taffeties and such like, notwithstanding that they be both base by byrthe, meane by estate, & seruyle by calling.

Stubbes wants clothes to place subjects recognizably, to materialize identities for onlooker and wearer alike. But he is forced to recognize what he deplores: that clothes are detachable, that they can move from body to body. That is precisely their danger and their value: they are bearers of identity, ritual, and social memory, even as they confuse social categories.

We began by noting that "fashion" as it is now conceived is above all about change. The connection between fashion and change emerged in the Renaissance, and was registered in such phrases as "shifting fashion" and "changing fashion." But fashion-as-change was in tension with the concept of fashion as "deep" making or as enduring cultural pattern. Renaissance "anthropology" developed as the collecting of the manners and customs of other societies. In 1520, Johann Boemus published a small but highly influential book entitled *Omnium gentium mores, leges, & ritus*; in 1555, this was translated into English as *The fardle of façions, conteining the aunciente maners, customes, and lawes, of the peoples enhabiting the two partes of the earth, called Affrike and Asie*.[21] To write about "aunciente" manners and customs was to write about "*façions*." And what characterized such fashions was the supposed fact that, far from shifting, they endured. These "deep" fashions were portrayed in terms both of customs and of costumes. The travel writer recognized the alien by their clothes. But that, of course, presumed that the alien had a

particular style of clothing. A society remembered itself visually and tactilely through what it distinctively wore, through its habits.

"Habit" (both clothes and "habitual" behavior) is at the furthest remove from the emergent meaning of "fashion." While the latter came to characterize the lability of an elite, the former suggested the persistence of cultural patterns. As Daniel Defert argues:

> To confuse the meaning of habit [*l'habit*] in the sixteenth century with that of fashion [*la mode*] is an anachronistic illusion. Habit has the original connotation of *habitus*, which implies work upon the body. The serious expression of a judge or the reticence of a virgin, the hairlessness or the tattoos of an Indian, body piercing or asceticism, are all part of the *habit-habitus* which defines the mode of being of established groups and not the free choice of individuals.[22]

Clothing, as "habit," implies a cultural way of life. This was perfectly clear in relation to the "habits" that monks wore. As Defert notes:

> No sixteenth-century French dictionary defines [*habitus monasticus*] simply as "garment." The *habitus monasticus* designates the rule, the way of life, from which the garment cannot be disassociated: *l'habit-habitus* makes the monk . . . The garment is a rule of conduct and the memory of this rule for the wearer as well as for others.[23]

Indeed, anticlerical proverbs warning against the equation of monks' gowns with their behavior (for example, Rabelais's "L'habit ne faict poinct le moine" in his first Prologue, or Queen Katherine's "They should be good men . . . But all Hoods make not Monkes," in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*[24]) made their point only by denying the antithetical assumption that costume and custom were mutually determining.

One can locate the determining features of "habit" in many early modern societies. Jennifer Wearden, for instance, has fascinatingly traced the clothing of Siegmund von Herberstein, sent by Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor, as an ambassador to Süleyman the Magnificent in 1541, after most of Hungary had been annexed to the Ottoman Empire. At the Ottoman court, von Herberstein was given a special gown of cloth of gold in which to be presented to the sultan. The gown was both a mark of honor and "a pledge of security." It thus points to the significance of clothing in the constitution of the social, since it was given to him as a gesture of incorporation. Such gowns had traditionally been worn by the sultan himself, so the transfer of the gown was an assimilation of the recipient to the body politic through the medium of the sultan's own body. In a book published in Vienna in 1560, von Herberstein memorialized this transfer by including a woodcut of himself in the gown that the sultan had given him.[25]

But in von Herberstein's gown, one can see the complex intertwining of fashion-as-social-incorporation with fashion-as-transformation. The gown was of Turkish cut, so von Herberstein was being reshaped by the *habitus* of the Ottoman court. Yet the gown itself was hybrid, since it was made from red Italian velvet dating from about 1500. An almost identical piece of velvet is now displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Ottomans had, indeed, been trading with Genoa since the fourteenth century and ambassadors from the West brought European velvets to Istanbul where they were highly valued. Two splendid kaftans of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum are made of Italian velvet. A kaftan attributed to Osman II (1604–22) is made from a velvet of about 1540, which is probably Italian although influenced by Spanish design, and a similar fabric appears in the gown worn by Eleanora of Toledo when she was painted by

Bronzino about 1544. The history of von Herberstein's gown reminds us of the limitations of a European-focused history that, even as it traces the hybridization of Europe itself through colonialism and trade, imagines its "Others" as "uncontaminated," without history. The latter view was, indeed, the founding myth of anthropology and was in turn to become the founding myth of tourism. The Other is imagined as eternally itself (Turkish, or Navaho, or Ashanti), subject to the mobile and restless observation of the European observer: the Other is changeless, outside of fashion; the European is the marker and bearer of fashion and of historicity itself. Against such an opposition, the gown that Süleyman presented to von Herberstein simultaneously records both the workings of fashion that brought Italian velvets to the Ottomans even as they brought silks, carpets, and other textiles from the Ottoman empire to Europe, and the rituals of incorporation, obligation, and memory.[26]

But such relatively equal gift-exchanges between powerful allies and antagonists were not, of course, the only models of exchange. Conquest, colonization, and slavery also provided the material base for radically unequal "exchanges," in which the appropriated goods were deliberately stripped of their "memories," memories that testified to violence and oppression. In place of such memories, the European colonizers manufactured their own myths of the "exotic," myths which memorialized the supposed heroism of the merchant adventurers (often, like Drake, pirates and slave traders) even as they purified the appropriated goods of the "unheroic" labors of their manufacture.[27] These unequal "exchanges," which tainted and haunted materialization, were one of the causes of an increasing uneasiness among the colonizing powers toward materiality itself. For paradoxically, as Europe imported goods from Asia, Africa, and the Americas in ever greater quantities, it increasingly asserted the detachment of the European subject from those goods. From this new perspective, to attach too much signficance to the power of clothes was to fetishize them – to endow "mere" objects with a power that would increasingly be appropriated as the sole prerogative of subjects.

Fetishism

In the introduction to his important book on *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, a book that attempts to restore the significance of things to the making of culture, Daniel Miller writes: "an approach to modern society which focuses on the material object always invites the risk of appearing fetishistic, that is of ignoring or masking actual social relations through its concern with the object *per se*."[28] It is extraordinary that, in a book about the necessity and inevitability of objectification, Miller still seems embarrassed before actual objects. We are here at the end of a long trajectory that situates us as subjects (or rather, "individuals") whose interest in objects (including clothes) is characterized by disavowal. To care about things is to appear "fetishistic." Nowhere have antithetical political positions had more in common than in the denunciation of the materialism of modern life and of our supposed obsession with "mere" things. The force of that denunciation depends upon the assumption of a place before the fall into materialism, a society where people are spiritually pure, uncontaminated by the objects around them.[29]

The denunciation often draws either explicitly or (as with Miller) implicitly upon Marx. For was it not Marx who analyzed how an obsession with "material objects"

effaced "actual social relations"? The answer is: no. No one has been less embarrassed by material makings than Marx. Marx's critique of capitalism is not a critique of "materialism."[30] Marx, of course, famously developed a theory of fetishism, but it was a theory of the fetishism of the *commodity*, not of the *object*. For Marx, the commodity comes to life through the death of the object. What defines a commodity always lies outside any specific object, and depends upon the equating of a specific quantity of paper cups with a specific quantity of coal or diamonds or academic books. Only if one empties out the "objectness" of the object can one make it readily exchangeable on the market. A shoe manufacturer who is obsessed with the particular shoes that he makes is almost certainly a failed capitalist. Capital needs to pursue profit and thus to detach itself from any particular object so as to transfer itself (to adopt Marx's animistic language) from one style of shoe to another, or from shoes to paper cups or armaments, as the market dictates. Capitalism could, indeed, be defined as the mode of production which, in fetishizing the commodity, refuses to fetishize the object. In capitalist societies, to love things is something of an embarrassment. Things are, after all, "mere" things. To accumulate things is not to give them life. It is because things are not fetishized that, in capitalist societies, they remain theoretically lifeless.[31]

To oppose the materialism of modern life to a non-materialist past is not just wrong; it actually inverts the relation of capitalism to prior and alternative modes of production. As Marcel Mauss puts it in *The Gift*, his founding book on pre-capitalist exchange, objects in such exchanges can be "personified beings that talk and take part in the contract. They state their desire to be given away." Things-as-gifts are not "indifferent things"; they have "a name, a personality, a past."[32] Similarly, in the livery economy of Renaissance Europe, things took on a life of their own. That is to say, one was paid not only in the "neutral" currency of money but also in material that was richly absorbent of symbolic meaning and in which memories and social relations were literally embodied. Yet new forms of trade, colonial conquests, and political and religious conflict within Europe put increasing strain upon these forms of embodiment, finally leading to the radically dematerialized opposition between the "individual" and his or her "possessions." As Igor Kopytoff notes, "this conceptual polarity of individualized persons and commoditized things is recent and, culturally speaking, exceptional."[33]

One aspect of this dematerializating polarity was the development of the concept of the "fetish." In a series of brilliant articles, William Pietz has traced the etymology and the function of the concept in early modern Europe.[34] Pietz argues that "the fetish, as an idea and a problem, and as a novel object not proper to any prior discrete society, originated in the cross-cultural spaces of the coast of West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."[35] The word "fetish" derives from the pidgin *fetisso*, which may be traced to the Portuguese *feitiço* (meaning "magical practice" or "witchcraft"). *Feitiço* has its root in the Latin *facticius*, meaning a manufactured as opposed to a natural object. "Fetish," like "fashion," is derived from the Latin *facere*: to make.[36] There was, as Pietz argues, a long history of distrust of the "made"; Pliny used the term *facticium* to mean "artificial" in the sense of "made to deceive," "factitious." This distrust was elaborated and reinforced by the Church Fathers, who associated *facticii* with idolatry, and hence, by extension, with witchcraft. Pietz notes, though, that the prior history of *facticium* cannot account for its specific emergence within Portuguese West Africa in the

Renaissance to define "the problem of the social and personal value of material objects."[37] For the *fetisso* marks less the earlier distrust of false manufactures (as opposed to the "true" manufactured wafers and images of the Catholic Church) than a suspicion both of material embodiment itself and of "the subjection of the human body . . . to the influence of certain significant material objects that, although cut off from the body, function as its controlling organs at certain moments."[38] The *fetisso* thus represents "a subversion of the ideal of the autonomously determined self."[39]

Moreover, the fetish (in contrast to the free-standing idol) was from the first associated with objects worn on the body – leather pouches, for instance, worn around the neck, containing passages from the *Koran* (37). In 1625, the Cape Verdean trader Andre Donelha met a young African, whom he called Gaspar Vaz, on the Gambia river. To the "distress" of Donelha, Vaz, "a good tailor and button-maker," was wearing "a Mandinga smock, with amulets of his fetishes around his neck." Vaz claimed to be doing so because he wanted to inherit from his uncle, who believed in "the Law of Mohammed." To show his own belief in "the Law of Christ Jesus," he "took off his smock, beneath which he wore a doublet and shirt in our fashion, and from around his neck drew out a rosary of Our Lady" (38). No doubt, the clothes functioned as livery for Vaz, who became Donelha's interpreter. The contrasting garments materialized conflicting cultural and religious identities. Yet there is a surprising overlap between the so-called "fetishes" and the Catholic rosary. Both focus power in a worn object. At the same time, the naming of the the African amulet as fetish disavows the "fetishistic" quality of the rosary. The concept of the "fetish" was thus developed literally to demonize the power of "alien" worn objects (through the association of *feitiço* with witchcraft), while at first preserving the notion of the sacramental object. It was not, in Donelha's view, mistaken to attribute spiritual powers to an object; rather, it was necessary to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate objects.

By the late 1590s, the Dutch began trading with the Guinea coast and, after the organization of the Dutch West Indies Company in 1621, they displaced the Portuguese. But the Dutch were Protestant. For them, there was no distinction between African fetish and Catholic sacramental object. In 1602, Pieter de Marees wrote of the Akans as having "divers Wispes of straw about their Girdles, which they tie full of Beanes, and other Venice Beades, esteeming them to be their Fetissos, or Saints."[40] Marees called the beads "*Paternosters*," explicitly conflating African "fetish" and Catholic rosary. Marees also refers to the "Ceremonies of their Idolatrous Fetissos":

> they hang a Net about the bodie [of their children], like a little shirt, which is made of the barke of a tree, which they hang full of their Fetissos, as golden Crosses, strings with Coral about their hands, feet, and neckes, and their haire is filled full of shels.[41]

The Dutch thus attacked "fetishes" for being, like the objects of Catholic worship, "idolatrous." That is, the fetish was said to personify and spiritualize "dead" matter (although in doing so it might indeed incorporate the demonic). At one level, then, the critique of the fetish became an extension of Protestant attacks upon Catholicism. There had been an extraordinarily intense period of iconoclasm in the Netherlands in 1566, and iconoclasm, like the attack upon vestments, was central to Protestantism throughout Europe.[42] "Idols" were pulled down in churches, the Catholic sacrament itself derided as idolatrous.

Protestants saw idolatry as permeating everday life in the "over-reverence" for "mere" things.[43] The extreme form of such reverence was the devotion to relics, many of which took the form of "fetishes" that had been and could be worn. In 1535, the English reformers disposed of "the vincula S. Petri, which women put about them at the time of their delivery"; "S. Thomas of Canterbury's penneknyff and his bootes"; the Virgin's girdle "which women with chield were wont to girde with"; the "singulum of S. Bernard . . . sometimes lent for pregnant women"; the combs of St. Mary Magdalen, St. Dorothy, and St. Margaret.[44] In 1604, John Reynolds denounced the wedding ring as itself an idol.[45] There was a potentially democratizing impulse in these attacks upon the church's materializations, since they were aimed at the power of an elite to embody its own powers and memories to the exclusion of all others. For it was only the church that could sacramentalize an object, as it was only the priest who could "make" the sacraments themselves. But the attack upon such elite sanctifications slid into a critique of the animating powers of *all* objects. Moreover, as such animations were attributed to a corrupt ecclesiastical hierarchy, they were also and increasingly attributed to the "fetish"-worshipping African. The concept of the "fetish" thus emerged as the colonizing subject simultaneously subjugated and enslaved other subjects and proclaimed his own freedom from material objects.

This disavowal of the object has often been read as merely a ruse. In this view, colonial entrepreneurs proclaimed their detachment from objects, while "fetishistically" collecting them. But this constant repetition of "fetishism" as a category of abuse repeats rather than illuminates the problem. For colonial entrepreneurs did not, at least after the early stages, fetishize objects; on the contrary, they were interested in objects only to the extent that they could be transformed into commodities and exchanged for profit on the market. We need, then, to understand the economic, as much as the religious, motivation of the concept of the fetish. The Dutch, like the Portuguese before them, were intent above all upon finding gold in Africa. As Pietz notes, they discovered it in three states: as gold dust, as lumps of ore, and as the golden *fetissos* worn on the body. It was above all in relation to these latter forms of gold among the Akan ("cast into elaborate and varied animal, vegetable, and mythic forms") that European "fetish" discourse developed. What the concept of the "fetish" marked in economic terms was the site of a crisis in value. For, on the one hand, these fetishes were viewed by Europeans as "trifles" or "toys" and even as peculiarly valueless. Thus Nicolas Villault claimed that the fetishes of the Gold Coast were "inanimate things, and most often so filthy and vile that one would not wish to touch them." [46] On the other hand, if they were made out of gold, they were precisely what the Europeans were in search of. And yet the Akan did not distinguish between their fetishes primarily on the basis of "market value" (gold as against beads or leather). Their interest in the power of the inanimate did not, indeed, seem to be about "value" at all as Europeans understood the concept. Hence, Akan fetishes, even when they were golden, were often composed of a mixture of metals of which gold was only one. As a result, " 'Fetiche Gold' became associated with 'false gold' used in commercial fraud."[47]

The "fetish," then, came into being as a term of religious and economic abuse. As a term of economic abuse, it posited the Akan as a people who worshiped "trifles" ("mere" fetishes) and "valuable" things (i.e. gold) alike. This meant that they could be "duped" (goods that the Europeans considered valueless – beads, for instance –

could be exchanged for "valuable" goods). But it also implied a new definition of what it meant to be European: that is, a subject unhampered by fixation upon objects, a subject who, having recognized the true (i.e. market) value of the object-as-commodity, fixated instead upon the transcendental values that transformed gold into slaves, slaves into ships, ships into guns, guns into tobacco, tobacco into sugar, sugar into gold, and all into an accountable profit. What was demonized in the concept of the fetish was the possibility that history, memory, and desire might be materialized in objects that are touched and loved and worn.

A by-product of this demonization of the fetish was the impossible project of the transcendental subject, a subject constituted by no place, no object – by nothing worn. "The Word *Fetish*," John Atkins wrote in 1737, "is used in a double signification among the *Negroes*: It is applied to dress and ornament, and to something reverenced as a Deity."[48] The transcendental subject of modernity, on the other hand, "knew the value of things" – that is, disavowed any but a financial investment in objects. Clothes could be "fashion" – detachable and discardable goods – but they were less and less likely to be fashionings, the materializations of memory, objects that worked upon and transformed the body of the wearer. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the period of our study, are of particular interest in the history of clothing because clothes were still material mnemonics in metropolitan centers even as they were becoming the commodities upon which international capitalism was founded.

Renaissance clothing

Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory explores the contradictory implications of "fashion" as "deep making" and as circulating goods. The first part of this book, "Material subjects," explores the function of clothes in the constitution of Renaissance subjects. In chapter 1, "The currency of clothing," we explore clothes as payment and as stored and circulated wealth. Servants, whether aristocratic attendants upon the monarch or the poor workers for a yeoman, usually received less of their income in cash than in material goods and benefits: lodging, food, cloth and clothing. Payment in cloth and clothing was a form of bodily mnemonic, marking the wearer's indebtedness to master or mistress. The liveried body, even though the livery was rarely marked as such, stitched servants' bodies to their households. Such clothes were "habits" in the sense that they were persistent material reminders of status and of incorporation. But because of their economic value, clothes could be traded for cash at the pawnbroker or fripper. The value of clothes, then, pointed in antithetical directions: on the one hand, they materialized social status and indebtedness; on the other, they were circulating commodities.

In chapter 2, "Composing the subject: making portraits," we return to the value of clothes to argue that portrait paintings were often supplements to the specific clothes that the sitter wears. That is, whereas portraits have often been seen as founding the interior self, we contend that they display a self that is constituted through investiture. At the simplest, aristocratic clothes were commonly far more expensive than even a full-length portrait by Van Dyck, and portraits were frequently painted to commemorate an occasion, such as a wedding, for which new and costly clothing had been bought. Moreover, the faces of the sitters were often sketched in haste, whereas the clothes were sent to the studios, where they exhibited

a patience that their sitters had rarely if ever shown. If the sitters' clothes materialized their status, though, they also inscribed other forms of memory: the memory of the dead, marked by the mourning clothes of the living; family memories (such as the "C4" jewel that Queen Anne so often wore to commemorate her father, Christian IV); the memory of the beloved (through a glove worn in the hat or a locket held open); religious memory (such as an inherited cross, materializing the sitter's Catholicism); memories of incorporation (such as the "livery" that marked Sir Robert Shirley as Persian ambassador). The sitters are permeated by what they wear.

In "composing the subject," the act of material memorialization is arrived at through a collaboration between sitter and artist that itself depends upon a range of hybrid material forms (paints made from Mexican beetles or from lapis lazuli; clothes made from a variety of imported textiles). In chapter 3, "Yellow starch: fabrications of the Jacobean court," we turn to the fears that such material fabications engendered. If a person could be permeated by the material memories of what he or she wore, how could one construct a national subject from "foreign" materials? In the violent attacks upon yellow starch in the early seventeenth century, we trace the xenophobic fear of a subject undone by the contagion of foreign fashion, a fashion that is depicted as Catholic, effeminate, demonic, and poisonous. The poison of yellow starch is above all attributed to the manufacture of women.

In the second part, "Gendered habits," we turn to the relations between women's manufactures – spinning, weaving, needlework – and the attempts to produce "femininity" through the repeated habits of the body. We move here from "habits" in the sense of what is worn to "habits" in the sense of embodied disposition. In chapter 4, "Arachne's web," we explore the tension between the social insistence that women play a crucial part in the production of textiles, above all through spinning, and the fears that women will weave their way into the social fabric, a fear that we explored in the previous chapter. In Velázquez's painting, commonly known as *Las Hilanderas* ("The Spinners"), what is the relation between the plebeian spinners in the foreground and the mythological splendor of the tapestried room in the background? And what do Renaissance commentaries on the myth of Arachne and Minerva tell us about both the relegation of female labor to the uncelebrated work of spinning (Arachne as spider) and the creation of social memory in the narrative weavings of Minerva?

Chapter 5, "The fate of spinning: Penelope and the Three Fates," analyzes transformations of the story of Penelope in the Renaissance as a means of exploring the changing relations between spinning and weaving as forms of women's work. As weaving became dominantly a male profession, Penelope was recast as a spinner rather than a weaver. As a consequence, her woven narrative was displaced by praise for her spinning, the repetitive habit through which she came to embody a wifely industry both virtuous and meaningless. But the fate of Penelope in these retellings is contradicted by the myth of the Three Fates, in which spinning, far from being meaningless work, is the foundation of the social fabric.

In chapter 6, "The needle and the pen: needlework and the appropriation of printed texts," we analyze comparable tensions within needlework. Like spinning for poor women, needlework was the expected labor of aristocratic women, a supposed cure for idleness. But while needlework was often imagined, like spinning, as a bodily habit that inculcated virtue through meaningless repetition, elite women

stitched their own versions of the social and political realm into the textile narratives they made. These narratives were usually taken from engraving and pattern books, but in choosing specific models (such as Judith and Holofernes or the Gunpowder Plot) women reworked and transformed the imagined boundaries of the domestic and the political, the private and the public.

In the third part, "Staging clothes," we bring together the preoccupations of the first two parts of the book in an examination of the function of clothing in the English professional theaters. On one hand, we return to the concerns of chapter 1, exploring the relations between livery and the circulation of clothes; on the other, we explore how gender, class, and memory are materialized through worn habits. In chapter 7, "The circulation of clothes and the making of the English theater," we argue that the accumulation and circulation of clothes were constitutive features of the professional theater. The professional companies also offer us an extraordinary insight into the significance of the trade in secondhand clothes, since they recycled clothes from the court, the church, and the city. But while the companies participated in the profitable circulation of clothes, they staged plays that as frequently emphasized clothing as forms of material memory. The companies spent large sums of money on clothes, but again and again they staged the haunting power of a ring, a handkerchief, a detached piece of clothing to connect the present to the past, the living to the dead, the present to the absent. The theater embodied the antithetical possibilities of clothing: as commodities which, in the form of props, took on only temporary meaning during the life of a performance and which could be discarded and replaced; as the imagined materials of memory itself.

In chapter 8, "Transvestism and the 'body beneath': speculating on the boy actor," we turn to the question of the dressing and undressing and the naming, unnaming, and renaming of the boy actor. It is as if the clothes literally re-member the actor's body, "transnaturing" it, as the anti-theatricalists claimed. Indeed, on the professional stage, the gender of the boy actor is usually marked by the donning of specific clothes. In a woman's clothes, he becomes Viola; in a man's, Cesario. Names emerge from prosthetic parts, the clothes that gender and regender the imagined body beneath. The theater plays with the problem of that body, above all in undressing scenes where the attachable parts that constitute a gendered identity begin to be detached. But if the body beneath can be imagined as male, it is also portrayed as permeable, open to transformation by the materials which it assumes and which, in turn, shape it.

In chapter 9, "(In)alienable possessions: Griselda, clothing, and the exchange of women," we address in a different context the problem of dressing and undressing. We here examine what it means to be clothed by the hands of another. The story of Griselda was probably the most popular story of the Renaissance, told by Boccaccio, retold by Petrarch and Chaucer, and performed on the stage. Griselda, a poor peasant, is married by Walter, a prince. But this is possible only because he has first "translated" her, reclothing her as a suitable bride. Later dismissing her, he strips her of her courtly clothes and sends her home in her own undergarment. Dressing and undressing are embodied forms of naming and unnaming. But in the Admiral's Men's staging of *The Pleasant Comodie of Patient Grissill*, Griselda's gray gown, the garment of which she was stripped to reclothe her in courtly livery, hangs upon the stage as a counter-livery, a material mnemonic of her former self.

These material mnemonics are at the center of chapter 10, "Of ghosts and

garments: the materiality of memory on the Renaissance stage.'' We here explore the persistence of the clothes of the dead as material forms of haunting. This is related to the wills in which the dying bequeathe gowns, doublets, petticoats, hose, rings to the family, the friends, the lovers they leave behind. What is the burden of these material memories? Who receives them? How do the living step into the shoes or assume the mantle of the dead? At the same time, the dead themselves return to the stage either in the ''ghostly'' clothes that they now wear, the sheets which are the shrouds in which they were buried, or, like Achilles and Hamlet's father, in the armor in which they lived. We conclude by looking at the ways in which memory itself is figured as and through permeable cloth and impermeable metal, torn shroud and burnished armor.

Throughout *Renaissance Clothing*, we focus on the making of the human subject through the worn things that shape the body and work as material mnemonics. Yet these worn things can be transferred from body to body; they can be appropriated or stolen. As memories, their meaning is neither given nor fixed. Even crown jewels, the symbols of royal splendor, can lose their magic by being turned back into pawnable commodities. But at the same time, the most worn-out piece of clothing can materialize an absent lover. Our argument is that fabrics were central both to the economic and social fabrication of Renaissance Europe and to the making and unmaking of Renaissance subjects.