ALL DRESSED UP

ADORNMENT PRACTICES, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to survey the functioning of clothing as a form of social communication. It is [illegible] demonstrated how clothing practices are the formation and validation of social groups. The ways in which clothing becomes symbolic for a group and the way in which this system is challenged and/or destroyed are examined. A distinction between fashion and anti-fashion is made to situate [illegible] of the West [illegible]. Assumptions on the nature of appearance in relation to the concept of truth are examined. Chapter One looks at the various and contradictory myths of body ideals, challenging the opposition of nature and culture. Chapter Two examines the traditional uniform and applies its characteristics to all forms of dress. Chapter Three provides a brief summary of the history of sumptuary laws and how they operate in the social world. Throughout this work, common sense assumptions and privileged readings of particular theoretical frameworks are challenged. Theory itself is subject to fashion, allowing for a comparison to be made between human adornment and the methodologies that attempt to define its practices.

Cette thèse surveille le fonctionnement des vêtements comme une forme de communication sociale. La formation et la distinction des groupes sociaux sont démontrés comme une fonction des pratiques vestimentaires. Les manières dont les vêtements deviennent symbolique pour un groups et la manière que ce system est mis en défi et/ou détruit sont examinés. Une distinction entre la mode et l'anti-mode est accompli pour positionner de nouveau les pratiques de l'habillement de l'ouest. Les suppositions au sujet de la nature de l'apparence selon le concept de la vérité sont examinés. Le premier chapitre traite les divers mythes du corps idéal, s'opposant aux distinctions fait entre la nature et la culture. Le deuxième chapitre examine l'uniforme traditionel et applique les caractéristiques à tout formes de vêtement. Le troisième chapitre donne un bref résumé de l'histoire des lois somptuaires et leurs fonctionnement dans le monde sociale. Au cours de ce travail, les suppositions communs et les théories de vues privilegiés sont défiés. La théorie elle-même est sujet à la mode, permettant une comparaison entre les pratiques de habillement et les méthodologies qui essaient de les définir.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> "All visible things are emblems, what thou seest is not there on its own account, strictly taken, is not there at all Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Ideas, and body it forth Hence Clothes, as despicable as we think them, are so unspeakably significant Clothes from the King's mantle downward are emblematic On the other hand, all Emblematic things are properly Clothes, thought-woven or hand-woven must not the Imagination weave Garments, visible Bodies, wherein the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason are, like Spirits, revealed "
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> from Sartor Resartus, The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdrockh by Thomas Carlyle, 1869. (in Cordwell and Schwartz, 1979, 1)

Communication and clothing

Human communication is a well studied subject. Philologists, linguists, psychologists, anthropologists and others attempt to decipher the origins and uses of spoken, written, and body language at its most basic level; this is the "how" of communication The "what" of communication is taken up by these and a battalion of other scholars- arts theorists, sociologists, discourse analysts, etc In addition to the self-conscious studies of these "experts", individuals collect the forms and analyze the practices of human communication through still more communicative practices. narratives, personal archives, socialization. The symbolic forms of human social interaction are explained, catalogued, and practiced universally, albeit the methodologies differ depending on the context and individual purposes of the researcher.

Despite the intensive work done on ourselves, there has never been or will never be a definitive theory on any form of communication. First, the definition of what constitutes a "communicative" practice is variable. Unexpressed thought, indiscriminately aimed actions and misinterpretations are ruled out of consideration if one is limited to a definition of a purposeful exchange between two people, even though these phenomena make up the majority of human activity. The motivations of persons other than ourselves [and, according to some theories, including ourselves] can never be absolutely known; misinterpretation can be deliberately sought. The study of communication would be rendered down to a mere empirical cataloguing of very few practices if this definition was followed Conversely, some may consider all human action, intentional or not, as communication, even including "passive" perception of the environment. Objects and energies are assigned meanings, or, just as important, ignored, reflecting personal and social values, delimiting subsequent actions, and forming an individual's way of being and conceiving the world around them.

The second barrier to achieving a conclusive definition of the practices of communication is the constant mutation of its forms. Differences in intent, meaning, and methods within and across cultures make it nearly impossible to impose a theoretical construct which will give humans a purpose or a meaning to all that is accomplished during a lifetime. Only two broad statements can be claimed with relative safety: humans are social animals - i.e. we seek interaction with our own kind and/or anthropomorphized substitutes - and our social urges are expressed through communication - i.e. individually and socially significant mediations with the environment. The reasons and manifestations of the human way of being is to be decided in the competitive arenas of science, religion, philosophy and ideology, their methodologies providing the substance to each other's arguments.

Rather than attempt to devise or impose a meaning on to life in general, a more productive venture is to examine a specific practice. A comparison of the similarities and differences among people and a corresponding examination of the various theories that have been applied to a subject can reveal much about a form of communication. The limits to the expressive ability of a given form, the way the form is understood by its practitioners and observers, the patterns of change, and the place of the activity in relation to other social practices can be examined, thereby contributing to the practice itself and its conception. This can only be undertaken with an initial caution that what constitutes the specified form of communication is partially the result of cultural conventions and partly the determination of the investigator. To separate communication into individual communicative practices will necessarily ignore the interconnections which inform the whole of human understanding. But this is a necessary evil, as no work could coherently encompass the entire process of human understanding as all theory comes from a subjective point of view, that of a socially and biologically limited individual.

One area that seems to be of universal interest is the practices of human adornment. Clothing is a form of communication that is literally closest to the self (Back, 1985, 3). Unlike other widely spread forms of communication, it is materially linked to an individual's body. Clothing is defined as any deliberate manipulation of the body, including hair style, ornaments, masks, decorations and mutilations. It is a conscious posing or styling of the body, for the purposes of asserting personal or group identity and associations (Kuper, 1973, 348).[1] As an

[1] By conscious, I do not mean the wearer themselves chooses the clothing [e.g. a baby who is adorned has little to say in the matter], or that the "authentic"meanings of the garment are known [e.g. adopting the costume of another

artefact, it preserves content and context across time. It can carry messages across social settings that may be susceptible to manipulation in other forms [e.g. clothing can't debate], giving clothing the power to achieve control over a social situation (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1965, 187). Clothing can convey much about the culture in which it resides, as comparative analyses reveal a broad range of values, beauty ideals, gender conceptions, age categories, status positions. It is also an expression of self-awareness and individuality (Steele, 1985, 64). Garments are acquired and kept for personal reasons, embodying sentiments and associations that exceed any intrinsic quality of the cloth itself (Squire, 1974, 17). "Normal" individuals are people who are attentive to dress, as clothing identifies the self in relation to social environment (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1965, 189).

Personal adornment practices are found in every society, but the forms and the meanings of clothing are contextually-dependent. Some conceive dress as an act of personal aesthetics, expressing individual tastes and drives to an audience (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 7). For others, dress is a matter of following preset cultural norms or conforming to "practical" concerns.[1] In all cases, the avenues of expression are limited by custom. The selection of clothing is based on the social status and the psychological and physical comfort of the individual, displaying both imposed social categories and chosen preferences (Slater, 1985, 130). What is defined as physically comfortable, socially appropriate, and properly expressive varies from group to group, but the urge to redesign the human form is universal. Justine Cordwell wonders if this indicates a fundamental dissatisfaction with the way we look; otherwise, why would we have spent "tens of thousands of years painting, daubing, plastering, pinching, cutting, pricking, dyeing, and distorting [the] body in the name of beauty, dignity, virility, fecundity, and so on?" The best answer to her question is discovered in a 1972 quote from an anonymous East African: "Because it shows we are human beings." (Cordwell, 1979, 47)

It is the intent of this paper to examine the uses and purposes of human adornment practices. A Western-cultural bias was unavoidable, as the available research material all stemmed from this tradition.[2] Despite this, I hope to explain some of the reasons why and how clothing is

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culture] Clothing is deliberately placed on a body by some cultural force, adopted over an infinite potential of other options.

1 "Practical" clothes, as it will be shown later, are as much a part of fashion and convention as the most whimsical, purely ornamental design. "Decency" can be a practical consideration to one person, while "warding off spirits" can be just as important and as valid to another.

2 The desire to accomplish such a study in the first instance is of Western origin, doubly damning me to the status of navel-gazer.

used as a communication device. An interdisciplinary approach was selected to avoid the pitfalls of making the material fit the theory. The privileging of one "style" of thought over another is much like the way clothing is worn: only our own current fashion seems to be the natural and obvious way of approaching the matter. Through the use of many different sources and examples, the relativity of the fashions of the mind and of the body will be foregrounded.

Fashion

Their daring Folly, Fickleness
In Dyet, Furniture and Dress,
That strange ridiculous Vice, was made
The very Wheel that turn'd the Trade
Their Laws and Cloths were equally
Object of Mutability
For, what was well done for a time,
In half a Year became a Crime,
Yet whilst they alter'd their Laws,
Still finding and correcting Flaws,
They mended by Inconstancy
Faults, which no Prudence could foresee

Bernand de Mandeville, Fable of the Bees, early eighteenth century (in Konig, 1973, 30)

"Fashion is the great governor of this world It presides not only in matters of dress and amusement but in law, physics, politics, religion, and other things of the greatest kind Indeed the wisest of men would be puzzled to give any better reason why particular forms in all these have been at certain times universally received and at others universally rejected, than that they were in or out of fashion"

Henry Fielding [1704-1754] (in Glynn, 1978, 13)

Before an explanation of the social significance of clothing can be undertaken, a clarification of one of the key concepts in the Western use of clothing must be accomplished Clothing has an ambiguous value in this culture, as attention to appearance is elevated to a status of paramount importance yet is disparaged as superficial matter. The difficulty of linking our "sartorial decisions" to the "grand spiritual passions" of humankind makes concerns about clothing style and self-presentation seem trivial (Bell, 1976, 16). Despite this, there are people who pay thousands of dollars to reformulate their bodies into an ideal shape through drugs, diets, exercise and surgery; others go so far as to commit crimes to acquire expensive items of clothing. Pop psychologists write endlessly about the futile obsessions with surface appearances which result in serious mental, physical and social repercussion; still, everyone laughs at the stereotypes of the superficial clothes-horse and the "bimbo" fashion model, two figures who completely conform to social ideals only to be disparaged for achieving near-perfection. This stigma may be carried over to some studies of clothing: not unlike the study of popular culture, status-based values are

imported to the supposedly objective realm of social studies, privileging some subjects as Art or Culture, worthy of meticulous study to reveal the complexities and nuances of these high forms, and devaluing other subjects to the realm of blindly followed mass entertainment. In the study of clothing, it is fashion that specifically carries the stigma, as opposed to the more exotic and "significant" styles of antique and "native" clothing.

All clothing is not fashion. Fashion is a descriptive term applicable to more than just clothing: architecture, art, design, literary styles, laws, science, politics, religions and other things fall under this form of social control (Konig, 1973, 54). It describes a particular way an object or a practice is circulated within a group. A fashionable object or practice gains rapid and widespread acceptance, once it reaches a certain level of mass use, it just as quickly looses its desirability. Practitioners or owners of the unfashionable item will lose status. Something new will replace the formerly-fashionable item, distinguishing those who adopt it first. Because the fashion cycle is so over-determined by autonomous, anonymous forces (Steele, 1985, 46), it is rejected by some people who value individuality and self-determination.[1] But, as explored later in the section on the uniform, the rejection of fashion is itself a fashionable pose, adopted by those who wish to discriminate themselves from the mob of mindless adherents.

Fashion is a culturally-specific process that can only occur under a unique set of conditions. Despite the tomes written on the History of Fashion which span the Birth of Civilization to Modern Times, fashion as a widespread social practice has only existed in the West for a little over two hundred years. A brief review of this shorter history of fashion can reveal the source of the stigma, and allow for a look at clothing untainted by personal prejudices against the latest length of hemlines or width of collar.

For centuries only the most privileged members of Western society, the courtly nobility, could engage in anything remotely linked to fashion. Only they were able to afford lavish expenditures on clothing. As their privilege went largely unchallenged, fashion did not need to change very quickly as the competitive urge towards distinction was limited to an inclusive elite. After the French Revolution and other less drastic Western political and economic reforms, the duration of a fashion cycle became increasingly shorter. As status became less attached to class at

[1] Those who follow fashion firmly believe it to be an expression of their autonomy and individuality, allowing for a constant and creative renovation of themselves.

time of birth and more to economic power, newly moneyed middle class groups gained the pretence to display their wealth (Konig, 1973, 146).

In addition to the change in political power, a change in the source of style was brought about by the empowerment of the moneyed bourgeoisie The courts' fashion needs were served by royal dressmakers and tailors, unrecognized servants in large households Dress styles were ascribed to their wearers, not those who made the garments. The clothing of the nobility was viewed more as a reflection of their "natural" position of privilege than an attempt to flaunt their power. The role of clothing changes once social competition begins to propel its creation Conspicuous consumption of goods was [and remains] a way to indicate status for the new regime, the body is the perfect place to display coveted items (Finkelstein, 1991, 5) Trendsetters are those least afraid to be conspicuous, flaunting their possessions for all to see in open competition (König, 1973, 151). As the playing field widely expanded in terms of stakes involved and the number of people in the fashion game, fashionable change moved at a quicker pace, making it a riskier practice in which to engage (König, 1973, 169). As fashion became more important in the newly competitive arena of class, the role of the unrecognized private servant was transformed into that of the very public couturier, him or herself a member of the rising bourgeoisie (Glynn, 1978, 19). Gradually, the influence of these designers increased to a near authoritarian level during the second half of the nineteenth century, preying on the fears and pretensions of their clients (Boucher, 1987, 391).

Though there was greater individualization of fashion through its attribution to famous designers, mass uniform fashion made its first appearance during the nineteenth century as well If the classes dressed alike before the advent of fashion, it was due to cultural traditions and scarcity of goods, not personal choice. The forces of fashion "requires" people to dress alike to show their allegiances to the current ideals - aesthetic, moral, and others - proclaiming their worthiness of membership in the larger group which the fashion represents A novel way of manufacturing clothing enabled people to reconcile the desire to be fashionable without significant risk to their social position, while reorganizing the garment manufacturing industry to encourage profits and efficiency. The ready-to-wear industry first began in men's fashion, followed by the manufacture of pre-made furs. This change broke the centuries old tradition of made-to-measure clothing By standardizing sizes and styles, more people could be in fashion at a lesser cost At this time, there were two separate clienteles in the fashionable world: the upper bourgeoisie who kept the same

personalized distinctions of the nobles, and the lower bourgeoisie, who purchased pre-made fashionable clothing (Boucher, 1987, 386)

By the end of the first World War, the old world bourgeoisie was beginning to lose its aristocratic hold on fashion Society gentlemen and matrons lost control to the designers, due to the rapidly decreasing number of skilled tailors and dressmakers, conditions of material scarcity, the rise of the nouveau riche, and an accompanying shift in emphasis from production to consumption (Glynn, 1978, 20 and Boucher, 1987, 408). The mass media were a major contributor to the emphasis in lifestyle and fashion. The professional model and the modern runway fashion extravaganza was born, complete with full accessorization, music, lights, and audience The fashion show as Event replaced the private showing of clothing in boutiques, worn without accessories by nameless shopgirls Designers of the past expected their distinguished clients to know how to wear their clothing; their modern counterparts believe that they must provide a complete package to their mass audience (Glynn, 1978, 22).

Designers have become media stars, and media stars have become their models, parading before the cameras in the latest modes Tactful little designer labels grew to become logos and insignia incorporated into the pattern and design of the clothing themselves. Jean Patou licensed his name to scarves, corsets, perfume, and accessories in the 1920's (Glynn, 1978, 21), but his efforts are pale in comparison to the modern day omnipresent signs of Coco Chanel, Anne Klein, Calvin Klein, Gucci, and other fashion supreme beings. Fashion is very individualized today, with designer labels, brand names, and celebrity role models laying claim to the foundation of styles. Gilles Lipovetsky notes that just as stars are an aestheticization of the actor, fashion is an aestheticization of clothes (Lipovetsky, 1987, 253), imbuing people and objects with a mystique that far surpasses practical abilities

Ironically, the individualization of style is accompanied by a type of conformity. Conformity is implemented in the mass adoption of a fashion in the widespread attempt to capture a piece of the mystique of the style or the celebrity attached to it, and as an inevitable offshoot of the industrialization of garment-making. A second rule of conformity is found in the necessity to display individual idiosyncrasy in dress (Lipovetsky, 1987, 53). The two or three types of fashionability of pre-World War One times have gradually fragmented into hundreds of sub-styles. One can achieve many different "looks" (Lipovetsky, 1987, 146), claiming individualism while conforming at the same time

The stigma applied to fashionable behaviour derives from its historical evolution from the penultimate in distinctive behaviour akin to high art to a generally-practiced, mass produced custom. In the eyes of some critics, it suffers from its attachment to popular media figures who appear to serve no purpose other than self-promotion. There does not seem to be any controlling agent, as no particular class or group directs the flow of fashion. Lower class subcultural groups, essentialized historical eras, and foreign cultures all inspire trends. While some criticize fashion for following the whims of a few elites, others lambaste it for its lack of glamour and prestige, as fashion is merely dictated by mob rule. Mass fashion can be praised for obliterating the competitive imitation of class-based fashion systems, but is problematic for the same reason, lacking a predictable, dynamic structure (McCracken, 1985, 40-41). Though clothing production and distribution techniques have encouraged a wide range of stylistic choices, detractors will point out that style is usually different ways of expressing the same idea (Mayer, 1979, 4).

To critique fashion for its lack of choice, or, alternatively, for offering too much choice to the point of erasing any meaningful communication, declares the desire to impose a theory of mechanical causation to a loose social practice. Fashionable styles are derived through a series of choices, deliberate and accidental, made within constraints (Mayer, 1979, 4). The possibilities of expression are always limited, contradicting both the lofty individualistic high art aspirations attached to the ancient styles of the nobles or the equally high reaching populist ideals of the modern casual wear (Mayer, 1979, 3). As Iain Chambers points out, fashion has many histories, and is endlessly recycled and renovated into new contexts. The styles and meanings of other sartorial traditions are quoted, out of context, by the latest cycle of fashion, offering new interpretive possibilities without engaging in any truly original, creative act (Chambers, 1990, 67-8). In total, the clothed human body, in all its different guises [dressed, undressed, posed], provides a map of the different social histories [politics, economies, aesthetics, sciences], categories [gender, age, race, status] and values [art, utility, comfort, prestige] (Chambers, 1990, 71). The various ways in which these categories are analyzed provides another historical map, this time of one of abstract discourses, theories, and tools of the intellect rather than one of material culture.

Theories of fashion and dress

> "It would seem that fashion, as a field of cultural activity, has managed to barricade itself against systematic analysis, it has put up rather successful fight against meaning Perhaps it would be more positive to say that fashion has always existed as a challenge to meaning where meaning is understood to involve some notion of coherence, a demonstrable consistent "
>
> Evans and Thornton, 1991, 48

It is the intricate process of decontextualized quotation that complicates the study of dress and adornment. Though styles are falsely claimed by individuals or social movements as theirs alone, the origins of the imitative chain are lost in the endless passages of history. The theories proposed on the subject of dress mirror the limitations and diversity of the clothing itself. Theoretical frameworks beg, borrow and steal from one another, reformulating ideas and methods into new meaning-creation systems, but most theories would like to claim innovation and independence from their "competition". An embarrassing number of theoretical arguments begin their appeal by proclaiming the novelty of their subject matter: "You are about to discover the Truth of .., a Truth that has never been told before " The impetus to declare the unique standing or previous neglect of one's subject matter is an egotistical proposition, as it not only discounts the theoretical work accomplished by other disciplines from which the researcher inevitably draws their material, but also dismisses the work and thoughts of the participants of the event under study, as their endeavours have not been placed within "legitimized" discourses and "proper" channels of dissemination

To declare the study of human adornment as an uncharted area is laughable. The range of work done on the manipulation of the human form is vast in scope and detail. In addition to the obvious reams of material written by the various academic disciplines, the ways of human adornment are taught by the popular media [fashion magazines, film and televisual images of fashion, popular ethnologies, advertisements] and through interpersonal contacts [individual advice, social sanctions, sumptuary legislation, centres of trade and other public spaces]. Everyone has something to add on this subject. The seemingly universal concern with clothing merits further consideration. Why do humans value self-presentation so highly?

A review of some of the most common theories applied to the study of adornment can demonstrate the location of the study of dress in Western academia. This list can only partially show what types of theory has been applied to dress in contemporary Western culture; it can also suggest absences, oversights, contradictions and overlaps between the theories. No theory can

stand on its own, limited as it is by its own narrow discourse. Together, they form a complementary, multi-disciplinary overview of one aspect of the human condition[s], providing a vague contour to the behaviours and the meanings ascribed to a shared practice

The most common analysis performed on clothing is a straightforward historical analysis Popular magazines and gigantic picture tomes examine clothing from a utilitarian, political economic framework. The authors of these "common-sense"-styled works attempt to trace causes of styles by explaining the influence of political treaties, dynamic leaders, trade routes, prosperity levels, and surrounding events. Quite often, there is a notable bias towards the elegance of the European elite and the changes in fashion rather than the more static and bedraggled wear of the "average" citizens. This is perhaps explained by the fact that records or material examples were not kept of the clothing of the lower classes As these works rely heavily on visual proofs, they must analyze only what they can display. In essence, these works attempt to trace "bricolage" in action without the burdens of postmodern theory. The theory implies that stylistic details are moved from context to context, thereby reordering their meanings while still faintly recalling the past (Clarke, 1975, 175).

The benefit of historical analysis is located in the detail and illustration of a complex practice. Dress is demonstrated to be a part of the workings of society, even if it is mostly relegated to a reflection of the wider [and more serious] issues of the times The chief drawback of this method is an essentialized evolutionary theme, attributing all change in dress to a highly specialized process of natural selection. The strongest social currents will be mirrored in clothing (Bell, 1976, 103). Unfortunately, the "survival of the fittest" metaphor often falls apart under examination, for contradictions to the bounty of highly selective material proof are easy to find While one war may drastically affect the styles of the participants, another will have a negligible influence. Garments are not treated in an equal manner certain details are described as being governed solely by the forces of economics [eg hemlines and constrictive underwear by prosperity; fabrics by trade routes] while others are ruled by political events [coat and dress cuts by treaties, wars, and charismatic leaders] (Bell, 1976, 97) Things that do not change are left unattributed or unquestioned, and entire historical eras are frozen into a singular style These characterizations do not account for the full plurality and dynamics of dress (Bell, 1976, 99-100) Adornment practices transcend simple political-economic equations, as they do not follow a simple linear history (Bell, 1976, 104).

Another context based model provides a more complete and convincing analysis by limiting its subject matter to a specific time Sociological-anthropological analyses avoid the deterministic proposition of the simple historical analyses by concentrating on a specific group. Cultural studies frequently employs this type of methodology. Often direct observation is employed, using the accounts of the members of the group itself to guide the analysis. The orientation is placed on people creating a social environment rather than the environment dictating their expressions.

These studies are not without problems as well. An essentialization of the costume and the meanings attributed to them may occur, when the assertions of the group members are overvalued. The researcher may be deceived into believing that the stated ideology of the group is mirrored in their dress [e.g. oppositional groups declaring their position through entirely non-contradictory forms of dress] Conversely, the researcher can impose their own biased evaluations onto the group [ethnocentrism]. Like the historical analyses, sociological-anthropological analyses can eternalize the costume of a group, ignoring the transitory nature of style.

The third general theoretical framework shares the belief that clothing is an expressive medium within a temporal and geographically limited context. In representational or aesthetic theories, significances are attributed to aesthetic acts in clothing. Quoting Joanne Bubolz Eicher [1972]:

> "In analyzing the aesthetic of dress, we are concerned with the body as an art form, the body as plastic, the body as an art gallery . Greatest virtuosity in aesthetic expression via the display of the human body is managed through the use of a wide variety of media, textiles, and cosmetics being the most common these media, either act on the body plastic and reshape it or they create the illusion of reshaping, or they are simply added to the body with little regard for the basic body form " (in Cordwell, 1979, 47)

Specific styles and garments are analyzed, proposing social ideals, discourses and auteur influences The auteur analyses are the most deficient of the three components of theories of dress aesthetics, for pure innovation is impossible in clothing. All designers are born into a world in which fashion already exists, determining "aesthetic affectations" to a large degree (Bell, 1976, 90). In some instances, art history methodologies are directly transposed onto the study of fashion. This is problematic as clothing has different social uses and contexts than art. The examinations of ideal types and the lineage of style is beneficial, fleshing out mere historical descriptives and properly placing the symbolic value of clothing within a time and place. But, again, an upper class "high art" bias is carried over from the historical analyses, perhaps as a justification of the study of a "common" practice

Just as representational analyses attempt to perform a "reading" of clothing, so too does semiotic analysis. Semiotics abandons any claims to authorial intention in favour of the determinisms of social convention. This theoretical application forsakes any notion of utility, placing clothing purely in the realm of the symbolic. As long as the analyst is cognizant of the split between the material realities and the abstract meanings of clothing, this type of analysis can provide a guide to the ideological value of clothing within a particular context. Roland Barthes' book The Fashion System does just this, separating "real" garments from their representation on the pages of the fashion magazine. This is unlike many aesthetic analyses which do not differentiate the representation of clothing - its portrait or photograph - from the clothing as a used, material items. Semiotic analysis introduces the possibility of instability and multiplicity of meanings in clothing, signifying social ideals outside of practical application [e.g. utility used to describe or justify essentially impractical clothing] (Barthes, 1983, 8). Thoughts, ideas, and associations, as channelled through descriptive language, crystalize around individual garments and styles, varying as the garment is moved from one context to another (Davis, 1985, 18).

The drawback of this theory is the difficulty in proving its claims, for it is dealing almost exclusively with the intangible elements of clothing. Semiotics, representational theories and psychological theories are meaning generating theories, they apply a distinctive mythology to read many objects and events without necessarily dealing with the material object itself. In the attempt to read between the lines, or folds so to speak, they create depth where, as postmodernists and post-structuralists would argue, there is none. They can be accused of manipulating their object of study linguistically to conform to the tenets of the larger theory. Their conclusions may only be meaningful to those versed in the applied methodology, for the discourses that allow that particular understanding is not necessarily a widely shared belief system. The three theories share a beneficial trait: clothing and its meanings are the products of conventionalized social significances.

There are several forms of psychological theory used to understand clothing. The mental effects of wearing particular items is examined [e.g. symbolic (dis)empowerment]. The most popularized version of psychological theory is the psychoanalytic approach. Seduction and forms of gendered power are interpreted in particular styles and garments. There are a few problems with applying seduction theory to the study of all clothing, as it may be only the product of modern Western culture. For example, Quentin Bell notes the dress of heavily robed Middle Easterners does not comply with the seduction thesis (Bell, 1976, 48). As well, sexual significances can only be attributed to a limited number of clothing items and styles. These items themselves originated the same epistemology that allowed psychoanalytic discourses to emerge, proving the analysis to

be more an exercise in reflexivity than discovery. Despite this drawback, it is important to note that clothing does have a role in shaping sexual divisions These analyses can illustrate how this socialization process is accomplished.

These five perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Their methodologies overlap, creating idiosyncratic analyses or founding new schools of thought. The plurality of theoretical discourses only mirrors the multiple discourses that construct clothing styles. Just as fashion creates and kills itself (Brun, 1987, 30) so too do the theories that attempt to apprehend its context and content. No clothing style or theory is universal, both are products of their context of emergence. Both spread in an irregular manner, some becoming fashionable while others fade into oblivion, some "details" becoming standard while others are abandoned for more expressive means. Theory and fashion are forms of social communication, therefore it should not be surprising if both are socially variable, subject to the creative and interpretative powers of individuals.

THE UNNATURAL HUMAN BODY

The decorated ape

> Man! Is there such a being without clothes?
> Eric Gill, 1931, 34

Animals, humans: two separate categories in the minds of most Westerners past and present. Nature, culture: two more polarities used to split this Earth into separate fields of meaning. Animals belong to nature, they define it's presence. Humans create and are created by culture. When the categories overlap, chaos ensues. The animal "inside" us must be controlled, rationalized, and marginalized into safely contained rituals - communes into "nature", "wild men weekends", "party animals". The animals permitted to join us in the human zone must be domesticated, cultured into a more human way of living, otherwise, they are "wild" and therefore dangerously anti-social. [1] On the other side, human culture is known to destroy nature: pollution, extinction, slash and burn farming, and other assorted environmental disasters show our dangerous face. The native populations of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Oceania encountered by European colonists were polarized in this split, once victimized by a genocide attack on their Natural Otherness, but now revered for their mystified symbolic links to a Nobler Nature. For centuries, the division line between the two sets of constructs has been maintained through various systems of belief. While Western religions reject the tenets of evolution, a theory that suggests the presence of a continuum rather than binary oppositions, enlightened scientific thought manages to rework the split into a more tangibly justified scheme. Humans are defined by our intelligence, our opposable thumb, our language, our tools, our self-consciousness. The scientific method has destroyed its own findings as contradictory evidence reveals humans to be less than unique in our abilities, placing us once again on a continuum, and knocking us off our pedestal. But we still marvel at our reflections found in that Other place: the family pet who acts a little too much like one of our species, the wild primates who prove our customs to be instinct rather than thought, even our own infants, who, though not yet indoctrinated into Culture, are shown to be functional, perceptive individuals at birth, rather than inert receptacles awaiting the proper stimulation to join the rest of humanity.

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[1] Tarzan of the Apes, Lord of the Flies, the myths of the wolf-raised wild children, characters of classic horror (the wolf-man, the vampire) and many war stories are examples of this version of the degraded human. This recurring theme suggests that an irrational animal lurks inside of everyone, ready to escape once returned to a provoking context, but this creature must be repressed for the good of humanity. A parallel between these characters and the psychoanalytic construct of the "id" is evident.

A key signifier of culture is the practice of human adornment. Bernard Rudofsky asserts that the urge to alter the human body, to rearrange it and mutilate it into new shapes, is strictly a human desire. This urge is particularly felt by modern industrialized humans, who, according to Rudofsky, regularly change the proportional ideals of the body, as opposed to "primitive man" who holds an unvarying body ideal (Rudofsky, 1971, 93). Since "primitive" people are unlikely to have the will, or the means, to record detailed changes in appearance, as fashion is not a universal urge, Rudofsky's claim is dubious, bearing the mark of a split between eternal nature / progressive culture. The clothing of non-Western societies, or lack of it, has always been of great interest to the well-layered Europeans. An unclothed human is at best a curiosity, as demonstrated in the anthropological interest in the "naked savages" of the exotic tropics, at worst a degraded object of contempt, linked to madness. Eric Gill points out that a person without clothes must be described by special adjectives - naked and nude - for it is assumed that people are clothed (Gill, 1931, 35). There is a great variety in the quantity of clothing worn by people, but only the Western nudist strives to be unadorned. Clothing is the human norm.

The diversity in the materials and methods of dress has led some to theorize the origin of this very human practice. A utilitarian explanation of the origins of dress suggests it to be a practical necessity. As the "naked ape", humans must replace our lost protective covering, keeping ourselves warm and shaded with pelts, plant matter, and their modern day simulations. Clothing becomes our second skin, taking on the duties of sheltering the inner body, but revealing it on the individual's own terms. Gill characterizes it as part of the "housing problem" where clothing shields us from the elements. He extends his analogy to show clothing as representing different rooms of the house: dinner jackets, bedclothes, special clothing for the ballroom, the church, etc., thereby showing the limits of the utilitarian argument. None of these functions has anything to do with warmth and shelter, but relies on social context to define appropriate coverings (Gill, 1931, 26-28).

Though protection may be the origin of clothing, it is at best a secondary interest in the practices of dress (Gill, 1931, 27). The body is capable of withstanding contextual inconsistencies for the sake of fashion and tradition. Extreme cold is disregarded as easily as intense heat if conventions call for a style that contradicts comfort (Squire, 1974, 14). [1] Clothing is a matter of adornment and display, not decency and use value.

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[1] Canadian winters provide ample opportunity to witness this phenomenon in action. Obstinate teenagers can be observed walking in -30 C weather clad in unzipped bomber jackets and running shoes, while other people are

Some see this trait as evidence of our distinction from the rest of the animal kingdom. A self-awareness of our appearance, manifested in universal concerns with ornamentation, appears at first to be unique (Gill, 1931, 89). The reverse is the rule: animals "dress" up as much as humans. The plumes, pelts and scales of nature's beasts come in a range of colours and styles that would make even the most creative designer green with envy. The difference between the animal kingdom and its most egotistical member is the qualification of adornment. Whereas animals naturally acquire colour and textures for the purposes of sexual attraction or protection through trompe d'oeil, humans artificially cover our largely naked bodies in foreign materials [often plundered from animals] or induce disfigurement (Rudofsky, 1971, 12). Again, language can be used to place similar phenomena into oppositional binaries. The same practices are classified into different meaning structures, labelling human adornment as a cultural activity and animal adornment as something beyond reason.

"All the evidence is against the view that Man is by instinct a Naked Ape." Geoffrey Squire prefers the idea of humans as the "decorate ape" (Squire, 1974, 13), a label that reconciles the nature/culture dualism into a continuum once again. Adornment is natural and cultural; the two are not mutually exclusive. Though practical concerns do govern the quantity and quality of garments to a degree, other motivations are in operation: ornamentation, custom, symbolism (Squire, 1974, 13). The lack of tangible purpose in adornment is not limited to homo sapiens. The extravagant plumage of some birds disables flight, and brightly coloured animals can attract predators as well as ward others off [for instance, humans on the prowl for decorations!]. Naturalists assign specific purposes to adornment features in other living things, whereas human adornment is attributed to vanity and meaningless posturing. Rather than dismissing human practices, they must be reconsidered in the same purposeful "scientific" manner. Fashion and adornment considered as specific patterns of behaviour within a context, not as items of clothing (König, 1973, 46), can put us back into the maligned and/or overvalued category of nature.

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bundled to the point of mummification. European colonists of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries provide an example of unsuitable overdress in hot climates, where they retained their traditional forms of dress, displaying allegiances and difference against all practical logic (e.g. padded confining military uniforms, long dark missionary robes, layers and layers of undergarments under long skirts).

Transformations

"...l'homme a cherché un refuge dans le vêtement qui en a attendu une métamorphose de toute son existance."
Jean Brun, 1987, 28

Adornment serves much the same purposes for humans as it does for the rest of life on this planet. Body styles can either draw attention to their wearer or they can camouflage individuality. Humans are fortunate in that we are often able to choose between these functions, allowing for contextual adaptation, but increasing the complexity of dress. This is the process of masking. The strictest sense of "mask" refers only to a face covering, but the term can be stretched to extend to all body coverings. Unable to alter our anatomy [stature, pigmentation, etc.], humans use masks to partially transcend physical barriers. Masks hide the body, change the skin, and transform the wearer into an alternative order of being (Brun, 1987, 57-58). "As repressed material, one might speak of the body as the 'unconscious' of clothing" (Evans and Thornton, 1991, 53). The transvestite potential of clothing enables basic human activities, transforming the hunter into its prey through the use of animal skins for the purposes of camouflage (Brun, 1987, 56). The hunter not only becomes less visible to its prey, but a transformation in a metaphysical sense can also occur, potentially allowing the wearer to assume [at least in mind if not body] some of the qualities of the animal (Brun, 1987, 56). Animistic religions commonly use the transformational power of garments to symbolically and psychologically link themselves to their gods, in the hopes that a spiritual union will bestow desirable characteristics onto the believer (Brun, 1987, 59).

Masks come in many forms and have many uses. Transformation is the key purpose in all cases, but the desired effect of change varies according to context of the wearer. Analyses of the effects of masks have been performed in several areas. Psychological studies show how individual and group anxieties and desires can be transformed into expressible forms. The relationship between the individual wearer and the embodiment of the larger social meaning or category of the mask is also explored in these investigations. [1] The social aspects of mask wearing are analyzed in terms of their value regarding social control, group identity, transgression, and social status. Cultural analyses look at the artifact as a means to preserve cultural knowledge, illustrating or negating cultural tradition through performance (Tooker, 1983,16-17).

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[1] Think of the Western "superhero". These comic book characters are almost always masked and/or costumed, possessing a "normal" life and a secret identity (eg· Clark Kent - Superman; Bruce Wayne - Batman; Selina Kyle -Catwoman) The two identities are kept distinct, and the risk of overlap and disclosure is a constant threat to the security of the character. In their superhero guise, they are allowed to perform actions of violence that are beyond the sanctioned ability of the social order. An increasing psychological probe of these characters highlights the interplay between their motivations (childhood trauma etc.) in the creation of their alter-egos and the needs of society.

The findings of these studies are largely particular to the occasion under investigation. In all cases masks are a social device, conforming to the expectations of the social group within a specific context (Brun, 1987, 58).

In our society, the practices of masking appear to be of little importance. Masks in the literal sense of the word are localized into contexts of secular performance such as costume parties, Halloween, stage and circus performances, and a handful of festivals. Masking, extending the use of the word to encompass all clothing, is a universal activity. Role playing through the adoption of full body masks allows one to operate in the social world and to satisfy one's own desires. The degree of self-consciousness in the donning of social roles is viewed in the care and selection of clothing to match an occasion (Finkelstein, 1991, 155). Uniforms are the most obvious example of this practice. The wearer of a uniform assumes a role, becoming a prisoner of their clothing and the institution that it represents. To the rest of the social world, the individual wearing the uniform is effaced into a single-purpose automaton. They are distinguished by their mask, but are joined to similarly attired individuals under another order (Brun, 1987, 38). Civilian clothing accomplishes the same function, allowing for display and distinction or for anonymity in the crowd (Wilson, 1985, 156). Individuality can be masked in or out of existence, depending on the desires of the person and the context.

The transformation that occurs with masking is primarily a psychological one, for the body is not usually physically empowered or disempowered by ornamentation.[1] It is unimportant whether these identity changes are tangibly "real" or merely pretense to the wearer of the mask, it is the social effects of masking that are significant, the way in which the masked person is perceived and gives order to the environment in which they are placed. In the West, the face masks of other cultures are removed from the context which gives them meaning, as in the case of the tribal artifact displayed as an "object d'art". The mask looses its status as purveyor of identity or as an artificial face, no longer representing a larger whole or its original ritualistic meanings. In this new context, it is relocated on the continuum of nature-culture, re-assigned a value of exotic Otherness, and tied to the more animalistic side of humanity (Halpin, 1983, 223-224). The transformative powers of the mask are lost in this context. In their original social location, masks are power objects in themselves, conferring authority onto their bearer. In the form of the Western uniform as well as their more conventional meaning, masks act as units of mediation that allow for the exchange of

[1] A woman of average build in civilian clothing would not receive much authorative status, but, placed inside a military or police uniform, would be conferred with greater authority and treated as if she had greater physical strength.

power across bodies. They are power-generating and power-concentrating (Crumrine, 1983, 2), focusing privilege and responsibility onto the body of an individual. Social hierarchies and mythic connotations are embodied into their design, and enacted in a ritualistic context (Crumrine, 1983, 3).

The wearer of the mask can disclaim responsibility for their behaviour as their actions become symbolic of the larger whole rather than their own motivations. A built-in protection is thus found in the ability of masks to strip people of their individuality. As Laura Makarius writes: "If masks protect their wearers, it is obviously because the latter needs protection, whether they are out on some dangerous expedition, such as hunting, or are regarded as being surrounded by imaginary dangers" (Makarius, 1983, 196). A potent example of this statement is the executioner, who, while in a very powerful position as an individual, must protect his identity by covering his face with a mask. He is protected from the consequences of his acts, in a practical sense - execution can be a dirty business - and in a symbolic sense, for his appearance and identity disappear under the larger sign of his mask (Makarius, 1983, 197). The protective function of clothing, activated through its abilities to confer alternative identities, extends beyond blatant masking. It can render the wearer highly visible, sanctioning exhibitionist activity and postures of power that would normally not be allowed, or it can conceal identity through uniformity, allowing activity to go unnoticed and unattributed to an individual.

What you see is what you get

As previously stated, masks may allow the performance of unconformist activity, but they do so in a conservative context. Clothing in general permits and controls role playing. Simone de Beauvoir remarked upon the power of clothing in this regard:

> "Even if each woman dresses in conformity with her status, a game is still being played artifice, like art, belongs to the realm of the imaginary. It is not only that girdle, brassiere, hair dye, make up disguise body and face, but that the least sophisticated of women, once she is 'dressed' does not present <u>herself</u> to observation, she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there- that is, the character she represents, but is not. It is this identification with something unreal, fixed, perfect, as the hero of a novel, as a portrait or a bust, that gratifies her, she strives to identify herself with this figure and thus to seem to herself as stabilized, justified in her splendour." (in Goffman, 1959, 57-58)

Clothing confers a role onto its wearer, a process that necessitates a belief in the coherence between a conception of the world and the ability of appearances to reflect that order (Squire,

1974, 9). It is at this point that the taboo of imposture comes into play. Masks are contextually based, requiring a synchrony between action and location. The audience requires that the performer pay great attention to their appearance to properly embody the assumed role, for the audience is "ready to pounce on chinks in his symbolic armour in order to discredit his pretensions" (Goffman, 1959, 59). A performer must be authorized to play the role designated through clothing; the way the clothes themselves are arranged and worn offer clues of imposture. The audience can be duped by a well executed performance, unable to discern intention from appearance. The closer an imposter's appearance comes to the "real" thing, the more it will threaten the audience's belief in authority and the capacity for them to recognize something genuine (Goffman, 1959, 58). A fine line is drawn between outright imposture, when a specific individual engages in a completely false identity [a con-man] and a collective urge towards partial fraudulence, when people attempt to disguise "figure faults" or dress beyond their means to achieve a heightened status (Goffman, 1959, 60).

Clothing enables posturing. The morality of a posture is, once again, based on the context and a scale of authenticity versus artifice. The difficulty in ascribing an absolute value of legitimacy as opposed to deception lies in the inability to locate an origin to the meanings conveyed through clothing: the intentions and character of the wearer affect the selection of clothing, but clothing shapes individual moods, controls action, and forms expectations about the wearer. The power of appearances is so strong that it can convince the wearer of a garment that they are in possession of the characteristics embodied in the garment. Eric Gill states that spirit and matter are resolved in the clothes we wear (Gill, 1931, 99), and offers the following statement as an example: "It is not the coat that makes him gentle but in the coat he recognizes what is becoming to his natural gentility and without which he cannot live up to his nature" (Gill, 1931, 3).

Simulations

> "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible."
> Oscar Wilde The Picture of Dorian Gray, 1891 (in Finkelstein, 1991, introduction)

The confusion of appearance enabled though dress is maligned as deceptive even though it is universally practised. In some discourses, such as the psychoanalytic approach, appearance is set up as an ideal that should reveal interior meaning. The manifest appearance, through an ornate construction of displaced and repressed signs, offers unwilling pathways to allow the emergence

of meaning i e. truth, a conception Jean Baudrillard labels "depth peeking through the break" (Baudrillard, 1990, 53) The process of interpretation can recall latent meanings. This conception of appearance reflects the common assumptions people make when evaluating someone's clothing. Clothing is assumed to say something about an individual, willingly and unwillingly divulging secrets about its wearer in a web of coherence and contradiction. [1] Meaning creating discourses seek to end the fraudulence of appearances, (Baudrillard, 1990, 54) decoding them into an underlying system of origin Baudrillard counters this more traditional outlook with his theory of seduction, claiming the manifest, superficial content overrides the mythic latent meaning (Baudrillard, 1990, 53). Attacks made on "false" appearance stem from the stigma placed on seductive powers which are based on the reversibility of signs. By abandoning the idea of truth, Baudrillard leaves the meanings of appearance on the surface in shifting significations, offering an explanation to why the constant manipulation of signs in clothing continues to hold our interest after centuries of playing the same game

The trompe d'oeil of dress and adornment renders the body into an artifact devoid of any so-called natural way of being (Baudrillard, 1990, 61). Modern medical science has allowed for even more manipulations, cosmetically altering the body according to fashion. In the age of plastic surgery, the expression "false face" takes on new meaning (Rudofsky, 1971, 35). The idea of nature is subverted and/or rejected in favour of artifice. The allure of body artifice is opposed by those who reject what they considered to be deception and vanity, both being defiances of Nature. A fear of the seductive potentials of these de/reforming technologies spurs their rejection. "To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion", negating the possibility of finding a truth to appearance (Baudrillard, 1990, 69) The absence or denial of a basis of truth to the human body provides relief to some from their physical limitations and the meanings attached to them [e.g. gender, race, size, beauty ideals], but causes concern for others who prefer the myths of naturalism and the transparency of social categories working through biological determinations.

Human artifice - a brief survey

Judging by the media attention given to modern plastic surgery, one would assume it to be an innovative practice. In fact, it is merely the attachment of a scientific, medical discourse to a practice that can be alternately conceived as an anthropological or aesthetic one. Selective alteration

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[1] For instance, we assume an outfit can tell a person's class of origin (something that they may wish to conceal) and their class ambitions A person of sloppy appearance is assumed to be disorganized in thought and disposition, while an overly-tidy person can be labelled "anal retentive" Appearance is given credit to revealing true personality over the wishes of the clothed individual

of the body is another universal practice. Within Western culture, ear piercing is rarely connoted with mutilation any more. [1] Less intentional alterations, such as the constriction of the foot through poorly designed yet fashionable shoes, are much less noticed. The modern shoe is, according to Rudofsky, an "instrument for deformation", bought in identically-sized, badly-shaped designs (Rudofsky, 1971, 111). [2] As a comparison, Chinese foot binding is often cited as one of the more offensive artifices, rendering the victim disabled for the sake of a beauty ideal.

The body is altered in ways other than overt mutilation. Many devices have been designed to interfere with human anatomy: bustles, pads, heels, wedges, braguettes, brassieres, cod pieces, hoops, crinolines, etc. (Rudofsky, 1971, 122). The corset, only abandoned around the turn of the last century, was a sign of virtue to be worn by both sexes, justified by medical assertions as solving "natural" deficiencies of the human body even though it caused severe physical problems, such as constriction of internal organs and shortness of breath (Rudofsky, 1971, 103-09) At other times slightness of body is rejected in favour of selective fattening. Bustles, padding, and garments that exert pressure on body parts to make them appear larger encourage a sumptuous look of leisure and affluence (Rudofsky, 1971, 100). The ideal female bosom is an area of variable size and shape, ranging from near flat-chestedness to a monobosom to separated, protruding breasts Ideal body weights waiver from extreme corpulence to emaciation. Quentin Bell points out that achieving the perfect figure will always require an expense, whether that be fatness as a sign of wealth in a milieu of scarcity or slimness achieved through leisurely pursuit of exercise and medical intervention; both situations follow the rule of conspicuous consumption.

The symbolism attached to weight varies greatly from culture to culture. Personal scales of body size are sublimated to public ones (Schwartz, 1989, 449). In Western society, an obsession with body size and proportion has taken many forms over time. Hillel Schwartz compares the current dilemma of the Western body to schizophrenia. Three bodies co-exist in one consciousness: a heavy, fat, old body of the present, representing social anxiety and self-consciousness; a thin, free body of the past linked to nostalgic memories; and a streamlined body of the future, the technologically enhanced cybernated figure (Schwartz, 1989, 411 and 443). This schizophrenic co-consciousness is discovered in the discomfort many feel with their own

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[1] Occasionally, in a masochistic context, it is re-introduced While in New York City a few years ago, I saw a small store with a sign in the window which read : "Ear Piercing - With or Without Pain".

[2] The top of the human foot should be twice the width as the heel A quick look at pointy-toed Western footwear will establish the degree to which this practical rule is ignored The ideal of the small, slim foot is ingrained particularly in women in Western culture The original version of the story of Cinderella is a horrific example of this ideal of beauty the characters of the ugly stepsisters mutilate their feet for the sake of fitting into Cinderella's delicate, anatomically incorrect glass slipper so that they may merit the affection of the prince (Rudofsky, 1971, 9-10)

physiques, necessitating constant transformations [workouts, surgury, diets] to gain access to the "true" interior self (Schwartz, 1989, 426). This self is invariably the thin body, the infant unconstrained by the burdens of worldly existence. A whole fleet of professional detectives-doctors, statisticians, dieticians, trainers, homeopaths - are deployed to free the trapped thin person, but actually maintain its imprisonment through their utopian discourses and universalized standards (Schwartz, 1989, 450), differing the achievement of the ideal through ever-changing standards As it is a "repressed" body, a pure idealized, unrealizable creation of the mind, the thin body can never surface, preserving the necessity of these professionals. The intensity of conflict between the three body "fragments" has resulted in a crisis situation for some, manifested in psychic diseases like anorexia, bulimia, and other obsessive eating disorders. The balance between social ideals and personal power gets out of control for some individuals, resulting in life threatening emaciation or obesity.

The conception of the body is fragmented in another manner. The head and the body are often conceived as two separate entities. The "headless" body is more strongly identified with the social realm, clothed and trained in size and posture The head, more specifically, the face, is the source of personal identity and distinction. The body is disguised and covered; the face is highlighted and foregrounded. But the head is subjected to much reworking and deformation as well. Changes in this area are often attached to the expression of personality and "natural" attributes such as intelligence. One of the more severe deformations is the practice of skull moulding. Ancient Egyptians, American Indians, and late nineteenth century French provincials engaged in this practice of reshaping their heads, achieving a streamlined, cylindrical shape. Not surprisingly, this fashion in France occurred during the height of the phrenology craze, another trend that promotes the belief in the ability of appearances to convey inner truth (Rudofsky, 1971, 97-98).

Though one might not place it under the category of body manipulation at first thought, hairstyles and facial hair are areas arranged into elaborate designs governed by conventions and fashions For example, the male beard is shaped into many designs and has a long list of associate values. It can connote authority and wisdom [e.g. religious figures, prophets] and be a symbol of virility and manhood (Rudofsky, 1971, 125-6). A beard may also suggest a desire to hide something and an unwillingness to confront others. Contradictions occur in hair growth and removal for women as well. Selective body shaving reflects different cultural ideals of femininity and beauty, and is tied to hygiene and sexuality. In North America, the shaven leg is a contradictory sign in regards to sexual "looseness". While it is almost manditory to shave from the knee to the calf, some consider it to be a sign of sexual impropriety if one shaves above the knee,

implying that the woman expects someone [i.e. a sexual partner] to see/feel above the hemline of her skirt. In other cultures, hairy legs and armpits in women are thought to be sexually attractive, connoting earthiness and animality.

These various practices of body manipulation are located on a scale of value as artifice Prestige is often given to the "natural" over the artificial, the untouched body endowed with notions of authenticity, timelessness, and sincerity that extends beyond pure social creation and fashion (Baudrillard, 1981, 46). The natural reality of the body seems to be denied through the contortions of adornment. But this observation returns us to the nature-culture dualism, throwing up "unnatural" cultural practices against an alternative ideal of the "natural" human body Body ideals and the garments which enable them, like masks, are doubly-artificial, as they are the product of human labour based on non-existent models (Brun, 1987, 63)

The natural pose

Just as technologically-assisted body shapes attempt to replicate a mythic ideal, the natural body is a fictional construction in its own right. The body is raw material for experimentation The styles and shapes of the past and of others appear to be gruesome or unnatural, but our own current ideal remains unquestioned, otherwise, it would not be an ideal (Rudofsky, 1971, 94)

Rudofsky writes about our dissatisfaction with a permanent image "When the excitement over a new fashion flares up, symbols of old come miraculously alive; strange cruelties and mutilations are accepted in homage of an idol, were its nature fully understood, would scare the wits of its adherents" (Rudofsky, 1971, 13). The ideal of the natural body is a product of fashion in its own right. A survey of posture styles, gait, health, and expression soon shows that there is no decontextualized way of being. In the 1830s, the artists of the West were plagued by a mysterious condition called consumption, a stance replaced by the pose of depravity by the turn of the century. Fashionable illness is the flip side of compulsive health, a phase in which we are currently engaged. Posture, from the upright primness of the Victorian era [undoubtedly facilitated by the constriction of corsets] can be contrasted to the slouching, purposively slovenly styles of the hippy generation (König, 1973,48). Relaxed movements or stiff upper lip, the line between a natural pose and an artificial one doesn't exist other than in differences invoked to distinguish one group from another (Konig, 1973, 50).

Some fashion theorists have attempted analyses that link prevailing style to the "spirit of the age" (Flugel, 1950, 148). Though the interpretive function of some of this work is questionable as it retrospectively attaches systems of meaning to distant times, the observations of past styles are interesting and valuable to plot the course of fashion (Flugel, 1950, 148) By attaching context to style, our own artificiality may be revealed, but more commonly it only serves to reinforce ideas of progression and exoticize difference An interesting case is the perception of the European travellers who settled in foreign lands The missionaries and early colonists who chastised the perceived naked animality of native populations were quick to attack their cultural traditions, seeking to end their practices of ornamentation and creative mutilations. Unable to understand the symbolism of their cosmetics, the European intruders thought it better to remove the cause of their worries by banning certain practices (Brain, 1979, 10). While horrified by the "savagery" of native adornment, they remained blissfully unaware of the inappropriateness and decadence of their own garments, sporting wigs, powder, and tight lacings in rugged wilderness lands (Brain, 1979, 9).

This ethnocentric attitude remains in the description of alternative practices. Plastic surgery, a relatively reasonable, scientific thing to do in the West, is opposed to mutilation, piercing, scarification and other unpleasant sounding customs performed by Others (Brain, 1979, 9). Robert Brain notes the historical inconsistency of early Western attacks on alternative traditions of ornamentation

> "The irony is that having effectively killed primitive body painting, we are ourselves becoming more interested in our bodies The stigma on cosmetic surgery is disappearing, plastic forms are available to hide or reshape the body, and there is almost no anatomical feature which cannot be made more perfect or at least more conformist Thighs are slimmed, paunches removed, buttocks and breasts raised Instead of secretly rouging her lips and dyeing her hair, the modern woman may indulge in wholesale body sculpture, whittling her body in the interests of fashion Poster paints are used on the face, lashes are painted red, hair streaked with green, nails painted purple, triangles and stripes more frequently associated with American Indians are appearing on the faces of fashion models and Punk Rock groups " (Brain, 1979, 14)

While the cultural practices of "naked" savages had to be contained, Western cultural ideals assumed the stature of nature.

The natural nude

Clothing is a sign of culture, coding the body in accordance to artificially imposed categorical differences. It is a tempting thought to believe that an unclothed human would be stripped of these cultural distinctions and returned to a natural state of being, equalized with every other human body. The myth of the universal unadorned human figure is a powerful image, but

there are many problems with this ideal notion (Hollander, 1978, XII). Humans are, unarguably, social animals. As such, protection is found in collectivity. A naked person in this context is an anomaly, for nakedness ensures individuality to some degree. Unclothed, a person becomes their own garment, making the individual personally responsible for all conduct as they are unprotected by a uniform that carries pre-coded meanings and authorizations (Brun, 1987, 38). Clothing provides a way of "writing" over these body difference, creating homogeneity where none existed previously (Brun, 1987, 40). Two very different bodies can appear to come from the same mould if dressed in a similar way, stylizing the body into a type or an ideal form that disguises unwanted difference (Hollander, 1978, 86). The protection of the uniform is lost to an unclothed human, a condition that is, in effect, against our nature (Brun, 1987, 40). For most cultures, a naked body is an incomplete body, requiring the packaging of cultural categories to complete it (Rudofsky, 1971, 27).

Artistic presentations of nudity show it to be a pose in its own right, as the depictions of proportions, attitudes, and the values attached to the body change over time and space. Anne Hollander writes that though the natural state of humans is to be decorated and clothed, we require a deep respect for nakedness:

> "Nakedness is not a customary but rather an assumed state, common to all but natural to none, except on significantly marked occasions. These may be ritual, theatrical, or domestic, but they are always special, no matter how frequent."

She argues that nudity is a necessary concept in Western representational art as it provides a point of reference and origin for the symbolic importance of clothing (Hollander, 1978, 84). As an expression of artistic values as well as social allegiances, the relationship between clothing and nudity as a lived social experience can be described in a similar way. Perhaps the only valid distinction one can make to differentiate humans and other animals in the matter of adornment is that humans are the only ones able to take clothing off (Gill, 1931, 163). Nakedness is not a return to a state of nature, but part of the "self-perpetuating visual fiction" of clothing itself (Hollander, 1978, XV).

The poses of nudity are revealed through historical and cross-cultural analyses. In Western art, two major connotations surround its depiction. Nudity can represent unadorned innocence, linking the human form to nature, or it can suggest a divine artistic achievement, showing the standards of ideal beauty for the time, place, and artist (Hollander, 1978, 85). Across cultures, differences in attitudes towards dress and undress are viewed in incidents of culture shock, where

certain areas of the human body acquire the status of taboo for one group but are much less significant [or at least possess a different signification] to another. Baudrillard states that in a culture that does not perceive nakedness as objective truth, the concept of nudity, and all its lascivious connotations, cannot exist In non-fetishistic culture, the separation of body and face does not exist, for the whole body is a symbolic veil, a representative of the individual (Baudrillard, 1990, 33) Mario Perniola examines the different conceptions of nudity in three traditions important in the creation of the modern Western world The ancient Hebrews linked God to clothing, as God "dressed" the earth. The metaphysical was valued over the physical body, and nudity had an absolute negative significance for this culture. The ancient Greeks adopted an opposing position, setting nakedness up as a Platonic absolute truth. This manifested itself through art and in an emphasis on athleticism, celebrating the vessel that contained the soul (Perniola, 1989, 238-39) Neither of these traditions eroticized the body as does the Christian tradition. Rather than setting up distinct poles between dress and undress, a dynamic between the two states creates a tension between the naked body and the garments that cover it (Perniola, 1989, 243). Within this context, undress has its limits; the erotic tension is lost at a certain point (Perniola, 1989, 246) A truly naked figure is a rare sight in the depiction of the body in this tradition, as the body holds no interest outside of the continuum.

Nudity as Clothing

Nudity is not unlike a style of clothing, worn in different ways according to cultural traditions. To achieve "natural" nakedness, one must be well trained in the artistic stance of the day. It is a posture to be worn Hollander can thus state: "Clothes, even when omitted, cannot be escaped" (Hollander, 1978, 87). Eric Gill offers a supporting statement to this thought: "A naked man is, in fact, well dressed" (Gill, 1931, 168). Nudity is appropriate at particular times and places, replicating the contextual contingencies that govern dress. Gill goes so far as to suggest that the skin itself is a suit of clothing, ornamented with details, in a context of display that can only be broken by an insistence of base corporeality:

> "A 'naked' man is clothed in silk - with hair in appropriate places, and delicately ornamented with nipples and navel - a marvellous mechanism of muscle and bone displayed and yet still covered Real nakedness does not exists from man unless he be flayed " (Gill, 1931, 166-7)

The body only loses its continuum of skin/clothes when it undergoes a process of "denudation", wounded to reveal its physicality that extends beyond aesthetic social construction

(Perniola, 1989, 245). The flesh is easily eliminated in the depiction of nudity. Representations in traditional art, computer simulations and prostheses can generate a realistic image of a body that never has existed, a pure simulation that carries all the effects and meanings of a corporeal equivalent (Perniola, 1989, 261). In some cultures, nakedness indicates the ultimate negative state, as it is linked with privation, degradation and shame; the people of the Near East, the Egyptians, Babylonian, and Hebrews considered it in this vein, for nudity was reserved for slaves and prisoners (Perniola, 1989, 237).

Nudity is revealed to be one more sign in the processes of adornment. Under wrap, it is a secret, an ambivalent referent assumed but not seen. Uncovered, the skin becomes a sign, circulated with its own meanings (Baudrillard, 1990, 32). The "metaphysics" of clothing and nudity, to use Perniola's phrasing, assigns an absolute value to visibility (Perniola, 1989, 242). Gill recognizes the reciprocal relationship between the two polarities, while indulging in another opportunity to criticize the Puritan disdain for appearances:

> "Everybody, except the puritan, loves clothes, everybody, except the puritan, loves the naked body. The whole difficulty lies in the reconciliation." (Gill, 1931, 164)

Clothing and body are tied together, ideally, each emphasizing the attractions of the other. A love of adornment accompanies a love of the body; disdain for one usually is followed by a disdain for the other (Gill, 1931, 165). In the Western tradition, eroticism is located in the place where clothing meets body, and is conditional on the possibility of moving from one state [dress] to another [undress] (Perniola, 1989, 237). This condition recalls the powers of seduction as outlined by Baudrillard, where the reversibility of signs is the operating principle. Hollander understands this when she describes the dialectic of dress:

> "People's clothes have the effect of making their inferred nude bodies seem more, not less, desirable. Nakedness, of course, has its own fierce effect on desire, but clothing with nakedness underneath has another, and it is apparently even more potent. Clothing that envelops, swallows up, and seems to replace the body also enhances its importance, differently but no less powerfully." (Hollander, 1978, 85)

Modesty

The seductive body is feared by some, as it is an unstable, transitive form of power. Ironically, the repression of seduction is sought through copious attention to dress. The suggestion of nudity is but the consequence of enclothing the body, thereby emphasizing what is denied (Perniola, 1989, 251). Clothing can make the "spiritual" visible, a practice recognized by the Christian tradition in the use of symbolic forms of ornamentation. But this same system of

belief engages in a rejection of the flesh, assigning it a negative value. The effect of attempts to repress what lies under the robe manifests itself in the form of codes of modest dress, principles that only insistsupon the "return of the repressed" and an eroticization the body. An alternative tradition exists in some tribal groups that view Western-styled full body covering as an immodest act. For these people, nakedness is the modest fashion, with only "harlots" covering themselves in unabashed display (Rudofsky, 1971, 26-27)

The concept of modesty is a complicated one, often overlapping terms such as shame, bashfulness, timidity, and frugality (Ellis, 1942, 7). It is essentially a moral value attached to the body and its relation to clothing, an attempt to reject the potential seductive power of dress. What constitutes modest behaviour ranges from the covering of particular areas of the body to demands for layers of clothing Clothing itself has no particular value under a code of modesty, a thought expressed by Knight Dunlap in a 1928 article entitled "Development and Function of Clothing".

> 'Any degree of clothing, including complete nudity, is perfectly modest as soon as we become thoroughly accustomed to it Conversely, any changes in clothing, suddenly effected, may be unmodest if it is of such a nature to be conspicuous clothing itself has not modesty or immodesty." (in R Schwartz, 1979, 26)

Modest wear varies with social station, age, location, activity, the time of day and year (Rudofsky, 1971, 28) When it is followed, it is a refusal of the display function of clothing, as attracting the gaze of others is a sign of vanity and ego.

For a culture with a strong sense of propriety concerning dress, modesty seems an almost natural response. In his 1942 book Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Havelock Ellis devotes an entire section to the subject of modesty, beginning with the affirmation that it is:

> "an almost instinctive fear prompting to concealment and unusually centering around the sexual processes, while common to both sexes it is more peculiarly feminine, so that it may almost be regarded at the chief secondary sexual character of women on the psychical side The woman who is lacking in this kind of fear is lacking also in sexual attractiveness to the normal and average man " (Ellis, 1942, 1)

While his gender stereotyping is rather sweeping in scope, he makes a valid point about the importance of modesty in the process of attraction. The absence of modesty is not unlike an absolute absence of clothing; modesty is to seduction as clothing is to nudity Immodesty is not the negative absence of modesty but its necessary mirror image (Ellis, 1942, 1), creating degrees of significance in dress and intentions in its wearers. Modesty assumes a naturalized status as it is

socially engrained, but proof of its contingency on cultural norms is found in the innocent transgressions of children who have no qualms about touching and revealing any part of anyone's body until taught otherwise (Rudofsky, 1971, 27). Similarly, the designation of modest and immodest forms of the body change with fashion, tied in to competition between rival groups (König, 1973, 134), and the creation of taboos that can then be transgressed for erotic purposes and symbolic defiance. The idea that modesty is a natural impulse may arise from the conflation of the ideals of modesty and feelings of embarrassment, the negative emotion provoked when we unintentionally transgress the moral dress code.

Reveal and conceal

Though some sense of modesty is nearly universal, the form that it takes is very different across societies. The Christian version of modesty has been particularly emphatic, enforcing its tenets through the inducement of shame of nakedness, replacing immodest symbols with "appropriate" Western clothing (Brain, 1979, 11). Modesty operates by the incentive of fear, making individuals acutely aware of their physical comportment. Rather than make people forget about the carnality of the body, clothing performs the opposite function. Covering an area is essentially the same as packaging it for display. The codpiece, once a popular item of clothing for European men, illustrates this function most vividly (Rudofsky, 1971, 56). Within the present western context, the ever-changing shape of the female bosom, redesigned by the bra, is another example. It is not how much is covered, but how clothing is worn, as stated by Geoffrey Squire:

> "The most nun-like wraps can prove indecent if the wearer intends to make them so, complete nakedness, as in the symbolic picture of Truth, or the model for a 'life-class', may be utterly innocent. Usually it is manner not matter which matters." (Squire, 1974, 14)

Modesty is a contradictory and self-defeating notion (Rudofsky, 1971, 26), as proponents claim to be rejecting display and self-consciousness but "achieve" this goal through careful image planning. Modesty confirms that dress is primarily a social activity, as it operates on the assumed expectations of an audience reaction, whether that be in the pursuit of shock value or as a deterrent to transgression. A Japanese tradition offers a reconciliation of the demands of modesty with adornment. No concept of the 'divine nude" exists in this culture, the naked body has the status of defencelessness and shame. Irezumu, an ancient, intricately beautiful style of tattooing, permits

the body to be "dressed" at all times, giving it a look of artificiality. Some enthusiasts of this art form make a down payment to individuals with full body suits of tattoos, and "collect" their purchase upon death, a museum of irezumu exists in Japan with the ornamented skins pinned to the wall (Brain, 1979, 64). While initially created by modesty, irezumu becomes a matter of pure display in this context Unlike the hypocritical traditions of Western modesty which serves to create an erotic, transgressive body, other traditions such as this Japanese one recognize the importance of display that must accompany all forms of adornment. The aims of dress are contradictory ones, where the attractions of the body are emphasized but denied on moral grounds (König, 1973, 36).

Display and deception

The unclothed body, as opposed to the postured elegance of the nude body, is an object of shame and vulnerability. Modesty is a code designed to prevent the loss of control over the body, both in terms of personal embarrassment and the loss of social power to seductive power. Adornment is used to empower the body,wrappingit with signs of authority [self-control and institutional/social control]. Clothing gives a specific perceptual knowledge to the body, conveying useful information to a knowledgeable audience (Finkelstein, 1991, 112 and 108). Clothing can show one's sense of respect of order, inseparable from the individual self but tied to the collective in the form of mass forms of dress (Finkelstein, 1991, 107). Fashion and style changes only can operate with the acknowledgement of an audience (König, 1973, 57), exhibitionism, outside of the negative values that this term usually carries, allows for oppositional constructs, rivalries, and moral laws to be played out in the social world. Social events and places are designed to enable the display function of clothing, such as malls, theatres, bourgeois salons, receptions, courts, and festivals (Konig, 1973, 58). The body is transformed into a commodity in this context where sumptuous items can be displayed or rejected (Finkelstein, 1991, 5) and allegiances can be declared supporting or opposing prevailing powers. [1]

The social function of display is self-evident to all of humanity. The appearance one adopts is largely determined by one's context. Joanne Finklestein acknowledges this fact:

> "Realizing the cultural and historical contingencies of these interpretations should determine that any insight into an essential self which we derive from reading the outward signs is

[1] The rejection of sumptuousness can be a conscious decision, such as "old money" attempts to differentiate itself from the ostentations of "nouveau riche", or as an oppositional statement in an individual attempting to link themselves symbolically to an underclass

better understood as a reading of a cultural moment than it is an analysis of personality Yet this is not often the case " (Finkelstein, 1991, 4)

Unfortunately, our belief in the ability of appearances to transmit knowledge about an individual often overextends the ability of clothing to accomplish this function Because clothing carries social meanings, it must use codes that are understood by many people. These codes are at times very loose ones to allow interpretative possibilities, but comprehension is complicated because of the need for accessibility. Conventionalized meanings limit the range of possible expressions; unconventional coding results in misunderstanding and possible negative repercussion. [1] While limited in one respect, the vagaries of coding obscure definitive meanings, but allow for creativity, play, and change. In the end, we must rely on what we perceive, but we can easily be deceived.

Appearance is thought to be able to convey abstract qualities of character, thereby necessitating a careful attention to appearance (Finkelstein, 1991, 2) The labour put into appearances negates its motivation, as it is primarily a construction rather than a profound unintentional revelation of our spirit The body becomes a manufactured object that advertises the place, power, and abilities of individuals bestowed onto and assumed by them within a social context (Finkelstein, 1991, 4). All people know that everyone works to create impressions, but still we attempt to divine truth from appearances. Finkelstein resumes the problems of our trust in the facades we present to the world.

"It would seem that the ideas we hold about personal identity, incorporating as they do these divergent views, suggests that our knowledge of human character and our speculation about the nature of our own consciousness and that of others are incoherent and unsystematized narratives, interwoven with contradictory ideas and assumptions " (Finkelstein, 1991, 1)

It is as if all were involved in a perpetual "conspiracy" to allow artifice to go unrecognized, (Finkelstein, 1991, 3) for we are shocked when actions contradict appearance There is an irony in the hypocrisy in the modern era. While we reject the past theories of appearance, the physiognomists and phrenologists who claimed they could deduce the character of individuals based on their looks and body shape, modern Western society embraces the ideals of self-transformation, believing that exercise, weight loss, plastic surgery, and make-overs will allow us to achieve the perfect unity of spirit and matter (Finkelstein, 1991, 7)

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[1] The often cited case of the misunderstood punk rockers can illustrate this point The use of unconventional materials for adornment was interpreted solely by mainstream individuals as acts of aggressive opposition, rather than a statement on the assumed transparency of meanings and uses of objects

Artifice and nature are not mutually exclusive categories. Artifice is a part of nature, manifested in the universality of display across all living things. The categorization of adornment as artifice and artifice as deception is the result of the contradictions of our "ideology" of appearance. Appearances do deceive, but only because we wish them to do so. The negative valuations placed on artifice could be the legacy of Puritanism, or simply the frustration everyone feels at the lack of transparency of meaning in the social world. Concepts such as modesty are invoked to control the potential chaos, but in the end, are done in by the very contradictions which provoked their creation.

UNIFORMITY

The "language" of clothing

The amount of time and resources people devote to the personal selection of clothing as well as the quantity of published and broadcast information on the subject indicate an "obsession" with self-presentation. Regardless if it be mere conventional common sense, nearly everyone believes clothing conveys information about its wearers; thus, great care must be taken to ensure that the proper information be present. Dress is a "language" designed to impart meanings, governed by rules which allow this process to occur. Like all languages, the rules of dress vary according to the culture in which they are located. A plurality of national and local "dialects" results in a wide range of adornment styles. One can study clothing to better understand the history and composition of an individual and a population, as it is a concrete manifestation of ideas, values, categories, and understandings of a social group (McCracken, 1988, 58)

Dress communicates on the basis of its symbolic properties (McCracken, 1988, 57) In this way, it more closely resembles an extra-linguistic aesthetic code, like painting and sculpture, in its complexity and vagueness, rather than a [more] linear linguistic code (F Davis, 20) As John Berger writes, seeing comes before words, explaining our surroundings to us but never fully encompassing them (Berger, 1972, 7). When one ascribes meaning to clothing, one does so first from a position of selective perception ["meaningful" details versus irrelevant ones] and secondly from a linguistic descrimination, recognizing the categories that describe perceived details and oppositional constructions. It is generally assumed that people consciously choose and involutarily encode meanings into the garments they wear, but, regardless of intentionality, all meanings are considered a transparent reflection of/on their wearer. In addition, when one sees the clothing of others, one locates one's self in relation to them, spatially, temporally, and culturally, through categories created in and worked through language.

Meaning is created by individual items of clothing and their minute details which mutually inform the surrounding garments and the context in which they are placed, creating an "ensemble" or a "look" that defies strict categorical containment Interpretation relies on many factors the identity of the person [social position, gender, age], the occasion, the location, and the moods of both the observer and the observed (F. Davis, 17). Despite the assumed transparency of meanings to an individual observer or wearer, meaning is deliberately ambiguous in dress In this regard, it is under-coded, allowing for interpretive flexibility from context to context Clothing allows

people to be social chameleons, moving through different social spaces with a limited number of garments at their disposal, while still remaining socially acceptable and understandable [or unacceptable and confusing, if that is the goal] For example, a person who attempts to convey an appearance of elegance and sophistication can chose from a variety of different styles Their choice will be read in different ways an extremely fashion conscious group will evaluate against one standard while a less pretentious group will use a completely different set of values. The "elegance" of the outfit could be read as a sign of class aspirations or declaration, artistic talent or lack of, social conformity or individualism, forward thought or nostalgia, etc All people familiar with the cultural traditions of the dresser will be able to read the intentions of the dressed person - the attempt to appear "elegant" - but will evaluate the success of this attempt in different ways, based on a deduction of the "involuntary" signs [e g ;their real economic position revealed by cheap jewelery] Judgement can be accomplished without finding the outfit inherantly socially unacceptable, but placing the dressed person on a scale of acceptance in relation to the individual observer and their peer group The signs in clothing are ambiguous in that they have no absolute value, allowing for many different evaluations.

Despite its ambiguity, the codes used to manipulate meaning in clothing encourage repetition and restatement of ideas, not innovation. This is balanced by its combinatorial possibilities which obscure what meanings are actually in play. As clothing is limited in the number of socially significant discourses available to it, it is repetitive and conservative by nature (McCracken, 1988, 68). The meanings [social categories, aesthetic values] pre-exist their encoding into the material forms of clothing, specifying in advance what messages are communicable The absence of generative freedom enables communication to occur, limiting the possible meanings into a socially-transmissible structure (McCracken, 1988, 67). Combination of meanings embodied into garments allow for greater expressivity and ambiguity, obscuring the determinacies in the spaces between details [1] Generally, this system is designed to promote effective communication within the largest possible range of expression

The surprise, revulsion and/or humour expressed towards one who cannot communicate effectively with their dress is perhaps a form of shock felt that a person is unable to work in this flexible, accessible, and seemingly universal communication system. Those simply unable to keep

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[1] Combining formal wear with sports clothing is an example of this A tuxedo conveys an attitude of seriousness, ceremony, dignity, wealth, and leisure Running shoes indicate activity, casualness, work, comfort, and commonality When placed together, the severity of the tuxedo, and possibly the social occasion at which it worn, is mocked, though still accepted in part, resulting in a more expressive yet more confusing message

a minimal degree of combinatorial convention are [self-]designated as social outcasts. This is in contrast with those who deliberately play with combinatorial possibilities to create witty or transgressive comments. Fashionable rebels are largely respected, for their use of clothing signifies a sign of their intelligence. For example, popular entertainers and artists can dress against general conventions, displaying transgressive sexuality and "inappropriate" iconography. They are considered daring and are often revered for their personal style. While some people may not approve of the messages in their clothing [e.g. the combination of overt sexuality and symbol of traditional authority], the transgressive clothing still uses conventional, intelligible meanings. Social outcasts are largely unable to encode meaning, combining mundane items against any convention, displaying a total absence of common-sense in the combination of fabrics [e.g. "winter" weight with "summer" weight], colours, worn-out items, and unfashionable garments. The meticulous attention paid to dress by fashion rebels separates them from the slovenly character of the sartorially-retarded. [1]

The relationship between signified and signifier is unstable in clothing as it is based on abstract meanings attached to socially constructed items. Communication can be prevented altogether at times, or have entirely different significations for distinct groups (F. Davis, 18). There is no dictionary of meaning for clothing. But, at the same time, the meanings attached to material objects are not as flexible as abstract thoughts. As its messages precede their encoding in individual styles, they are constrained to that method of expression. The wearer of clothing has little combinatorial freedom if effective communication is the desired intent (McCracken, 1988, 66).

Clothing operates on a purely symbolic level, being a tangible sign of an abstract idea. While spoken and written language classifies and gives shape to objects, actions and energies, thereby rendering them socially significant, clothing is used to express concepts such as immaterial power relations, social affiliations and ideologies. The manipulation of a symbolic property attached to a stylistic feature is difficult to achieve, for a specific item or treatment is exclusive to that pre-existing idea; the idea is not arbitrarily attached to a style or item of dress. Clothing gives definition to social constructions, and attaches them onto individual bodies. In this way, power relations manifest themselves in a material way, demonstrating their scope through quantity and

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[1] I am unable to theorize why there are people who are, simply put, unable to dress "properly". Usually transgressive behaviour has some positive motivations behind it: a sense of moral superiority, a desire to be admired for bravery, the expression of creativity. Those who are extremely poor dressers do not seem to have any motivation, in fact, most seem oblivious to the reactions of those around them, a curiously anti-social attitude.

quality of expression In other words, clothing expresses the unexpressable. After it becomes the representative of a formerly intangible power, it can serve to re-shape social organizations, giving certain people access to privileges and responsibilities. [1]

Michel Foucault refered to a vague, unaccountable concept of "power" in many of his works, and is often critiqued for leaving the term undefined. The social relations expressed through dress are a visible sign of Foucault's agentless power. His thesis of productive power willingly working through the body of individuals is demonstrated in the way people use clothing to label their place in society The material form of clothing is [over-]determined by abstract meanings emerging from an unaccountable body of unwritten laws, and becomes symbolic of these rules [2] Individuals accept certain ways of dressing in accordance to the conventions of dress, including and distinguishing themselves from their fellow citizens. A place is accepted along a complicated continuum of social privileges and responsibilities, with dress acting as an important means to access a designated and/or chosen role. The inability to locate a source to the labeling of social categories strengthens the hold of convention, as it is not imposed by a defined group. [3] In addition, the great majority of people more or less unquestioningly obey the rules of dress, and reciprocally act as a sanctioning body to prevent transgression, thus ensuring the stability of the dress code as a whole. Even within transgression, there is an implicit recognition of the conventions of dress as it plays with the negation or subversion of a commonly practiced convention The appropriation of a highly symbolically-charged garment in a disrespectful context can ignite passions like few other things [e.g. religious or political iconography employed in a manner that challenges its meanings]. Rather than change the meaning of the garment, the appropriated use only re-enforces the importance and significance of the symbols, recognizing its value to the originating group. This can only occur when the meaning of a particular garment approaches a direct correlation between the form of adornment and the idea it represents, the symbol becoming its meaning

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1 An example of a transformation can be found in the introduction of uniforms in some schools in the United States This was accomplished as an attempt to eradicate the fiercely competitive fashion rivalries between the students, and to encourage them through the discipline of the uniform to take school more seriously

2 Auteur theories of dress history attempt to locate an agent to meaning but these are critiqued for this very reason, as individual designers are largely products of the aesthetic, cultural values of their time, limited by the technologies and materials available for consideration

3 Peer groups, family, occupation, material and technological limitations, economics [personal and global], cultural traditions, religious and civil legislation, climate, political affiliations and other determinants control what is available for any individual

Clothing can be rigid in this regard, being succinct and absolute in meaning. Yet it is broadly expressive as it is an creative, aesthetic form, and personal as it is attached to individual bodies. Clothing is an ideal medium for the expression of values and attitudes. It can present controversial meanings that may not otherwise be explicitly stated (McCracken, 1988, 69), tempered as it is by artistic license and the embarrassing potential for misreading and unintentional coding. Its meanings can become naturalized and unnoticed if practiced in a mass fashion, creating a social cohesion only noticed when juxtaposed with an intruding meaning system. Once again, quoting McCracken:

> "Culture can therefore trust to this instance of material culture messages that language might abuse. It can encode in clothing and material culture information it does not wish to see transformed." (McCracken, 1988, 68)

There is a limited way to describe clothing styles in language (McCracken, 1988, 65). The nuances of meaning in clothing extend beyond the enunciative abilities of language. Caroline Evans and Minna Thorton describe the application of linguistically-based "meaning generative systems" [semiotics, sociology, psychoanalysis] to the "meaning destroying system" of clothing and fashion necessitates many assumptions and restatements of cultural norms, such as fashion's traditional association with femininity (Evans and Thornton, 1991, 48). While these discourses attempt to link clothing to the body: "[t]he Body always manages to sound rather dis-embodied, the problems of language, specifically the contrast of fashion's seductive patter and the severities of contemporary analytical discourse, are ones which, perhaps, are primary when tackling the question of ascribing meaning to fashion" (Evans and Thornton, 1991, 49). When clothing nears an absolute correlation of material form and underlying idea, it can become subject to parodies that can undermine its determinacy of meaning (F. Davis, 20). [1] The universe of meaning in clothing is limited by material possibilities and available discourses. Even so, clothing extends beyond the strictness of grammars and vocabularies (McCracken, 1988, 65). Clothing avoids absolute polarities, creating multiple oppositions and allegiances in material form [e.g. outfit x = this group and/or this group, a bit of this group, but not this group]. It provides the hope of overcoming binary opposition of theoretical, political discourses in its limited recombinant possibilities (Brun, 1987, 32). But even these possibilities are pre-fabricated, thereby constraining the combinations possible. The limitation of potential meanings guarantees interpretation, novel combinations,

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[1] A parody of clothing can take the form of an appropriation by another group. For instance, the innovative styles of youth subcultures lose their potency once the "code" is "cracked" by mainstream culture, resulting in their political degradation through parody [e.g. the styles associated with rap music adopted for comedic purposes by white middle class comedians and advertisements]. At this point, a war of authenticity, a rejection of the style by the original group, or its transformation into "camp" are some of the strategies that may be adopted to revitalize symbolic properties.

though rare, inhibit communication, a situation that is against the social purpose of clothing in the first place (McCracken, 1988, 66).

Dress patterns provide an opportunity to study social order as they classify individuals as members of subsets of meaning (Rugh, 1986, 1). Clothing makes the body culturally visible, determining its shape, size, and composition as well as its social significance (Silverman, 1986, 145). Dress can reveal several orders of classification. Cultural categories differentiate individuals in age, sex, rank, marital status, occupation, and/or location by attributing definitive forms of dress [e.g. styles exclusively for men versus women, children versus adults; class differentiation]. Cultural principles, the ideas through which the categories are formed, are similarly expressed through ideals such as modesty, levels of sumptuosness, and materials. Special events in life are marked with ceremonial wear [e.g. weddings, graduations, inductions into groups]. Clothing takes on its full powers of display in this context. Social distance and proximity can be shown, creating collectives and restricting interaction between groups. Clothing may also symbolize entire historical eras, locating ideas and individuals on a time line signified through stylistic change (McCracken, 1988, 59-61). The scorn manifested towards people who are "out of style" - i.e. historically and unfashionably anachronistic -is a reaction to their assumed identification with an ideology of the past that is no longer deemed appropriate.

Despite the desirability of assigning a particular social place and value to individuals, contradictions appear in dress codes and their meanings. Incompatible or hypocritical ideas can emerge in the combination of signs. For instance, the dismissal of sumptuousness in dress is often meant to be a rejection of the concerns of appearance as frivolity, but this can only be accomplished through the self-conscious adoption of another style of clothing, therby reinforcing the importance of image-making A person's "avant-gardness" can be conveyed through appropriations of antique fashions, while claims to individualism outside the conformity of mainstream art and politics may be declared by a mass of identically dressed "rebels".

These categories are all pre-existent to their encoding in clothing, reinforcing rather than creating social divisions. Clothing might assist subsequent differentiation, but never directly causes it. To enable all these different principles to operate at the same time and to permit transition from one category to another, clothing is always under-coded. The exception to this rule is the uniform, which has as its goal to definitively place individuals under a common order (F. Davis, 19). The concept of the uniform is simply an exaggeration of the principles in operation in all

clothing. By examining the absolute case of the uniform, an understanding of the way clothing gives and reflects order in the social world can be achieved

The uniform

The uniform is a significant concept as it marks a complete union between individual appearance and social discipline (Roche, 1989, 212) It allows for the development of complex systems and social transformation on a large scale by identifying the power, authority, and responsibility of groups, displacing the traditional necessity of personal knowledge of individuals to judge their character. Political organization as we know it today is not possible without the invention of uniforms, as they indicate the coercive and authoritative limbs of government the military and the police. Similarly, war on a large scale was made possible through the differentiation of troupes by colour and cut of garment (Langner, 1965, 126) These special forces are separated from the mass by appearance, obtaining an immediate reaction because of the symbolic properties of their clothing (Langner, 1965, 125)

The concept of the military uniform dates back to the sixteenth century, and then it was only adopted when economic conditions allowed for this form of sumptuous, vicarious display (Boucher, 1987, 248). Until the reign of the French king Louis XIV, military costume mostly consisted of civilian dress with a few practical additions for the necessities of war making Once widely adopted in the form the western world now knows, the military uniform soon lost any links to practical need and became an object of display above all The officer's uniform rose to the highest forms of courtly elegance soon after it was established (Roche, 1989, 212) Uniforms became signs of wasteful expenditure in their impracticality, discomfort and glamour, symbolizing manliness while disabling its wearer physically (Bell, 1976, 148) More appropriate to the nineteenth century fancy dress ball or concert than for battlefield, these uniforms required meticuous attention to self-presentation in the name of discipline Formerly functional details became increasingly ornamented, and comfort considerations were supplanted by a tightness that would emphasize a look of strength rather than enable it to be shown

The conspicuousness of these stylish uniforms soon made them impractical on the battlefield once efficient rifles were developed But uniform reform is always difficult to implement as the garments possess a "spiritual" value apart from practical considerations (Bell, 1976, 150). To overcome resistance, highly decorated uniforms were retained for formal occasions, and fighting uniforms serve more practical purposes on the field (Bell, 1976, 151)

Military dress uniforms have the status of fashion, with stylistic details being appropriated into civilian wear [e.g the codpiece, épaulettes, frogs, braid, medals and buttons as ornaments, millenary style] (Boucher, 1987, 248) The military uniform is more symbolic of the relationship between the state, the army, and fashion rather than a display of a warrior spirit, practicality, and permanence (Roche, 1989, 215).

Rank

The relation of state and force is congealed in the uniform, with the representatives of the state and its laws "clothed with authority". The uniform supports many symbolic functions in its design (Langner, 1965, 124). It first and foremost transforms the authority of government into corporeal power. Additionally, it ranks people within the organization, supplementing individual position with badges and insignia. It sets up relationships of superiority, stratifying members of the organization into defined ranks. The higher ranked individuals will show their superiority through greater emphasis on the ceremonial aspects of the uniform (König, 124-25). This ornamental function serves the double purpose of enhancing personal status, and distinguishing its wearer from the rest of the uniformed group But individualization is not the primary function of uniforms. They are designed to achieve conformity within the ranks, not distinction. Elite decoration gives hierarchy a visible form, but everyone is reintegrated into the larger collective by the overriding common elements of the uniform (Joseph, 1986, 77). Respect [or contempt, depending on the political stripe of the viewer] is given to the uniform itself, to the symbolic values it represents, not to the person wearing it (Roche, 1989, 213). An example of the physical and psychological effects of rank distinction is found in the different treatment received by a captured general versus a captured soldier of lower rank (Silverman, 1986, 131). Though the captors are not under the authority of a high ranking enemy prisoner, they will most likely grant him privileges and respect.

Community

The uniform operates as a dramaturgical device, providing a symbolic medium for group interaction and boundaries (Joseph, 1986, 71). Not only does it identify who is included in the collective, but ensures institutional goals and stability. It literally embodies the attributes and values of the group, covering the bodies of individuals with the symbols of the institution. The uniform has an existence independent of the wearer, with all interaction mediated by its cloth. It serves to remind the wearer and all those s/he encounters of the proper code of behaviour (Joseph,

1986, 66). The interpretation of this code is dependent on the context in which the uniform is placed [e.g. agent of repression versus upholder of peace].

As a group emblem, the uniform allows members of a community to recognize one another and be recognized by others, changing and stabilizing their social position (Konig, 95). It prevents its wearers from suddenly changing allegiances or refusing to do their duties (Bell, 1976, 148).[1] Uniforms provide legitimacy to an organization, validating it through a declaration of mass membership (Joseph, 1986, 73). They build unity through the creation of an "esprit de corps" (Langner, 1965, 126).[2] Ironically, the monopolization of a specific set of signs as the primary, if not exclusive means to indicate membership provides the conditions for imposture (Joseph, 1986, 67).

Segregation of members from civilian society and their re-integration into a specialized collective is achieved in a visible manner (Joseph, 1986, 76). Individual categorical differences between the members are lessened, if not erased. Ideally, civilian social class distinctions are eliminated, creating a form of democracy within the hierarchy (Joseph, 1986, 79). Regional difference are effaced in the melting-pot effect of the uniform, replacing other distinctive forms of adornment (Roche, 1989, 227). The uniform can bestow prestige onto the individual, uniting strangers formerly of various status levels into a community that will rank on its own principles (Roche, 1989, 223).[3]

Proof of the erasure of individual difference inspired by uniforms is found in the recurring debate over the acceptability of individuals to show personal allegiances while part of a uniformed collective. For example, the Sikh tradition of wearing turbans has caused much debate in the context of Western uniformity. In 1959, a uniformed British transport worker wished to retain his symbolic headwear despite the prohibitions of the uniform code, resulting in a large public debate. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other police forces have faced similar controversies. In these cases, the rights of the group leaders to impose uniforms and the rights of the individual

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1 Soldiers in battle cannot suddenly decide to stop fighting or to change sides, for they will be attacked by the enemy because they wear the signs of opposition.

2 The phrase "esprit de corps" is interesting. Translated literally, it means "spirit of the body" as well as "spirit of the troupes". The role of the uniform in creating a social cohesion is apparent in this expression.

3 This, of course, is not always the case. Racial, gender, and class privileges and prejudices are carried over from the civilian world. But this is in spite of the homogeneity the uniform attempts to inspire, reflecting social categories imported to specialized collectives rather than the ideology of the group itself.

members of the group to adopt the uniform of his religious and national group come into conflict (Cohn, 1989, 303).

Uniforms attempt to bestow a master status onto individuals, creating a look of immutability to change outside of fashion (Flugel, 1950, 33). They are empowering in this way; attempts to undermine the unity of meaning through the adoption of a symbolic form of adornment of another belief system thereby become a threat to the integrity of the uniform. Religious groups use uniforms to suggest unity across time and space, adopting a conspicuously antique look to symbolize what they believe to be the eternal nature of their beliefs [e.g. Amish, Hutterites, Quakers, and other fundamentalist groups from the East and West] (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 17) Additionally, religious organization, like the military, is dependant on garments to distinguish the "flock" from the officials, joining the select few together in uniform (Slater, 1985, 130). Nationalism and religious belief must be shown to transcend history and fashion to achieve a legitimate status. Uniforms enable this necessity. The uniform provides a way to advertise one's belief system through the display function of clothing (Bell, 1976, 101). The common consciousness of those sharing a belief system and their unity of purpose is symbolized through dress (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 18) It also serves as a protection to the potentially disrupting influences of non-believers. A 1962 quote from Solomon Poll, a Hasidic Jew, reveals the purpose of his group's distinctive form of dress:

> "With my appearance I cannot attend a theatre or movie or any other place where a religious Jew is not supposed to go Thus my beard and my sidelocks and my Hasidic clothing serve as a guard and a shield from sin and obscenity" (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 19)

Discipline and authority

As indicated in the previous example, uniforms also serve to create discipline in their wearers. They are a symbol of obedience and intent, educating the body in posture and habits (Roche, 1989, 218-19). Like a theatre costume, they entirely designate what role is to be played. The uniform displays the duties of its wearer to perform their assigned role. Observers of uniformed people will require them to perform their functions. The public acts as external censors to enforce the organization's codes of behaviour (Joseph, 1986, 65). The individual's desires and needs are erased by their uniform, effectively becoming agents trapped inside the rules of the institution it represents (Brun, 1987, 38) A loss of individual critical ability is expected, with all responsibility transferred to the institution (Brun, 1987, 39-40). When one dons the uniform of a particular group, one is expected to give up all claims to free action and thought, to act only under

the limitations of the group's rules (Langner, 1965, 127). This loss of individual freedom is offset by several benefits.

A two-tiered certification of legitimacy is built into the uniform. The wearer is given a special status in the eyes of the general public, legitimized as a representative of an order. Second, the individual is declared as trustworthy, honoured by the institution through the conferral of their symbols (Joseph, 1986, 68). The internal hierarchy of the organization is designed to make entrance and subsequent promotions an honour to be sought, symbolized first through the uniform and enhanced through special insignia to re-individualize people on the basis of personal merit (Joseph, 1986, 65).

The military uniform becomes a trophy to be worn, not unlike the ceremonial display of prey by hunters [e.g. wearing carcasses] (Flugel, 1950, 29). The uniform can be used for the purposes of intimidation, terrorizing the opponent through display [posture, medals, symbols of the "warrior"] (Langner, 1965, 125 and Flugel, 1950, 30). A uniformed individual can appear larger in stature through the use of garments that will promote the look of a stronger, sturdier body, increasing its visibility (Flugel, 1950, 34). The choice of materials [strong, durable fabrics, hard metals and leathers] and an emphasis on verticality, in addition to bulky protective armour and weaponry, give the body an appearance of structural integrity it might otherwise lack. At the same time, the uniform suppresses the individuality of the body, depersonalizing it into a regimented conformity (Joseph, 1986, 68). Invisibility ensures a degree of protection, providing safety in numbers (Joseph, 1986, 690).

The distinctive status of the uniform occasionally creates problems for its wearers. The ideology it comes to represent may be rejected by another social collective. Those who continue to wear the uniform are endangered by their affiliations to the group. Social control groups have often become the targets of violence when their actions are interpreted as overly-repressive. The visibility of the uniform, formerly a benefit, now targets its wearers. During the late 1960's in the United States, a loss of respect for the police was combatted by removing some officers from uniform to reduce the militaristic connotations, thus eliminating a sign to which hostility was directed (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 16).

As well, a competing group can use the symbols of the uniform to undermine the authority conferred on it (Joseph, 1986, 87). [1] The uniform can be a sign of over-conformity, its wearer criticized under a competing ideology of individualism (Joseph, 1986, 94). It can also be a symbol of lack of authority and status, such as the uniforms worn by low paid service workers [janitors, fast-food outlets employees, security guards].

The lay-uniform

> "Soldiers with medals, desk warriors in suits, slaves to fashion in tee shirts. Inside every uniform there is a human being hoping to stay hidden "
> (in Bond, 1986)

The uniform enjoys a special status. Not all clothing is considered a uniform. Most people limit the concept to the dictionary definition: "The official or distinctive clothes worn by the members of a particular group, such as policemen or soldiers, especially when on duty" (Webster's Dictionary). But the same functions of the uniform apply to all forms of clothing in varying degrees Uniforms display, mask, authorise, protect, enhance, erase, separate and unify. The section of this paper concerning sumptuary laws, which deals primarily with civilian dress, describes the importance of clothing in creating unity and distinctiveness within and between groups, a social use of clothing most evident in the traditional concept of the uniform. It is very easy to forget the degree to which all clothing is controlled by social convention. Andrea Rugh describes the constraint to individualism:

> "Normally, although a person is not compelled to wear a particular fashion, choice is so circumscribed by normative prescriptions, sanctioned inducements, conventions, and socially cherished values that for any individual there may, in fact, be little latitude in what clothing he or she finally adopts " (Rugh, 1986, 2)

In the pages of the fashion magazine, individual creativity - the designer's as well as the wearer's - is foregrounded. Fashion is associated with leisure and enjoyment, removing it from ideas of institutional constraints and the work ethic implied in a genuine uniform. Despite this linguistic distinction, civilian dress forms are equally prone to regimentation. Contradictions to the "auteur" ethic are found on the same pages; fashion in popular media is always conveyed in terms

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[1] Army garments have been appropriated by several subcultural groups Certain militant groups borrow its symbolism to express a similar solidarity and intent to action, while others wear elements of the uniform to parody it, making anti-military statements through the "inappropriate" recontextualization of military garments It makes one wonder why the military continues to operate army surplus outlets as the availability of such goods degrades the value of the uniform to the status of fashion

of life style information, a way of being and an attitude towards the social world (Wilson, 1985, 157). The "professional" look, the sporting life, the "ingenue", the postures of leisure, sexual attraction, and respectability are portrayed in picture and defined in text. "This season's looks" may be a stylistic deviation to the norm of the last batch of fashions, but a new code is being constructed just as the old one is shelved. It is very difficult to escape the uniform, we are only able to change which uniform we may chose to wear, with all of us sporting our allegiances and beliefs for the world to see.

Unity

As previously stated, dress as a medium of communication is a conservative form, repeating previously existing messages displaced onto items of clothing. Garments that most closely approach the ideal of the uniform - any form of prescribed dress or formal wear - increase the redundancy of information to firmly place individuals within the symbolic system of meaning. But even the most casual of clothing restates cultural norms, beliefs, standards and styles (Back, 1985, 7). Class, rank, and professional allegiances were the categories most emphatically displayed through the adoption of a uniform style in the industrial era, but the post-industrial emphasis on consumption as opposed to production has increased the visibility of political and leisure interests in dress (Wilson, 1990, 33). [1] An expansion in the number of visible subcultural groups indicates a rejection of the mainstream symbols of validation. The spurned symbols are usually ones that would not be accessible to economically or culturally alienated groups, such as sumptuous forms of dress. The impetus to remain part of a collectivity is shown in the formation of alternative, often exaggerated dress styles. These groups, marked by their own style of uniform, attempt to access new, different opportunities for rewards based on distinctive consumption patterns (König, 6). While some groups would claim to be breaking with uniformity [e.g political dissidents· some marxists, feminists, student activists], they are merely exchanging conventional dress for a more visible, self-consciously chosen uniform that serves to embody their political opposition.

Regimented dress proves to be too useful to abandon its principles. Uniforms permit recognition, instantaneously associating an ideology with a body. The legitimating powers and the

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[1] Unity serves as a mask of ideological contradictions. Michael Harrington points out that the mass availability of quality clothing and the pressure to be well dressed has made poverty in the United States invisible to a significant degree. Harrington goes so far as to suggest that the affluent "handed out" these costumes so that the poor won't offend the rest of society, making it easier to be well-dressed than fed, housed, or kept healthy (Harrington, 1965, 163-164).

security derived from visibly associating oneself with a collective lends to their appeal (König, 64). Imitation of dress gives individuals the security of not being alone in action or thought, conferring the status of representative of a movement rather than an eccentric or a criminal (Simmel, 1989, 167). Dress indicates what is important to the individual and pride in their group, and conceals what should not be revealed, such as contradictions between the ideals embodied into the clothing and the lived experience of their wearer (Rugh, 1986, 5).[1] The group's values are universalized into a timeless representation in the concrete form of clothing. Individual imitation of the dress of others valorizes personal differentiation from other groups, symbolically linking people together in a show of solidarity. (Simmel, 1989, 168). This is in contrast to imitation used to achieve acceptance into a higher social strata: "Imitation is not the simple pursuit of prestige nor the work of some generalized force; it is a culturally purposeful activity motivated by an appreciation of the symbolic liabilities of one style of dress and the symbolic advantages of another" (McCracken, 1985, 48). Most of the time uniforms of this type are adopted consciously, allowing individuals to control their social categorization to a significant degree. People can write over inherited social categories by selecting a sub-cultural style that will override less controllable labels such as economic status.

Distinctive styles can also retrospectively come to symbolize political-economic movements. Occasionally these fashions are perceived as more uniform than they were at the time of their initial wearing. For example, the style of 1920's "flappers" has become symbolic for a hedonist proto-feminism, reduced to a few stereotypical garments rather than a full, representative range.[2] Similarly, the upper class styles of the Victorian era have been constructed into a polemic of extreme prudishness versus hypocritical erotism, instead of being viewed as a product of a variable morality scale representing a "respectable sexual ideology", rational for its time (Steele, 1985, 85-87). Retrospective labelling or constructing unified systems of meaning onto essentialized forms of dress is the mirror image of exteriorizing our own personalized meaning systems, reflecting the current ideology of individualism onto people of the past. Humans seem to

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1 An interesting discrepancy between means and political ideology can be masked by dress Marxist-socialist intellectuals possessing middle-class incomes [at the minimum] may chose to hide their wealth and take on the clothing of the working class, a practice that masks their privilege which allowed them to pursue the education that permitted them to form their ideological beliefs in the first place

2 Historical picture books, period films, and antique fashion shows rely on these stereotypical depictions of fashion and its wearers Only the styles of the urban, upper-middle class are deemed notable, representing virtually all of western womanhood as table-top Charleston dancing party-goers dripping in pearls, fringe and feather boas, free to indulge in vices previously reserved for men [smoking, drinking, sex] The clothing of working class women, older women, and career women is largely neglected in favour of the "society-page" girl

seek uniformity to shape a potentially chaotic social world, visibly labelling meanings of others and of ourselves onto the body.

Differentiation through imitation

In Western society, clothing is very much connected to individualism and self-expression The style of garment is regulated by fashion, a dynamic process that works on cycles of stylistic obsolescence. Attached to fashionable change is the idea of personal change, both in terms of a developing aesthetic taste and socio-political view A fashionable "look" thereby comes to represent a whole body of popular culture, including everything from preferences in music to racial, ethnic, and gender sympathies to political beliefs. Subcultural styles themselves move in and out of mainstream fashion (Kaiser, 1990, 521), with elements of design appropriated from the current "cause-célèbre" into the elites' definition of politically sympathetic glamour A careful balance between personal differentiation and inclusion into larger social values is negotiated at the individual level. In economic terms, individualism, as opposed to mass fashion, is based on the rarity of goods; highest fashion is comprised of the newest, rarest items, while the commonplace is considered at best fashionless as it conveys no personal or socially distinctive meanings, at worst shamefully out-of-style displaying meanings no longer in favour (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 9).

Fashion is not an absolute value, as it does not polarize people into a simple binary of inclusion or exclusion There is a long scale of attitudes towards fashion and degrees of conformity, ranging from near disconcern with prevailing styles to those who see fashion as a means to social advancement (Konig, 62) The attitude one takes towards fashion will always be a conscious choice [though tempered by ones' upbringing and social context], based on a personal assessment of the value of visibility in dress The desirability of conspicuousness is the important element in deciding how one should conform. Clothing is read as tangible evidence of personality, achievements and discrimination. Distinctively fashionable clothing can make a person conspicuous and individualized, but distinction only works in a positive way if it conforms with principles accepted by the community as a whole, thereby re-integrating the highly fashionable into a system of shared meanings (Konig, 112) This is the case of the trendsetter, a person who wishes to lead a taste group, as opposed to an oppositionally distinctive person, who simply wishes to stand alone. People who do not wish to attract attention will dress in a mainstream style They only achieve this self-conscious self-effacement through a recognition of what constitutes high fashion versus an equally visible unfashionability. These people attempt to wear a uniform of

invisible distinction. A person desiring greater social visibility is equally if not more concerned with conformity, devoting much attention and study to trends set by those even more fashionable than themselves [e.g. high fashion designers or "in vogue" subcultural groups]. A fashionably dressed person wears the uniform of visible distinction.

Social meanings in clothing are created through oppositional contrast, reflecting the drive towards social distinction. Elements of design - colour, cut and material - are combined into garments which correspond to distinctions in social categories [e.g., white collar/blue collar, colour analysis "seasons", casual/formal, masculine/feminine] (Sahlins, 1976, 180). Utility does not play a large role in the selection of what elements are attached to the categories. Appropriate dress is defined in terms of "respectability" of appearance, not the protective or practical qualities of clothing (Veblen, 1953, 119). There is no practical reason why manual workers are limited to plain, plaid, and checked patterned shirts in one cut and a limited range of fabrics, nor why business wear takes the form that it does. For the most part, the categories are respected on the basis of social convention, resulting in a uniformity of dress styles for a defined context that distinguish the participants from non-participants.

Conformity to one's social situation is enforced through a range of social sanctions. Imitation and distinction are flip sides of the same coin, each group preventing its own imitation by groups it does not want to imitate itself. Imitation by outsiders is discouraged through the strangeness of alternative styles of dress due to contextual distance, at times leading to highly exaggerated styles to maintain the gap [e.g. the volume of upper class clothing; the extravagance of subcultural styles such as punk rockers]. Unfamiliarity with a fashion will discourage experimentation as the embarrassment of miscoding is a constant threat. Deliberate creation of objects that will not be understood is a way of ensuring group solidarity and recognition. "Their function is first to be distinctive signs, to be objects which will distinguish those who distinguish them. Others will not even see them" (Baudrillard, 1981, 48). Occasionally economic and material barriers prevent imitation, when items of adornment are so scarce that it takes a specialized knowledge to acquire them. The uniformity of social groups becomes a deliberately exclusive practice. Sumptuary laws are the most extreme way of enforcing social inclusion and exclusion, legislating the markers of social conventions onto the bodies of classified individuals (Konig, 119). In severe conditions, one is given little latitude in the implementation of individual style. During a time of conflict, it is inappropriate to wear the signs of enemy. A tragic example of the drawbacks of oppositional dressing is found in the use of colours to indicate membership in street gangs. Innocent people have been attacked because they wandered into a gang territory wearing

the colour of an enemy gang, becoming victims of a symbolic use of clothing. Similarly, European colonists in America, Asia and Africa were discouraged, occasionally by legal sanction, from adopting native costume even though their dress was ridiculously ill-suited for the conditions in which they lived. Their layered, tailored dress was symbolic of their cultural and moral "superiority" over the inhabitants of these lands, to show sartorial sympathy towards more practical native styles of dress might have indicated a question of the colonists right to rule. Antagonistic social groups are limited to their uniforms, for any deviation may suggest a political comprise (Rugh, 1986, 4).

Uniform dress represents social groups and contexts. Individuals are uniformed on the basis of social categories and spaces. The distinctions are based on previously constructed categories, reinforcing and naturalizing them. The broadest division is that of gender, where biological sexes are assigned different styles (Sahlins, 1976, 181) Traditionally in the West since the time of mass industrialism, men's clothing has been much more defined in terms of occupational status [i.e. production] while women's clothing reflected the ability to consume (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 14). This code in dress is gradually moving from a simple binary opposition of masculine/feminine to a wider range of gender positions in the modern western world, including several homosexual and androgynous styles that are largely divorced from economic position (Sahlins, 1976, 184). The recurrent craze for so-called men's wear looks in women's fashion and the shapeless styles of sportswear are examples of this branching out

Age represents another significant division in dress styles. The importance and attitude of particular age groups is shown through the styles accorded to them Different rules apply to people of different ages, assigning subjective personality traits onto entire age groups Young people are supposed be "rebellious" and more erotic in dress; older people are expected to be out-of-style and plainly attired. The rebellion of youth extends solely to the rejection of imposed dress codes; when left to their own devices, the great majority of modern western teens will buy exactly the same clothing, right down to the brand name, reaserting the rule of the uniform despite vociferous claims to individuality (Slater, 1985, 134). Clothing is designed and marketed in accordance to stereotypical depictions of life style attitudes. Age categories and the values attached to them are historically and geographically variable. An analysis of clothing styles can help reveal the attitudes and formation of these groups. The definition and role of children has been studied in this manner Small children as depicted in European portraiture of the eighteenth century appear as tiny grown-ups in miniaturized versions of adult clothing This can be contrasted to the frail, ornate, incomplete dolls of the Victorian era where children had a completely separate wardrobe (Konig,

97). In the modern day, age groupings in clothing have become increasingly fragmented in the first two decades of life. "Designer categories" currently include differentiation between infants, toddlers, preschoolers, schoolchildren, preteens, subteens, and teens (Sahlins, 1976, 184). This situation is to the obvious benefit of the clothing manufacturers, as it encourages the purchase of new clothing when children chronologically mature even if they haven't grown out of their old clothing.

Outside of age and sex differentiations, distinctions are primarily based on purely social categories that have no links to the biological status of the body. Selection of dress is largely context based. At the most basic level, time of day, week and year is governed by conventional forms of dress that may have little to do with climatic conditions (Sahlins, 1976, 182). For instance, it is more acceptable to wear less clothing during the evening [e.g. a strapless party dress] than it is during the daytime, even though temperatures are cooler at night. People often must be ill-clad to appear well dressed, ignoring practical concerns for the sake of reputation (Veblen, 1953, 119) Normally, people intentionally dress to suit the social environment (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 9), but there is no better way to ensure visibility than to dress against expectations [1] Marshall Sahlins has dichotomized the process of selecting a garment into two categories - ceremonial dress versus workmanlike dress. The choice of one style over the other is made depending on one's role at an event. The degree to which clothing conforms to the necessities of activity, what Sahlin's calls workmanlike clothing, is contrasted to a more ornamental and symbolic way of dressing. The split is based on the status of the individual within an institutional context, showing how hierarchy is displayed through style (Sahlins, 1976, 186) Thorstein Veblen notes that elegance is defined by the absence of the signs of manual labour [e.g. wear marks, soil], as neatest is a sign of leisure (Veblen, 1953, 120).

Employment is a great determinant of dress Specialized forms of dress are used to announce occupation and position. The labelling function of clothing can be exploited to the extreme in groups which sport what amounts to a formal uniform [health care professionals, monarchs and aristocrats, trade unions of old, authorities] (König, 9). Some professions, such as the clergy, come to be synonymous with "the cloth" that they wear (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967,

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[1] Despite the risks involved, inappropriate dress can be used to make a powerful statement of opposition, especially in a context where clothing is highly symbolically charged Weddings make extensive use of symbolic garments, so it is a context ripe for restrictions and violations [e g wearing white to "compete" with the bride, red and black used to oppose the marriage, informality or excessive display of sexuality to trivialize the solemnity of the ceremony]

370). Once in uniform, their value as an individual is virtually erased, embodying their profession and the expected group ideology.

Even as important as employment is in determining the shape of clothing today, the degree to which it demands particular forms of dress is significantly less prescribed that it was at other times and places. By the end of the fourteenth century in England, there were forty-eight different official costumes, or liveries as they are called in this professional context, for each type of master craftsman and trader. Their purpose was, in the words of a 1347 mercer union act, "for cherishing the unity and good love among them and for the common profit of the mistery", creating solidarity among those in a competitive job market (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 371) Liveries served to advertise the skills of the worker. Hiring fairs were organized to unite employers with employees. As most of the workers were illiterate, their dress served as means of introduction at these occasions (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 376) Paid workers are made to wear clothing as identification to protect their employers as well as advertise the workers' abilities The visibility of the uniform allows for surveillance of the individual, ensuring that they fulfil the promises of their garb. For this reason, fourteenth century builders who were employed by the church and state were made to wear liveries so that they could be identified, as they were prone to leaving jobs unfinished in search of higher paying opportunities (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 378)

Liveries were worn to fraternal meetings and served to indicate rank within the guild as well as the general field. By the fifteenth century, the wealthiest elite members of some companies were the only ones entitled to full garb, including hood and gown (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 371). But the designation of employment hierarchy can easily turn to a method of outright social control, as in the case of eighteenth century black servants who were compelled to wear ceremonial silver collars engraved with their employers name and address, a practice denoting a servitude linked more to slavery than to the employment of free men (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 377) Servitude can be linked to sumptuousity, with masters adorning dependant workers in the goal of improving their own status (Bell, 1976, 139). Quoting Quentin Bell, occupational dress can indicate the status of the employer as well as the employed:

> "At a very early moment in history people of wealth found that their own backs were not broad enough to bear the weight of all the sumptuous dress that they would like to display The priest or the chieftain, not content with dressing finely himself, employed servants, or persons in servile positions, to dress for him, these vicarious consumers [wives, eunuchs, retainers, etc] were at first employed in productive or military tasks But here too the law of conspicuous waste came into effect It is patently more futile to put a servant into a fine dress and bid him to do nothing than it is to have him usefully employed " (Bell, 1976, 140)

Fashion and uniformity

In the case of outright hierarchical environments like the work place, uniformity is an obvious and expected trait to discover Similarly, the styles of other cultures and other times appear highly regimented, codified by precise legislation mirroring strict social divisions. The competition between ranks, power groups, social classes and sexes created and drives the fashion system in a never-ending game of one-upmanship (Flugel, 1950, 138).

In the contemporary North American context, the role of class as a visible social division appears to be of lesser importance than European monarchical models and other authoritarian systems Since the industrial revolution, fashion has moved away from announcing social position in terms of rank and wealth to a display of identity, or, equally, to mask individuality with anonymous urban mass conformity (Wilson, 1985, 155-56). Postmodernism as heralded in popular culture, fashion magazines in particular, re-enforces the ideal of personal taste as regulator of individual dress The freedom to choose promised by the tenets of democracy and liberalism is advertised by the clothing manufacturers and distributors, encouraging all to revel in the pleasure of surface appearances while somehow expressing the true inner self at the same time. A seemingly unlimited choice of goods is offered, allowing for a mix-and-match style of historical and cultural traditions (Kaiser, 1990, 523).

More evidence of the breakdown of the competitive drive between groups can be found in the gradual disintegration of the fashion system as we have known it for centuries. Leaders [aristocracy, high society, fashion designers] are becoming followers. Major design houses branch out and down into less elite and less distinctive designs, while "best dressed lists" and high society fashions take on the glow of high camp from a time long past. The mass fashion of democratically formed subcultures, supplemented by imports from around the "global village", now circulate and inspire those in charge of production. *Benetton* et al move closer to a generic ideal where rich and poor, man and woman, adult and child, all cultures, races, and religions will select their dress based on personal colour preferences, not in uniforms imposed from on high. Quoting Holly Brubach

> "[Most *Gap* clothes] look as if they had always existed, as if no designer had ever messed with them beyond adding a band of contrasting corduroy to line the cuff or deciding to turn out a classic cotton turtleneck in burnt orange " (Brubach, 1992, 80)

Undoubtedly, the fashion system is undergoing a change. After a century of rule, the elite designers have become accountable for their manipulations of the human body. But conformity is still enforce by social pressure, and fashions do change according to a visible scheme. As well, the seeming universality of dress in terms of status division could simply be a case of misinterpreting the "clues". Fashion can contribute to and serve to mask social inertia, promising change when there is none. The illusion of democracy and social equality is fostered by uniformity acting as a shield to descrimination and status differences (Baudrillard, 1981, 50-51). Though contemporary fashion claims to distinguish on the basis of individual creativity and merit, identifiable collectives are created through distinctive consumption patterns, thus enabling power to act on group members in different ways. The irony of the fashion system is found in its promotion of individuality, separating people on the basis of personal idiosyncrasies and social categories, by means of squeezing everyone into a limited number of molds (Abramov, 1985, 212). The etiquette book is unwritten, but "regimental" uniforms are adopted and enforced by collectives on a voluntary basis.

A second irony compounds fashion's uniformed individuality. As clothing becomes less formalized as an overt system of control, the risk of "misreading" its messages has increased. Stylistic changes attached to personal social competition have replaced the fashion wars between oppositional groups. It is no longer a case of pure economic disparity, with sumptuousness changing in relation to class. Groups consisting of all social levels battle on an aesthetic front. The case of youth subcultures provides an example. Headbangers tend to wear a particular cut of jeans, often ripped or patched, denim or leather jackets with elaborate drawings on the back, and t shirts and long hair, deliberately appearing "rough around the edges". Preppies tend to wear cotton turtlenecks, knits, printed shirts and blouses, straightcut denim and cotton pants in all shades, and have a very tidy appearance. These two groups do not generally socialize together and often deprecate the other. There is little if any economic or political conflict between the groups, only differences being in taste and attitudes. There is no power to be won or lost in this stylistic battle, only opposition for opposition's sake.

Even if these difference do exist, they are increasingly erased. As all slowly become equalized at a categorical level, fashion as a whole becomes increasingly regimented, with everyone wearing the same types of clothing (Finkelstein, 1991, 127). The ambiguity of relying on personally chosen affiliations and tastes confounds clothing's communicative potential [e.g. a retro-style or out-of-style; member of a group or a "wannabe"/"poseur"] (Kaiser, 1990, 527),

requiring sophisticated interpretation skills to distinguish the intentions of dress styles. [1] The overabundance of choice may be indicated in a return to "basic" styles, colours and fabrics, largely free from superfluous adornment (Kaiser, 1990, 525). [2] Jeans, denim and leather bomber jackets, trenchcoats, long-sleeve mock turtle-necks, short sleeve t-shirts, tank tops, "little black" dresses, blazers and a few other modern "classics" are sold at the local no-name bargain store and the designer boutique. At the same time, the widespread use of textually based systems of meanings on clothing - the omnipresent printed t-shirt - has increased, literally labelling people. Though the style of clothing is identical, individuals stamp themselves as property of a political ideal [e.g. images of civil rights leaders, quotations], media products [e.g.: concert, celebrity t-shirts], times and places [e.g. commemorative t-shirts], or design houses, though none could lay claim to "designing" a t-shirt. Though it lacks a nameable catalyst, the prevailing fashion of the day is just as much a uniform as hierarchical styles. The legions of the jean-ed and t-shirt-ed may make claims to individuality, comfort, environmental friendliness, and freedom, but these qualities possess the same pretensions as the courtly nobility who attempted to show how special and high-minded they were during their reign over fashion.

The confidence and security gained through keeping up with prevailing styles is seemingly universal (Bubolz, Eicher and Roach, 1979, 9). Fashion provides a means for the expression of social identity. The body is trained, reshaped and redressed into an expression of the social body (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 85), regardless of the mythic ideals of personal expression and freedom attached to the clothing of a particular time. Clothing may be losing its ability to individuate on the level of style as designer-rule evaporates, but distinction in terms of moral values and health concerns replace social rivalries (Brubach, 1992, 80). Whoever is the cleanest, the most natural, environmentally friendly and politically correct is the best dresser.

Antifashion

Today's claims of distinction often take the form of "antifashion", a position that rejects the frivolity of fashion. Antifashion defines a fixed code of dress, limited to a group of people in a geographical space. An antifashionable pose attempts to cultivate an everlasting image, one that is beyond the modish quick changes of fashion. Antifashion attempts to symbolize continuity across

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1 An irony of celebrity adulation is found in fashion. Artists known for their distinctive dress style are copied by their legion of fans, thus rendering the artist a part of the crowd, and necessitating constant transformation.

2 The vestiges of class-based difference remains at the level of material. Natural fibers [100% cotton] snobbery is rampant, with all sort of claims made to justify the purchase of the more expensive materials. But as quality of synthetics improves, this may not last for long.

time, freezing cultural ideals and identity into the material form of the garment. Ceremonial wear, such as the robes of the clergy, is antifashionable, connecting individuals in history through their common uniform (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 13) This is in contrast to fashion, which involves the speedy diffusion of style over a wide space and many different kinds of people Fashion is an advertisement for an ideology of social mobility, invoking notions of progress and change (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 12 and 19)

Despite its attempt to appear timeless, antifashion only appears not to change The ideals embodied in garments provide the continuity, using the notion of authenticity to write over any changes to the style. For example, technological innovations in garment preparation have greatly changed tradition costumes, but these alterations go unrecognized as they do not fit in with the myths attached to an "eternal" costume (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 14) Modern monarchical ceremonial costume provides an illustration of a changeable antifashion, it is susceptible to fashion but giving the impression that it isn't. The Queen of England's ceremonial gowns link her to her royal predecessors, but it is unlikely that Elizabeth I or Victoria would approve of the costume for themselves. Similarly, folk costumes appear to be paralysed in time, though many changes occur Antifashionable folk costumes usually were fashionable at one time, but were transformed into the official ceremonial wear of a populace, granted or imposed by their rulers Another example is found in the costume of spanish bullfighters, who changed fashions regularly until the late eighteenth century; after that time, the style of wardrobe was suddenly frozen into an antifashionable uniform (Konig, 89)

In its modern western usage, antifashion is a deliberately chosen pose The pretensions of proponents of antifashion are revealed when the concept of fashion is properly defined outside of the particular forms and meanings of clothing associated with fashion by the media and design houses. Fashion is motivated in part by economic necessity The planned obsolescence of style by the designers and by the distinctive fashion elite ensures the continued prosperity of the garment industry (Silverman, 1986, 133). Psychological discomfort, the seemingly natural fear of negative distinction, is the means to promote change Under this system, people are encouraged to acquire more and more possesions, never wearing the same garment twice to a public occasion (Ash and Wright, 1988, 59) Traditionally, fashion was relegated to the upper echelons of European society as its members were the only ones with suffient leisure time and funds to engage in engage in its practices. Political and economic reform at the end of seventeenth century gradually increased the disposable income of many people and reduced discrepancy between classes, allowing fashion to flourish at increasingly lower levels of society Fashion thereby became linked to social

ascendency and bourgeois tastes during this time. But, as with any power group, there will always be those who oppose it. Several widespread movements specifically rejecting predominating bourgeois power emerged during this century, necessitating an oppositional stance against the bourgeois form of fashion. This rejection mirrors the bourgeois rejection of sumptuousity, with fashion moving from the multiply layered and lavisciously decorated styles of European nobility to the well-taylored elegance of the bourgeoisie to the casual frumpiness of the modern fashion rebel.

Antifashion, once unwillingly reserved for the poor, now is adopted as a sign of timeless distinction against the frivolous, spendthrift bourgeoisie and/or the perceived patriarchal imposition of fashion. But this symbolic oppositional form of dress is unable to escape the process of fashion, only avoiding a manifestation of its current dominant form. Fashion is defined as a special form of regulated behaviour, driven by competition between individuals and groups for the purposes of exclusion and elite formation (Konig, 128). This definition firmly places the fashionable and the so-called antifashionable within the same process. The form and ideology of antifashionable dress may differ significantly from the conservative, upwardly mobile styles of conventional high fashion, but the end effects are the same. Fashion implies a fluidity in social organization, marking differences in social position while creating the conditions to permeate higher strata through imitation. Western antifashion is as socially ambitious, but suggests revolution rather than individual progression. It does not matter if this social change is in fact possible, for it is only the impression that it can occur that is sufficient to motivate a competitive use of clothing (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 14).

Eventually, most oppositional groups come to the realization of the hypocrisy of the attempt to reject fashion while aspiring to organized social change. Antifashion is a fashionable counter-effect of the failed attempts of one group to copy another (König, 65). The fashion of the elite group is rejected when it proves impermeable to the socially ambitious group. An alternative style is adopted by default, forming a menacing symbolic opposition. To the chagrin of opposition groups, elements of antifashion are often plundered by fashion, destroying the "timeless" quality of their garments and requiring a change in waidrobe to maintain distinction. This hegemonic use of fashion dilutes the potency of oppositional symbols and re-integrates dissidents back into conventional forms of social competition. Antifashion is but another form of fashion in this context. Most often, the "destruction" of fashion promised by oppositional groups is simply a case of "dressing up by dressing down", adopting a costume to fit their role (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 17). Only a stable, authoritarian society will be able to avoid symbolically competitive

forms of dress. The negation of fashion is simply an inversion of the process of imitation (Simmel, 183). The antifashionables do not reject the facade of appearance, as some practitioners claim, but are very conscious of their outward appearance, conveying an ideology of individuality within a reformulated collectivity (Simmel, 184) Both fashion and antifashion endow clothing with the power to express inner meanings, giving primacy to the visual.

Antifashion is not "unfashion", but it can use antique styles to symbolically forge a bond with "timeless" ideals (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 10). Antifashion is not a display of individual eccentricity, for it demonstrates collective bonds between people During the late 1960's and early 1970's, a form of antifashion swept the youth of North America and Britain Fashion was rejected along with the other tenants of middle class life In an introduction to Rene Konig's book, Tom Wolfe denounces the self-styled oppositional stance of these young fashion rebels, declaring their pose of antifashion to be not much more than the prevailing style of the time Instead of adopting more sumptuous clothing, the "funky chic" style appropriated poverty as its look. Wolfe notes the hypocrisy of this mode, as a symbolic unity in dress to the under-privilege did not necessarily reflect accompanying charitable activity. The status quo remained virtually untouched as revolutionary dress was largely a mere fashion rather than a reflection of social activity (König, 1973, 16-17) The national form of dress imposed after the Communist revolution in China provides a better example of an attempt to use antifashionable clothing to achieve an ideological and a material change in society. All were garbed in a sexless, shapeless style to encourage a new national spirit, erasing all opposition and difference under the commonality of the peasant uniform (Scott, 1965, 127).

In contemporary Western society, a similarly widespread antifashion style has been adopted in the form of sportswear But, rather than promote symbolic unity, the producers and distributors of these garments attempt to imbue these plain uniforms with the status of fashion, (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 10) emblazoning their clothing with signs of individual creativity despite their unchanging form. In particular, jean pants have achieved a special status Omnipresent jeans are linked with the myths of the Wild West, the teen rebels of the 1950's, and an eternal proletarian spirit, thereby placing them firmly in the category of antifashion At the same time they are made to communicate the instant sex appeal promised by a designer label, altered with the latest fad treatment - stone wash, acid wash, tearing, shredding, cutoffs, cullots, overalls, painter pants, bell bottoms, hip huggers, straight leg, tapered leg, skin tight, rolled cuff, stirrup pants, button fly, patches, studs, lace, coloured, plaid, pinstrip, printed, corduroy, leather, and,

the very latest, undyed - making them an object of fashion. Holly Brubach explains how this duality is possible:

> "A dress by Valentino or a jumpsuit by Jean-Paul Gaultier has implicit in its design a description of the sort of woman who would wear it and of the life she leads Beyond a few dim echoes of James Dean and ranch hands, however, blue jeans have no such powers of suggestion, they've been a fixture of our wardrobes for such a long time now that it's hard to regard them the way we do articles of fashion So it's left to the manufacturers to create a context for jeans, something to trigger the consumer's imagination " (Brubach, 1982, 81-2)

There are different forms of sartorial competition. Fashionable competition is to be expected, as fashion operates on the process of distinction at an individual and group level. Those who wear the highest fashion declare a superior social status over less finely dressed individuals. Competition occurs at the level of style, with all implicitly accepting the value of clothing but constantly renovating its forms Antifashion styles compete as well, but do so by entrenching oppositional, immovable ideologies into dress styles (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 26). Fashion and antifashion both propose moral superiority over one another, expressing different views of the social world. Fashion demonstrates a belief in a sliding scale of power accessible through consumption, while antifashion sees power in terms of strong oppositions. As fashion is more flexible, it usually dominates. Genuine antifashion cannot suddenly emerge as a competitive force in a general context of fashion; it can only compete as a legitimate force through conflicts between societies. Within a wider context of fashion, antifashion is only another pose, borrowed by the fashionable for political, symbolic opposition.

Bernard S. Cohn outlines the interesting case of a conflict of culture and power manifested in the uses of clothing. He examines the dynamics of competition in India under the colonial rule of Britain For the British traders, textiles and clothing were a means to achieve profit [i.e. social ascendency], a position much different to that of the Indians who had no concept of western materialism (Cohn, 1989, 311). The British position was somewhat hypocritical, requiring a major cultural redefinition of the part of their "hosts" while enforcing an1830 East India Trading Company law which prohibited the adoption of native dress by its employees. To obtain valuable trade treaties, the British had to redesignate certain cultural objects into commodities, divorcing them from their traditional cultural significations (Cohn, 1989, 310). While the British tradition viewed cloth in a utilitarian light and used clothing as a means to display social position, Indian tradition used cloth as a medium to transfer power from one individual to another. Clothing literally <u>was</u> authority in certain contexts, incorporating power onto the body of the wearer, thereby acting as more than a metaphor of power (Cohn, 1989, 312-13)

A ceremonial use of clothing demonstrates the difference between the two cultures. The Mughals, a group in the north of India, symbolically transferred honour and power through robes of honour called khilats (Cohn, 1989, 313-14). Gifts of robes and cloth were placed in archival treasure rooms or chests, passed from generation to generation as a title would be passed down. "In a very direct way, these objects constitute the relationship between individuals, families, and groups" (Cohn, 1989, 313-14). When British company officials were honoured with these antifashionable items, the robes were used in a completely different manner. The khilats were "recycled" in other gift giving occasions, reducing the symbolic importance of the robe to that of any other commodity (Cohn, 1989, 316). "In short, prestation and counter-prestation had become a contractual exchange" (Cohn, 1989, 318). The separateness of the two cultures was maintained in the use of common material objects, the Indians on the side of antifashion and conservative authority, the British recoding these same items as objects of fashion circulated as a means to achieve power.

The claims of antifashion

> "Strange that when so much else has changed there still exists such a strong hostility to fashion amongst so many radicals. No one objects to changing tastes in decoration, changing fashions in medicine, holidays, and food are hardly noticed as such, although none is devoid of the snobbery and competitiveness of which fashion is so often accused, and socialists feel no guilt for adding fashionable gadgets - videos for example - to their long list of worldly goods." (Wilson, 1990, 28)

Elizabeth Wilson remarks on the strange attack launched by the antifashionable, selectively targeting one form of consumption over another. This perhaps demonstrates the symbolic potency of clothing as a communications medium. Fashion is assaulted on many fronts, besieged by a wide variety of groups. The recurring bouts of fashion-bashing may stem from the long-standing suspicion of vanity, seduction, and the deception of appearances (Brubach, 1982, 79). To reject fashion as irresponsible and superficial, according to Wilson, is simply the reverse of moralism (Wilson, 1990, 36), replacing one dogmatic way of thinking with another.

In the past, health concerns, a rejection of conspicuous consumption and various anti bourgeois movements denounced the style of the day, all being essentially anti-frivolity. Today, the rejection of fashion is based on a "need" for greater responsibility, both financial and environmental (Brubach, 1982, 79). Utilitarian pleas include arguments in favour of economic frugality and functional superiority, comfort and increased attraction, durability and the ability to

reflect the modern condition (Sahlins, 1976, 167). A cry for rationalism in clothing is the impetus for many rejections of fashion, but the suggested alternatives involve a uniform ideal of beauty in their own right (Wilson, 1990, 29). The problem with pragmatic arguments against fashion is that clothing is essentially a symbolic system, not an object designed to satisfy any material need (Sahlins, 1976, 170). A "useful" object in itself is a false idea, "for 'utility' is not a quality of the object but a significance of the objective qualities", a product of fashion and context as much as the garment to which the label is attached (Sahlins, 1976, 169). Function is often a mere alibi for the processes of distinctior The elite who purchase plain-styled clothing justify their prestigious expenditures on garments for practical reasons - they purport them to be of better quality than the cheaper "knock off" designs. Their claims are highly exaggerated, as the likelihood of their clothing ever approaching a state of wear before fashion trends will dictate the inappropriateness of the new item of clothing is very remote (Baudrillard, 1981, 32). The rationale of function is a value itself, reflecting a limited moral judgement applied to some social groups more than others, rather than a universal, eternal, practical nature (Baudrillard, 1981, 31-32).

In a similar vein, fashionable dress has been attacked for medical reasons. In particular, nineteenth century England saw a proliferation of mini-fashion revolts. The Rational Dress Society was formed in April 1888 in the goal of rationalizing clothing by designating appropriate supports, weights and coverage. Its first issue of its publication, the Gazette, declared its principles:

> "The Rational Dress Society protests against the introduction of any fashion in dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movement of the body, or in any way tends to injure health. It protests against the wearing of tightly-fitting corsets, of high-heeled or narrow-toes boots and shoes, of heavily weighted skirts, as rendering healthy exercise almost impossible, and of all tie-down cloaks or other garments impeding the movement of the arms It protests against crinolines or crinolinettes of any kind as ugly and disforming The object of the R.D.S is to promote the adoption, according to individual taste and convenience, of a style of dress based upon considerations of health, comfort, and beauty, and to deprecate constant changes of fashion that cannot be recommended on any other grounds " (Newton, 1974, 115-117)

Though fashion as a concept was challenged, the gender gap was not. Like many of the other small dress reform movements, this organization did not endure very long, its last publication printed in July 1889. As medical "knowledge" is as subject to fashion trends as clothing [e.g. "in" diseases, health fads], these arguments are usually based on moralisms and aesthetic complaints rather than scientific facts. As Stella Mary Newton points out, dress reformers have invoked "art", "hygiene", and "rationality" as eternal concepts to justify their claims (Newton, 1974, 2); not surprisingly, the use of these three "universals" begets very different ideals to what constitutes proper dress

Parallel to these arguments is the notion of authenticity of clothing. Antifashion is utopian (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 25), both in terms of embodying collective social ideals and conforming to the human body's "natural" shape and requirements. Authenticity is used as an argument by the political right, who condemn the foregrounding of the social construction of dress and the categories it reflects through theatrical forms of dress, as well as the left, who often display a nostalgia for mythic rural and proletarian dress. Both sides express the desire for an authentic form of dress that will allow the "essential" self to be revealed, not surprisingly, "nature" often needs to be encouraged by the imposition of dress reform (Wilson, 1990, 38). Authenticity is another mask for distinction, this time invoking the prestige of the "natural". The "sincerity" shown through lack of adornment serves to distinguish against other conspicuously consumptive forms of ornamentation, showing authenticity to be but a purely social creation (Baudrillard, 1981, 46).

Antifashion works under the same principles as does fashion, but obeys a different authority force. Socially unanchored professions, such as artists and students, have enjoyed greater freedom in experimenting in dress as they are better able to adopt an alternative position to mainstream authority (Bell, 1976, 182). Subcultural groups often work against traditional [bourgeois] forms of power, but remain highly organized and socially accountable for their dress and other actions within the confines of the group and its uniform. The antifashion code at work, though expressly alternative to the class-based competition of the fashion code, is "other directed", governed by peer group influence (Bell, 1976, 179). The meanings embodied in subcultural antifashion are reworkings, or bricolages, of past styles of fashion and antifashion. These sedimental meanings are recontextualized, revitalizing the garments' power to communicate as a part of a total system of significance (Clarke, 1975, 175). An enhancement of oppositional meaning is encouraged by the appropriation of elements of other uniforms, allowing for parody and contradiction to emerge in a new context (Clarke, 1975, 178). The benefit of drawing from available resources rather than relying on complete, incomprehensible innovation enables group members to participate and others to understand the style without sacrificing its difference. As a style comes to objectify a group's self-image (Clarke, 1975, 180), the transformed meanings of its antifashionable style are made available to future style-makers as a resource, demonstrating an economical communication system of dress working in a recyclable semiotic code. For a time, subcultural antifashion serves to symbolically unite its members into a purposively isolated group, thus demonstrating their dissension, but then distinctive style soon evaporates as it is incorporated back into the social whole (Lind and Roach-Higgins, 184), restoring the members of the group to the larger community. Again, clothing serves to distinguish parts from the whole, but re-integrates

them into variable interdependence to derive status, enabled by the shared resource pool of possible meanings

Gendered fashion and antifashion

An antifashionable pose emerges to differentiate one group from another more dominant group, but this pose and its ideals can hypocritically and ironically become the norm, subject to the competitive rules of fashion. The history of western men's modern dress illustrates the transformation of a utopian, oppositional style into the fashion-oriented standard. The so-called "Great Masculine Renunciation" of fashion occurred as a backlash against the excessive self-announcing styles of the pre-revolutionary french nobles (Flugel, 1950, 111) The distaste for ornamentation was at first applied to both sexes. But as class distinctions softened, gender distinctions hardened, and the plain masculine suit came to visually mark the divide of power. Kaja Silverman describes the 'phallic verticality" of male dress as mirroring masculine values of stability and permanence, as opposed to the erratic changes and frivolous ornamentation of female dress, (Silverman, 1986, 147) a difference which permitted a form of vicarious expenditure by men without compromising the ideals of their dress (Silverman, 1986, 140). The plainness of style was adopted as an affordable uniform that would symbolize the ideals of "liberté, fraternité, égalité"(Flugel, 1950, 112) But the fastidiousness of the eighteenth century dandy points to the presence of fashion that exceeds the antifashionable design of the suit. A different form of beauty and self-possession was created, best described as the blasé pose of indifference or "cool" (Wilson, 1985, 180-2) Rather than link all together in a uniform devoid of adornment, men are judged by the smartness and cut of their suit, reinscribing difference between those educated and affluent enough to acquire the current ideal "antifashionable" look and those unable or unwilling to follow the rules

Modern feminism repeated many of the same ideals to equality as post-revolutionary men, though they expanded the "fraternité" to include the other half of humanity. To display their drive towards equality, some feminists rejected [and still reject] conspicuously feminine dress in favour of imitations of male dress (Silverman, 1986, 149). Fashion was [and still is] rejected as a dictatorial conspiracy designed to paralyze women in movement as well as in spirit (Brubach, 1982, 79) Flamboyance is replaced with masculine severity, though these clothes may be no more functional or comfortable (Wilson, 1990, 32). More effective than the simple adoption of generic male work clothing is a parody of male clothing, for it emphasizes the social construction of gender rather than a pure rejection of the feminine.

The study of oppositional clothing tends to focus on male attire, especially in subculture analyses. As subcultural groups most often form around media products, musical groups in particular, and these groups are predominantly male in composition, the clothing of female adherants tends to replicate that of the men (Wilson, 1990, 32). Despite this, modern dress can escape the polarization of masculine/patriarchal power and feminine disempowerment [both in theoretical analyses of fashion and in social practice] by rejecting the split between "phallic" power dressing and loose, unstructured "feminine" styles (Evans and Thornton, 1991, 57). An interesting counter-argument to feminine fashions = patriarchal thesis suggests that the use of fashion and display, rather than strict masculine uniformity and antifashion, is a greater way to provide an oppositional voice against the constrictions of patriarchal severity and utility. The exploration of fashion has allowed a rare creative outlet as well as an area of economic independance for women [as an empowered consumer and as producer] when other avenues of expression were denied due to sex (Evans and Thornton, 1991, 53). As well, garments that have become symbolic of the physical and mental repression of women, such as the corset, can be re-interpreted as an device that empowers through distinction. "The corset impairs the personal attractions of the wearer, but the loss suffered on that score is offset by the gain in reputability which comes of her visibly increased expensiveness and infirmity" (Veblen, 1953, 121). Only the elite can afford this luxury, no matter how unreasonable a price it seems to pay. Empowerment is achieve through the physical manipulation of one's body, attracting attention [or the gaze] in fetishistic and other ways. Unfortunately, the mass nature of fashion, its unrealistic and often self-destructive ideals, and the predominant male presence in the world of design detract from this thesis of empowerment achieved through feminine "plasticity". At a widespread level, there have been changes in women's clothing due to greater social mobility. As more women enter public areas of the social world, their dress begins to reflect social hierarchies of the workplace and class status to a greater degree (Bell, 1976, 191). This form of dress is not oppositional, and conforms to fashion contextualized in a hierarchical uniformity.

Fashion, antifashion and class competion

Social status repeatedly controls the fashion practice of a group. As previously stated, only those in a position to socially advance will compete in the arena of fashion, each attempting to out-display their rank and merit. In Western society, the middle classes have been in this position, using their numbers to gain political power and thereby gain the potentional to achieve greater privileges.. Flanking the middle class are two groups that do not have the same opportunity to

social mobility. [1] The relative inability to change social status results in the adoption of antifashionable styles by both the upper class and the working class.

In the case of the upper class, antifashion reflects an "eternal", unchallengeable position of privilege. The symbolism of lasting quality pervades products aimed at this group, unchanged by fads of any sort [e g the frumpy wear of the British aristocracy] (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 68). Similarly, the working class has little potential for advancement. A style of functionality over form is adopted (Bourdieu, 1984, 200), a rejection of the frivolous expenditure on ornamentation of the aspiring middle class In his study of French class-based consumption pattern, Pierre Bourdieu describes the difference in attitude towards appearance between the classes. He remarks that there is significantly less anxiety manifested towards appearance in the working class. This is shown in the proportional amount of time and money invested in the cultivation of the body, and the lack of formality of dress in the domestic space (Bourdieu, 1984, 201 and 206). Bourdieu sees this difference as a result of the likely social and economic profitability of investing into "body capital".

> "The interest the different classes have in self-presentation, the attention they devote to it, their awareness of the profits it gives and the investment of time, effort, sacrifice, and care which they actively put into it are proportionate to the chances of material or symbolic profit they can reasonably expect to see from it More precisely, they depend on the existence of a labour market in which physical appearance may be valorized in the performance of the job itself or in professional relations, and on the differential chances of access to this market and the sector of this market in which beauty or deportment most strongly contributes to occupational value " (Bourdieu, 1984, 202)

Antifashion is an unintentional oppositional style under this scheme, but so too is the drive towards distinction in fashion Uniformity operates as a homogenizing force within groups and as a differentiating device in the larger social whole, communicating the perception of social mobility and the oppositional positions possible within a limited range of meanings and understandings

Conclusion

To be distinctive, one must obey the rules of the community in order to exceed them. No matter how one attempts to escape uniformity, it must exist to provide a basis for individuality (Konig, 113). Opposition only emerges as a distinctive feature in a place of shared, conventional practices; otherwise, there is no communication, only a chaos of colours, textures and shapes that

[1] Not to imply that the classes are three homogeneous groups, a great range of positions exists within large, undefinable class groups, some of which are socially derived [i e born into an economic level] and others which are self-imposed [i e selecting an education / career path]

relate nothing about the social whole. Uniformity and ritual mean nothing without something to oppose it, to underline its significance as a shared practice and the embodiment of a set of values

SUMPTUARY LEGISLATION

> Once there was a time when men could tell lords
> From other folk by their dress, but now
> A man must study and muse a long time
> To tell which is which
>
> Thomas Hoccleve (in Jones, 1980, 10)

The law of fashion

In all discussions on the subject fashion, clothing, and adornment, there is an attempt by theorists to organize their object of study into a system, stratified into grammars of symbolic meaning and/or overlapping historical discourses. Whether explicitly or implicitly stated, fashion is explained in terms of a code, a set of organizing rules that enable different significations to compete for dominance or to symbiotically create a [perceived] homogeneous meaning. This labour of systematization can be challenged, usually by invoking an equally structuring discourse, as an imposition of an artificial theoretical framework onto an informal social practice. Such claims hold greater sway in these so-called postmodern times, as the eclecticism of dress makes it very difficult to impose a coherent theory of meaning. A visual survey of any urban public space reveals a great range of stylistic possibilities; the degree of formality, the iconography, the materials, the suggested cultural origins and purposes of particular garments are mixed and matched according to loose principles of group identification, economic resources, current fashion trends, and individual requirements. In the face of such seeming chaos, it is easy to throw one's hands in the air, and leave the mess to the organizing powers of subcultural analysts and fashion forecasters. A nostalgia for "simpler" times, when people wore their social allegiances on their sleeves, literally and figuratively, is a strategy employed by some, usually of a more conservative and orderly nature. Others reject this historic simplicity, viewing it as an undesirable, repressive outlook to what is a potentially creative outlet. To them, the freedom of choice and the exploration of fashion alternatives merits the price of unorderly mass discordance.

One area of fashion history allows for a re-evaluation of the mythic notion of the simple conformist past. Sumptuary laws have existed virtually for all of human history. At their most formal state, they exist as written laws, enforceable through coercive means. Informally, individuals are taught from birth the appropriateness of particular styles, colours, and ways of wearing clothing. These laws are enforced in subtler ways, primarily through practices of social

inclusion and exclusion. The western world has largely abandoned formal sumptuary law at the present time. Laws dealing with the morals of public exposure and the imposture of uniformed officials remain with us, but even these are limited to very specific contexts and intentions. For instance, strip club workers may be required to keep certain parts of their body covered at all times and flashers are arrested as perpetrators of a form sexual assault, but comparable regulations are not applicable in the less lascivious context of a nudist camp. Similarly, one would not be arrested for dressing as a member of the armed forces, of the police, or of the monarchy if attending a costume party, but it is considered treacherous to adopt the responsibilities and privileges of members of these groups facilitated by imitating their dress.

The quantity of formalized sumptuary legislation has been steadily reduced since the eighteenth century, allowing for the popular conclusion that modern times are more complicated due to the unregimented anarchy of dress. The past, in a monolithic "olden days" framework, appears as an orderly, simplistic time in comparison, regardless if one finds this order unjust or not. This common perception is the reverse of what is indicated by sumptuary laws. The presence of strict sumptuary legislation indicates a different kind of social complexity, one that required great prudence, creativity, and much conformity in the presence of even more diversity. The uncertainties of dress have always called for the imposition of a explanatory framework, just as they do in the present time. Modern investigators make order from the mess by grouping, regrouping and subgrouping individuals into social formations based on consumption patterns, thus restabilizing the social world into a momentary stasis. In the past, legislative bodies attempted to do the same thing, by insuring a permanence to their groupings by legally defying their subjects to change. The residues of sumptuary laws of the past remain with us in the form of written documents, their ludicrousness emerging in the straightforward designation of the order of things. While our unwritten rules of fashion appear self-evident [e.g. blue eye shadow is "déclassé", don't wear white after Labour Day], their rules seem at best quaint, at worst mean spirited and politically offensive. As time passes, modern analyses begin to take on some of the same quaintness as their precursors, as we can look back "knowingly" onto the alien rules and regulations that governed more recent generations, perhaps even ourselves. [1]

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[1] The image of a former high school punk rocker, mod, head banger etc. looking at their yearbook when they are middle aged comes to mind at this point. Even the most conventionally dressed person will doubt their past sanity in view of material evidence of past fashion habits, as what was once a deliberately planned and naturally accepted aesthetic becomes contrived and ugly under the different and equally naturalized rules of the present.

A brief history of sumptuary legislation

Properly speaking, sumptuary laws refer to all aspects of social presentation, i.e. sumptuous display. In addition to clothing, the quality and quantity of expenditures on food at social occasions and household possessions are included. For example, a resolution was passed in Rome 187 B.C., entitled Lex Orchia, which limited the number of guests at a feast (Hurlock, 1965, 296). But it is clothing that receives the lion's share of attention, both in terms of laws and academic consideration, as it is the most public area of sumptuous display. Encoded sumptuary rules are first noted in Ancient Greece and Rome. Solon of Greece [639-559 B.C.] established a rule of three garments to be worn at a time for women, and set expenditure limits based on the amount of wealth possessed by a family (Hurlock, 1965, 287). Roman society attempted to order its people by assigning particular tunica to social status (Black and Garland, 1980, 38). Common people wore white or natural wool tunica, while knights and magistrates adorned their garments with two purple stripes. The tunica had specific names: tunica angusticlavia was adorned with wider purple stripes, tunica laticlavia was worn exclusively by senators; victorious generals wore tunica palmata, a toga picta of purple silk embroidered with representations of their battles in gold thread; tunica erecta or regilla, an ungirdled garment, was worn by young men under the age of majority or as a wedding dress for women (Black and Garland, 1980, 39). In addition to the cut and the style of a garment, the number of colours that could be worn at one time was under the code of law. Peasants were allowed only a monochrome outfit while officers could sport two colours, and commanders had the privilege of three (Hurlock, 1965, 297). Only the members of royal household were allowed seven hues all at once. In Aurelian times [231-275 A.D.], gender acquired its own palettes and textures: only women were allowed yellow, white, red, or green shoes, and silk was similarly denied to men (Hurlock, 1965, 298). Like all sumptuary legislation, these rules eventually fell into disuse, and were abandoned by the third century.

The ancient Romans had a comparatively easier time complying with their legislation, as their wardrobes more closely approached the ideal of a uniform. More complicated dress rules plagued other times. In particular, the reigns of the British monarchs Edward III [1327 -1377] and Elizabeth I [1558 - 1603] are highlighted as two of the most severe [and, therefore, transgressive] periods in sumptuary legislation. Rather than specify the types and forms of costume to be worn by ranked individuals, their sumptuary laws designated prohibitions of particular treatments - fabrics and decoration. An example can be found in a law by Edward III, the first English monarch to enact sumptuary legislation. One of his laws restricted the use of ermine and pearls in clothing to royals and nobles with incomes over one thousand pounds, though this rule did not apply to the use of these materials on headdresses (Hurlock, 1965, 298). During his reign, these

laws were enforced through confiscations of offending garments and fines (Black and Garland, 1980, 77). Despite the severe quantity of laws passed by Edward and his successors to the English throne, it appears that dress regulations were often ignored, as indicated by writings of conservatives who criticized the confusing state of dress and status. An often quoted passage from the early fifteenth century by Thomas Occliff displays a distaste for breaches of the fashion mores of his time:

> "And this, in my thinking, is an evil, to see one walking in gowns of scarlet twelve yards wide, with sleeves reaching to the ground, and lined with fur, worth twenty pounds, or more, at the same time, if he had only been master of what he paid for, he would not have enough to have lined a hood ...and certainly the great lords are to blame if I dare say so much, to permit their dependants to imitate them in their dress In former times, persons of rank were known by their apparel, but, at present, it is very difficult to distinguish the nobleman from one of lower degree " (Black and Garland, 1980, 87-89)

Further proof of the ineffectiveness of Edwardian legislators' attempts to control the rules of fashion is found in material evidence. The case of the poulain, shoes with extremely long pointed toes that were wildly fashionable in France in the 1480's, demonstrates widespread defiance. They supposedly originated from the necessities of a medieval lord burdened with a protruding tumour on his foot (Simmel, 1989, 170), though this practical origin was soon forgotten for the sake of pure fashion Some ecclesiastic and civil authorities took a dislike to these strange, impractical affectations, necessitating legal incursions as the toe length grew to greater and more ridiculous lengths. When this fad spread across the Channel, Edward III decreed that no knight under estate of a lord, esquire, gentleman, or any other person could wear shoes or boots with points exceeding two inches in length. The penalty for an infraction was a fine of forty pence. Despite all attempts to curb the ever increasing toe length of footwear, poulains continued to grow, achieving lengths of 18 inches and longer after Edward's death (Laver, 1969, 71-72)

Edward III's laws fell into disuse just as the dress hierarchies of the Romans once did, but future European monarchs continued the practice In France, the offensive length of poulains was regulated by rank, with princes sporting twenty-four inches of point while the poor only were allowed a measly six inches (Hurlock, 1965, 298) Ineffective laws that attempted to regulate styles were replaced by economic limitations to expenditure under Richelieu in the early seventeenth century (Lipovetsky, 1987, 46). Charles IX, though going down in history as an ineffective ruler (New Age Encyclopedia, 1979), managed to enact more sumptuary laws during his reign [1559-1574] than anyone else. His laws included the regulation of quality and quantity of ornamentation based on rank, such as the prohibition of silk to all but princesses and duchesses His laws stayed in effect until the storming of the Bastille, whereupon the General Assembly

banished all formal dress regulations (Hurlock, 1965, 298). Encoded laws were quickly replaced by informal sanctions against all sumptuous display as luxury connoted nobility, a connection that was safer to avoid during post-Revolutionary times (Hurlock, 1965, 301).

Concurrent to Charles IX's reign over adornment in France, the tradition of sumptuary laws was re-invigorated in England during the Elizabethan period. Elizabeth I was particularly sensitive to the importance of appearance, to the extent that she had a proclamation drafted that attempted to set official patterns for her depiction in portraits and have all "debased" images of herself destroyed. Though this legislation was not passed, it was largely adopted on a voluntary basis, and indicated the perceived importance of the relationship between image and power (Braudy, 1986, 275-76) Her father, Henry VIII, had been concerned with adornment practices as well, passing laws such as one declaring that countesses had the unique and mandatory "privilege" of wearing a train before and behind their skirt, fastened to a girdle. He also decided that men should keep their hair short, but a beard was to be encouraged (Hurlock, 1965, 298). Elizabethan law was a re-emphasis of the pre-existing Tudor statutes of 1533 and 1554, and added several new proclamations. Colour, quantity, quality, price, style, and materials were specified in the traditional vein of sumptuary legislation, but a new emphasis on surveillance and detection of violation was encouraged. Penalties now included public humiliation, such as the case of Thomas Bradshaw, a merchant tailor who had his garments repeatedly torn in public, and was then forced to walk home in this condition (McCracken, 1982, 55)

Western society does not uniquely possess a history of regimented dress, though its traditions are rendered more visible as they are preserved in the form of laws in written, accessible forms. Scholarly interest has made this history more visible as well. In addition, the strong impetus towards change in fashion results in the creation of a developing history, one that makes styles from the past into interesting, foreign objects operating under exotic regulations and meanings In other societies, the "arrested development" in clothing styles may render fashion a lesser interest to historians and sociologists. The rules that govern appearance in such instances are as numerous and as entrenched as the formalized legislations of the monarchs of Europe, but are less apparent in retrospect Japan is an exception to this Eurocentric history of fashion laws, having a rich history of laws controlling sumptuous display on the basis of income for the purposes of restricting imitation between social groups (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 13)

In the European case, the lack of change in costume style is often the result of imposing or adopting regional costumes. The gentry passed down their fine costumes to the peasant classes in

provincial regions, or feudal lords granted a style to a peasant group during a time of celebration to encourage unity (König, 1973, 111) These "traditional" costumes appear to be frozen in time, though some uniforms may be relatively recent adoptions and are quite frequently subject to purposively unrecognized fashionable changes Examples of this type of costume are often featured in tourism advertisements or cultural festivals, when these seemingly ageless forms of dress are brought out to display the unity of a cultural tradition, a unity that most likely doesn't exist. [1]

A fashion can be made symbolic of political, economic and other social movements or groupings, (Wilson, 1985, 47) resulting or necessitating the appearance of paralysis in style to naturalize the group's ideals. The imposition of uniforms in some communist countries, such as China, is an example of this phenomenon Groups will adopt a version of a traditional costume to invoke symbolic links to the ideals of the past For example, social activists will adopt the the styles of the working class to invoke a notion of unity with the designated oppressed group Though these groups attempt initially to propose change within the larger social whole, the ultimate purpose of the costume is to unify its members across time and space into an eternal ideology Religious organizations provide the most vivid example of the use of "timeless" costume, self-consciously adopting antiquated styles, linking the current membership to their spiritual predecessors, even if the doctrine and the ceremonies have considerably changed since the time of the costume's origin. Sumptuary legislation, written or unstated, is a conservative, stabilizing force under the pressures of change (Hurlock, 1965, 297)

Morals

As previously mentioned, one of the purposes of modern legislation is to maintain a level of moral standard in clothing. Primarily our legislation is related to sexual morality, prescribing the covering of certain fetishized areas of the body, such as the genitals and surrounding areas Differences based on sex are common and are the basis for challenges Women have often been the target of legislation, which usually stems from the fear of their "seductive powers" Celine Renooz, a psychologist, wrote of the imposition of modesty onto women in a 1898 work entitled Psychologie Comparée de l'Homme et de la Femme. She argues that modesty attributed to women

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[1] For example, the Ukrainian white peasant blouse and intricately embroidered accessories, and the Scottish kilt and tam, are eye-catching uniforms worn on "cultural" occasions The costumes are never worn outside of a ceremonial context but are made symbolic of the group These anachronistic outfits attempt to create the spirit of a mythic community of olde, implying simplicity and idealized traditional links that probably never existed at the time of the costume's original popularity

is merely an acceptance and inversion of masculine sexuality, where shame is imposed onto women: "This reversion of psychological laws has, however, only been accepted by women with a struggle " (Ellis, 1942, 3) At some times, the struggle is taken to the streets in the form of costume innovations, necessitating some quick legal action to maintain the "natural" order between the sexes The attempt to popularize the bloomer pant and shorter skirts at the beginning of the twentieth century are examples of imposed modesty. In the present day, each summer is inevitably marked by a defiance of the law governing the covering of women's breasts, where one or more women, usually young (and, not surprising, thin), will go topless with the stated purpose of sunbathing in a public place. Their arguments cover much ground, claiming the law to be an outdated convention, personally restrictive, discriminatory to women, and proof of the irrational fetishization and denaturalization of the female body. As sun tanning is currently on the environmental hit list due to the risks of ultra violet rays and their links to skin melanomas, this yearly protest may soon be a thing of the past. [1]

Cosmetics and other forms of adornment have traditionally been linked to vanity, sexuality and trickery in the West. The Puritan influence encouraged legal action against the deceptions of ornamentation, while remaining oblivious to its own form of costume. The missionary attack on native costumes is an intensified version of the same attempts to rid the female portion of Western society of its practices of attraction, both being linked to the "devil's influence" (Brain, 12). Examples of sumptuary laws directed at changes in women's fashion are numerous. The 1920 s saw a flurry of activity on both sides of the ocean when skirt lengths gradually began their climb up the leg In 1925, the state of Utah declared that a skirt that was three inches or more above the ankle merited a fine. Similarly, the state of Ohio announced that any woman over the age of fourteen could not wear a skirt that did not reach "that part of the foot known as the instep". Again, these laws proved to be just as ineffective as their precursors, as skirt styles continued to rise despite attempts to keep them safely brushing the pavement (Laver, 1969, 232). Colonial New Jersey sought to save bachelors from the deceptions of designing women. Under the same penalties as witchcraft, a law was passed that prohibited women from "betraying" men into matrimony with scents, cosmetics, washes, paints, fake teeth, false hair, and high heel shoes (Hurlock, 299) Similar legislation was passed in England in 1649 entitled "The vice of Painting

[1] A recent demonstration on Parliament Hill, featuring a few topless women, was met by the leering gazes and video cameras of several thousand men Unfortunately, the women involved in this worthy challenge of social convention failed to see the irony of their actions, as they essentially set their bodies up as transgressive, spectacular objects on display, only proving the validity of the law Rather than make their oppositional gesture in a suitable location - the beach, a parc where people sunbath, private property - they decontextualized it by turning it into a media event, asking for the gaze of others rather than denying its validity

and wearing Black Patches and Immodest Dresses of Women." A later act of Parliament attempted once again to protect innocent men from false-faced women, stating:

> "All women, of whatever age, rank, profession or degree whether virgins, maids, or widows, that shall, from and after such act, impose upon, seduce and betray into matrimony, any of his majesty's subjects, by the scents, paints, cosmetics, washes, artificial teeth, false hair, spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, and bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of law in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours and that the marriage, upon conviction, shall stand null and void " (Brain, 1979, 12)

Madame Renooz's comments on the reversibility of gendered modesty speak to the double bind in which women were placed During the Victorian era, the legislation prescribed modest appearance, not for the moral, economic, or health benefit of women, but to save men from the deceptions of artificially induced attractions Largely devoid of actions in the social world, experimentation in fashion for women of means could serve as a outlet of expression In her 1974 article "Externalities of Change: Deference and Demeanor in Contemporary Fashion", Joan Cassell suggests that the attacks on women's fashions have had very little to do with the intrinsic foolishness of any particular style of costume, but are reactions to their attempts to escape social control, symbolized in dress (Cassell, 1974, 66). Her argument can fit into any attempt to repress alternative forms of dress, ranging from the long unkempt hair of "hippies" in the late 1960's and early 1970's to the eradication of native costumes during the colonial period

Laws opposing symbolic movements towards freedom have been repeatedly challenged The concept of freedom when applied to fashion does not necessarily retain its traditional meanings: a politically symbolic move may manifest itself in a constricting garment Aesthetic freedom is an equally potent form of action as is the rejection of crippling garments such as corsets and long, layered skirts Similarly, what may be labelled a move towards a more practical, less restrictive form of dress can seem, in retrospect, merely symbolic For example, the controversy over the use of corsets encompassed arguments for and against the garment based on medical evidence, the requirements of nature and the sensibilities of taste The issue moved into the political arena on more that one occasion, with feminists and doctors arguing on both sides of the issue Eventually, famed designer Paul Poiret claimed final victory, declaring himself the agent of liberation by removing corsets from his styles Prudence Glynn points out that though Poiret may have freed the waists of turn-of-the-century women, he promptly bound them at the ankles with hobble skirts (Glynn, 1978, 23) A parallel contradiction can be seen in the more recent case of the mini skirt. The late 1960's saw the introduction of unprecedented shortness in skirt length, a style that was paired to the concept of liberation by means of its association with youth culture and a

daring show of leg. This freedom was a purely aesthetic one, for short skirts, as born out in their recent re-introduction in the late 1980's, prove often to be more uncomfortable and awkward than a floor-length skirt, restricting movement in their tightness, requiring more time to be spent on the beautification of the legs [e.g.: hair removal, toning of calf muscles through exercise] and causing consternation as they threaten to ride up to indecent heights. Practical liberation and aesthetic liberation do not often cross paths in the symbolic realm, leaving the door open for public debate on many fronts, and the enactment of various social sanctions towards those who threaten the prevailing mores of the time.

The tension between the urge towards adornment and the prohibitions against it extend beyond gender differentiations. Power groups, regardless of political affiliations, always have an axe to grind against oppositional fashion trends. Sumptuary laws have been enacted by plain puritans and embellished hedonists, monarchists and republicans, in societies based on hierarchies of class and societies attempting to destroy hierarchical divisions. Moralists and physicians become the agents of justification, as all sumptuary law carries the stamp of reason.

Many laws are passed under the pretences of combatting imposture. Prohibitions against sumptuous display take two moral positions. First, and more common to the American continent, are reprobations against pretence and display, invoked in the name of modesty under God. Puritan law in colonial America sought to restrict the use of sumptuous material to control excessive display through dress as a practice that would be both impractical for the rugged conditions of New World living as well as a sin under religious doctrine [e.g.: no silver, gold, silk, slashed sleeves, ruffs, beaver hats, etc.] (Hurlock, 1965, 299). But many a time the motivation against ornate dress remains as a pure attempt to protect "God-given" hierarchical privileges. As Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen state: "Since man's place in life was thus fixed by social custom it was heresy for him to attempt to rise above his class either in manner of living or dress, because God called him to this place at birth." (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 123). A Massachusetts Act of 1651 that tried to curb pretensions in the undeserving proclaimed.

> " our utter detestation and dislike that men and women of meane condition should take upon themselves the garb of gentlemen, by wearing gold or silver, lace or buttons, or points at their knee or to talk in bootes or women of the same ranke to weare silke or tiffany hoodes or scarfes, which though allowable to persons of greater estates, or more liberal education, yet we cannot but judge it intolerable in persons of such condition " (Blumberg, 1974, 491)

Stemming from European feudalism, a hypocritical position on the evils of fancy dress was promoted by those most likely and able to engage in sumptuous display. The expression "clothes

make the man" is indicative of the not-so-hidden motivations of the nobility of the past and the pretendants to their thrones. When democratic challenges emerged among the newly moneyed bourgeoisie, the naturalized splendour of the nobles became entrenched in law, protecting them from the evils of imitation and rival sumptuosity (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 122)

For almost five centuries, splendour had been reserved for the elite of Europe. Both God and feudalism had ensured this order. Conveniently, religious doctrine encouraged the acceptance of one's position in the social scale. For the rich, this required indulgence of leisure and fashion, and the conspicuous consumption of clothing. For the poor, their clothing was a tangible expression of their origins, for they might have inherited their clothing from a great great great grandparent (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 119-120). "If shabby togs of plowmen betrayed kinship to fallen man, a life defined by labours of the soil, the vestment of clergy and of nobility bore no such shame." (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 119). Clothing was a natural expression of the social world, and to attempt a shift in these relations through disguising oneself as a higher rank was a violation of God's rule (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 121)

Economics

For the most part, dress regulation among the classes was and still is controlled by economic availability (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 380). For instance, the colour red was very popular, and restricted, in mid-fifteenth century Germany. The German princes of this time are all depicted wearing the colour in their portraits. The exclusive use of the colour inspired imitation, requiring enactment of a prohibitive law. Proving that restrictions only foster the move to defiance, a peasant revolt contained the demand that all be allowed to wear the banned red cloaks (Laver, 1969, 86). Their insistence upon their right to wear the colour was purely a symbolic one, for, as James Laver points out, the peasants couldn't afford red cloaks even if they were granted the right to wear them (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 125). For the most part, sumptuary legislation reflected the predominant economic reality of the time, though that "reality" was undoubtedly showing signs of stress, thereby necessitating a law to bolster the order. A 1530 English law shows the tendency of the economic order to be mirrored in sumptuous display. It allowed three ellens of velvet for headdress of a member of the upper bourgeoisie and homespun cloth for commoners. Ermine and sable were reserved for aristocrats, fox and polecat for simple townsfolk, and goat and lamb for the peasant class (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 124). These divisions merely re-enforce current economic availability, but, by codifying differences between groups, the laws may encourage transgression. Goods are valued for their attachment with social status, a sumptuary

law re-enforces the difference between groups. This link creates the conditions for accession to power by means of imitation through consumption patterns.

Some of the more effective sumptuary laws brings this into consideration, limiting expenditures on clothing to those of a certain economic level, rather than prescribing by rank and/or class. But these laws are vulnerable to a rising moneyed class, especially if the power group is one based on birth. An Elizabethan law attempted to negotiate wealth with rank, declaring that the highest level of sumptuary practices are reserved for landed lords of inherited lineage, for those with incomes over five hundred marks per year for life, permitting them to share same level of exceptions as Baron's sons and all above that rank, gentlemen attending the Queen, and embassy employees (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 214). While Henry XIII enacted hypocritical legislation [considering his own love of display] to protect himself and his court from "copyright infringement" by virtue of birth (Black and Garland, 1980, 95), Elizabeth's laws made some concessions to purely economic factors.

While attempting to preserve the status quo, sumptuary laws can influence commerce. The determination of the customary styles through legislation encourages quality and quantity of materials used. The value of objects is controlled as well, re-enforcing the prestige or the commonality of particular objects. Acquisition and exchange of goods is thereby controlled indirectly by law on some occasions (Finkelstein, 1991, 138). At other times, there exists another kind of sumptuary legislation, one that seeks to protect economic interests on an industrial level rather than a class level. An English law in vigour during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries was designed to lessen the importance of imported linens by mandating burial in woolens (Hurlock, 1965, 296). The desirability of certain fashions has occasionally threatened the economic salience of regions, requiring prohibition of certain styles and materials. In the sixth century, a craze for Italian and French velvet caps was discouraged by law by forcing the populace of England to wear domestic wool caps, in the hopes of encouraging trade within the country and saving local industries (Hurlock, 1965, 297). A similar action was employed by Henry IV of France, who, possessing no love for extravagant dress himself, created laws to prevent foreign importations of materials. The bourgeoisie turned to wool once again, while the courtiers continued to wear foreign silks, though in much plainer styles (Laver, 1969, 103). For different reasons, plain styles were all but legislated as mandatory after the French Revolution, symbolizing a new egalitarianism and an opposition to feudal waste (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 127). The intention of the new dress requirement was soon undermined through practices of less noticeable sumptuosness, replacing flashy colours and ornamentation with layers of plain clothing and fine

tailoring (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 131). At other times, the move towards simple clothing is induced by general economic scarcity. During times of war, sumptuary laws are enacted to preserve national wealth, in an attempt to avoid bankruptcy (Hurlock, 1965, 286).

Class

The previous examples illustrate the importance of class and rank in the creation of sumptuary legislation. The principle of distinction in rank, between economic groups, power groups, persons of status, and religious sects, has governed dress patterns for centuries. A belief in the ability of dress to reflect and relate rank is necessary for a society to adopt sumptuary restrictions. Costume in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries carried the value of a uniform that could reveal the rank of the wearer. Challenges launched against this belief required law to support convention (Wilson, 1985, 23). To ensure that this most visible of signs correlates to other life style symbols, legalized conventions have been enacted against fraudulent rank (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 10). The necessity for laws only emerges at time of competition and conflict, for the patterns of economic distribution normally ensure differentiation along class lines. Enforcement of sartorial distinctions rest on previously subtle, unspoken tradition and past laws (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 380). Feudal states, for most of their history, did not require legislation, as distinction was expressed through national and region costumes, not through rivalries of imitation. When power hierarchies are challenged and class boundaries are overstepped, the rule of law is put into effect (Hurlock, 1967, 300). A rising middle class is inevitably the catalyst for legislative action. The French Counsel of LeMans forbid the use of particular colours, styles, and ornaments to the middle class, resulting from the pressures of imitation this group inflicted upon the privileges of courtly nobility (Boucher, 1987, 179). In 1294, the rulers of France attempted to limit the number of new gowns for the lower nobles - dukes, counts, barons, knights, squires - as well as restricting the use of furs, silk, and the colour purple (Boucher, 1987, 180). These concerns demonstrate the arbitrary nature of fashion, as usefulness, beauty, and other values one could attribute to clothing are of secondary importance to their symbolic values. The law cares not if people are poorly dressed, but if they are too well dressed.

The distinction principle is widely recognized, but Grant McCracken and Quentin Bell also note another equally important principle in operation in the creation of sumptuary legislation. The purpose of customary dress is not to distinguish but to classify, gender, class, rank, occupation, and faith are all designed to conform to general aesthetic pattern and to fashion, providing

coherence in what could potentially be a chaos of affiliations (Bell, 1976, 20). Using a 1597 Elizabethan proclamation, McCracken illustrates how these laws serve to bind different ranks and classes together. This law indicated what noble persons were permitted to wear, with each superior category entitled to all the privileges as the category beneath that rank (McCracken, 1982, 55).

1 KNIGHT'S SON Velvet in jerkins, hose, doublets, or satin, damose, tafetta or grosgrain in gowns, cloaks or coats
2 KNIGHT 1 and velvet in gowns, cloaks, coats, embroidery with silk or nether stocks of silk
3 BARON'S SON 1 and 2 passemain lace or lace of gold, silver or silk
4 BARON 1 and 2 and 3 and gold and silver cloth, tinselled cloth, silk or cloth mixed or embroidered with gold or silver
5 EARL 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and purple silk
(McCracken, 1982, 55-56)

McCracken notes that this law not only separates the ranks from one another, but locates them on a sliding scale of conformity (McCracken, 1982, 55). A progressive scale orders the society into an interdependent network, each deriving status from those above and below their rank. An affinity to the ideal Great Chain of Being is to be found in this vertical organization. The necessity for a complex ordering indicates a threatening diversity of rank, wealth, occupation and status (McCracken, 1982, 56). Dress is revealed to be part of political organization of a nation, unifying and separating people into recognizable units (McCracken, 1982, 57). Rather than the static monoliths of class imagined by us modern "progressives", social organization through clothing is shown to be a subtle tapestry of class, wealth, religious doctrine, power and interconnective privilege.

The inevitable failure of sumptuary laws

Repeatedly, all legislation designed to curb imitation, expenditure, or transgression of moral standards fails. From the start sumptuary laws are doomed, for their very creation indicates the passing of the prevailing order. As it is a matter of private consumption, enforcement is a problem. Evasion strategies are numerous. A person may wear restricted garments in private in a personal act of defiance (Finkelstein, 1991, 138). Expensive undergarments containing prohibited materials [lace, colours, silk] can remain undetected. Women of the fourteenth century learned the craft of embroidery to embellish plain clothing, thereby avoiding cost restrictions; alternative furs, such as cat and dog hair, could be use in muffs, giving the illusion of a more elaborate costume (Hurlock, 1965, 300). Consumption can also adopt a vicarious form, as outlined by Thorstein Veblen and others. After the French Revolution, the traditional sumptuosness of the nobility was no longer appropriate for the sober bourgeoisie, but the fine fabrics, treatments and wigs were

displaced onto the servant class as a means to show one's prosperity, despite the impractical nature of this wardrobe in the performance of service. Quentin Bell notes that though the master of a home may adopt a plain suit, all his dependants - family members and servants - will be very well dressed as signs of his financial power (Bell, 1976, 139) The vestiges of this tradition remains with us to this day, seen in upper-middle class restaurants, theatres and hotel service staff who are required to wear old styled, military-influenced uniforms, tuxedos and evening gowns despite the considerably less formal dress of those they are attending Controlling this type of display is considerably more difficult, as the responsibility is removed from the person perpetrating the offence. In effect, it is agentless sumptuousness, and thus no one can be punished

Sumptuary legislation attempted to recognize vicarious consumption on a few occasions through the enactment of laws designed to place servants and apprentices in line with the rank of their masters. A 1582 Common Council of London law ordered that no apprentice could wear any apparel other than that which he received from his master, a ruff of only one and a half yards long, and stockings only white or russet, the 1611 Council added to this list no hat valued at over five shillings, no spanish shoes, "nor hair with any tufted or lock but cut short in a decent and comely manner". Servants had to negotiate between the conventions of their station and that of their masters, a line that was easily transgressed (Cunnington and Lucas, 1967, 380)

The nature of fashion is itself contradictory to the purposes of sumptuary legislation As J.C. Flugel writes, fashion implies a fluidity to the social order, as it operates on a principle of difference in social position Fashion changes only according to pressures placed on it through imitation. If the possibility exists that the upper echelons of the hierarchy are penetrable by those of lower standing, imitation will be attempted A change in fashion will otherwise not occur, and sumptuary legislation will not be necessary If sumptuary laws are required to sustain social distinction, a power breakdown has already occurred, the competition in clothing being but a symptom of the changing times (Polhemus and Proctor, 1978, 14) Competition, be it related to sex, rank, wealth, or status, will pre-exist fashion (Flugel, 1950, 138) Attempts to freeze the fashion cycle with legislation will fail as their measures are inevitably too late If the legislation is overly stringent, the power group risks a rebellion, as in the case of the eighteenth century attempt to abolish the sombrero in Spain, which resulted in the ejection of the Prime Minister from his office, or in the case of England after Elizabeth's strict rule over the fashion of her land, which required a great permissiveness in her successor (Hurlock, 1965, 301) Sumptuary laws are deficient in another manner they do not prevent innovation, as they can only legislate against known styles (Flugel, 1950, 139) The creation of new garments and styles can re-invigorate the

fashion race outside of the interests of the law, as witnessed in the emergence of post-revolutionary France.

Sumptuary laws occasionally cause their own downfall in a very direct manner. Designed to restrict through the social order by reserving fine dress for the higher ranks, they can [illegible] to dress better than they may wish. Medieval Italian doctors at university were [illegible] this deficiency (Byrd, 1979, 145). Lesser nobles and persons of small fortunes fell into financial ruin in the attempt to keep pace with the higher nobility in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Hurlock, 1965, 296). A most interesting case of the necessities of rank and class is the medieval knight, as described by Terry Jones. Originally, in the eleventh century, knights were drawn from a class slightly above well-to-do peasants. By the thirteenth century, the rising costs of equipping oneself with the proper protective garments, which thereby warranted a bigger, more expensive horse, transformed the knight into an aristocratic figure, as only noblemen could afford the burdens incurred by duty (Jones, 1980, 5). The costs continued to escalate until, by 1278, only half of those eligible were taking up the title, the rest preferring to pay a fine instead. Military service became a status symbol, with the full colours of aristocracy adopted and the title descending through noble birth, but a parallel tragic-comic figure of the ruined "knyght of force" also emerged at this time (Jones, 1980, 6). The fourteenth century saw protests in the English Parliament over compulsory service abroad in the Hundred Years War, so, to offset the unpopularity, the Kings of England enacted sumptuary legislation and other privileges, making the knighthood into an exclusive club of sorts. In 1379 an unsuccessful petition attempted to restrict the use of fur, jewellery, gold, silk to the knightly class, but the effects of this rise in prestige were already beginning to show (Jones, 1980, 7). The conversion of the title into a prestigious position shut out those of lesser means, but promoted imitation. The definition of the knighthood became more and more obscured as those seeking prestige could copy their dress style, thereby blurring the social distinctions the laws had attempted to enact (Jones, 1980, 10).

Fashion prevails

Rather than restrict the development of fashion to a non-competitive arena, sumptuary laws often have the exact opposite effect, launching an additional challenge to those already posing a threat to the ruling powers. The laws provide evidence of a fashion process in action, enabling it by re-enforcing social divisions and making their associated privileges scarcer and therefore more valuable. The vast histories of changing styles and numerous examples of sumptuary laws would seem to indicate the inevitability of competition through adornment and the possible universality of

fashion. But, according to Bell, fashion as it is today is a European product created through particular conditions. It is not an inevitable cycle of rivalry, the "static authoritarianism of the East" prevented its establishment for centuries. Fashionable change can only occur when there is a power inequity or rivalry which allows one group to dress more sumptuously than another, which then generates defiance, creating an urge towards social change. Bell further states that change in clothing goes against human nature:

> "A man or a woman in a stratified society, whether at the top or the bottom of the social scale, is so far from desiring novelty in dress that he hardly conceives it to be possible, and when he does encounter it his reaction is one of shock, astonishment, ridicule, or disgust." (Bell, 1976, 115)

It is only through competitive social conditions that fashion is allowed to flourish. A strict hierarchy operates only on differentiation, not imitation, where dress crystallizes difference into material forms (König, 1973, 94). Sumptuary laws are unnecessary under these conditions. At all instances when a mass of sumptuary legislation is suddenly introduced to differentiate social groups, the same conditions exist. An elite control of certain symbols is the semiotic equivalent to political and/or economic dominance. When that position is challenged, sumptuary laws are brought into effect to protect their former monopoly over symbolic garments (Bubolz Eicher and 1979, 12). Once the access to this "text" has extended beyond the control of a small dominant group, illegitimate use and imposture is feared. In the case of clothing, social unrest can create an ambiguity of roles, reflected in the disorder of dress style, making a correct "reading" hard to perform (Bubolz Eicher and Roach, 1979, 11). The elite, fearing their inability to decipher the signs that surround them, attempt to restore control with law. Unenforceable, the laws operate much the same way as censorship codes: desperate gestures to retrench customary powers when the production and distribution of communicative goods has passed from the hands of an elite into the hands of another group (Ewen and Ewen, 1982, 125). And, as in the case of censored material, these protective laws create the temptation of forbidden fruit by increasing the value of the symbolic meanings. Elite groups must either invent new, more exclusive signs that are beyond appropriation, or engage in a game of exaggeration to remain the fashion leaders (Bell, 1976, 109).[1]

Sumptuary laws are a statement of questioned dominance. They attempt to locate where distinctions exist and where allegiances should lie. They are only enacted when a threat is

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[1] This explains some styles of the 16th to 18th centuries. Towering wigs, enormous panier dresses, and excessive ornamentation defies all practicality and abandons beauty for the sake of pure competition. When the excesses of a particular style reach their breaking point (i.e. physically incapable of extending the dimensions), it is dropped completely, creating its own shock value.

perceived, as a hostile, exclusionary action, they only encourage defiance. Sumptuary laws will always be ineffective for that reason, as they are the products of fashion, a recognition of its forces, rather than a force enacted against fashion. All dress regulations are therefore doomed from the outset Nevertheless, the prominence and quantity of these laws over the course of western history indicates the presence of a belief system. Sumptuary law designates a faith in the transparency of physical appearance, as clothing is expected to reflect rank, role, and the accompanying personality But it also shows the inherant falseness of this belief, as imitation, impostue and competition threaten the cohesion of social stratification (Finkelstein, 1991, 139)

The chaos perceived in the modern day is a result of the challenges and counter-challenges made in the competitive arena of fashion It has come to the point where one expects misrepresentation of class, as the inhabitants of Western society have come to assume a conspicuous attention to fashionability (Finkelstein, 1991, 139) Modern western social organization has made almost all of us "slaves to fashion" to some degree, creating a "sartorial conscience" from the remnants of law and their mandatory defiance of centuries past, though what constitutes the signs of fashion have changed significantly The regulation of the fashion code has moved from the formalities of the state and the church to the pages of the fashion magazine, assuming the form of entertainment to entice a larger audience Subtle censures carry more weight than any formal law the "loud" tie, the "bad" hat, the "improper" skirt, the "cheap" scent can lead to complete dishonour if the violation reaches the attention of the wrong person (Bell, 1976, 19) In a complete reversion, the law has now become a mandatory employment of fraudulent status symbols. Status is disguised in an attempt to level everyone into one homogenous, affluent class, at least in terms of appearance (Blumberg, 1974, 491) Proof of this lies in the operation of the fashion industry In all other areas of cultural production, strict copyright laws protect authorship rights Writers, composers, and artists can sue if their work is copied, but a huge market in designer knock-off styles flourishes in the modern fashion industry, creating the appearance of a short, sliding scale of affluence rather than sharply defined polarities (Blumberg, 1974, 491) Sumptuary laws highlighted differences and inequity, thus encouraging challenge The widespread abandonment of this practice has lead to mass fashion rivalry. Over the years, competition has been watered down as the period between the creation of a distinctive style and its appropriation has been virtually nullified, creating the appearance of a democratic, egalitarian society Challenges to power groups are thus lessened, as privilege is disguised into less visible forms, reduced to a discreetly stitched label in the back of a collar or an insignia on a handbag. Though sumptuary laws may have all but vanished in this context, the same belief in the power of

external appearances expressed by material goods still rules our way of interpreting the social world (Blumberg, 1974, 492).

CONCLUSION

Fashion and antifashion are uniforms, a fact readily seen in any clothing store or social space where small groups of identically dressed people mingle amongst themselves. [1] The necessity for change, whether that be the cyclical change of fashion or the implosion of antifashion, is caused by the eventual expressive inability of clothing; the repetition of meanings neutralizes their communicative power into a white noise, unnoticed due to mass conformity. The contradiction between the display function and the homogeneity of clothing emerges in all the versions of the uniform. Individual idiosyncracies are legislated into existance, becoming another type of uniformity, necessitating constant chance. Julia Emberly describes how the fashion apparatus must operate on the basis of its own denial:

> "And yet in order to produce a space of desire for that 'liberation' the fashion apparatus must ensure that sufficient alienation, self-loathing, boredom and sterility exist. In the necessary production of its own contradictions, the fashion apparatus holds the subject within a spectrum of choices which close at the extreme ends of total freedom on the one hand, and absolute control on the other." (Emberley, 1987, 48)

Fashion innovations must be considered novel, even though fashion is nothing but the eternal recycling of details in new contexts. It must also be considered beautiful, to encourage acceptance and consumption. The beauty of a new uniform quickly wears off into what Thorstein Veblen calls 'an aesthetic nausea". Styles of the past seem grotesque, stripped of their naturalness by the current myths of practicality and progressive fashion. The rhetorics of fashion erase the memory of its own past, discrediting preceeding styles in favour of the current mode (Barthes, 1983, 300). To justify change, clothing cannot abandon some claim to utility, but, ultimately, all clothing is pure aesthetics. The "futility" of dress is the source of fashion's ugliness, permitting old styles [and the values attached to them] to be discarded in favour of the new and "improved" uniforms of the present (Veblen, 1953, 124-125).

Roland Barthes reasserts Veblen's declaration of the ultimate negativity of fashion when he states that "nothing" is at the nucleus of fashion. All its meanings are the creation of a rhetorics of detail, the smallest elements are able to transform the entire signification of a garment, even retrieving a mass of senseless shapes, colours and patterns from the void of meaninglessness into a coherent social discourse (Barthes, 1983, 243). Sourcing Hegel, Barthes notes that clothing

[1] An interesting annecdote, as reported by Richard Arnold, a former Paramount studio employee, shows the degree to which humans seek their own kind. A large crowd scene was being shot for one of the Star Trek films where extras, clad in the uniforms of the different divisions of the imaginary Star Fleet organization, were told to mill around as if they were attending an informal social function. Much to the director's chagrin, the extras proceeded to form large units based on the colour of their uniforms, despite repeated attempts to mix everyone together.

transforms the abstract, shapeless body into a "real" [i.e. socially significant] body, suggesting ideal forms (Barthes, 1983, 258). These ideals cannot materially exist, their shadowy illusions are superimposed onto the naked [not nude] body. Unreproducible as they are intangible, they are subject to unnoticed change. The present version of the natural way of being seems to mirror the "eternal" ideal of the clothed body. There is no physical model on which a comparison can be based, so historical contigency can be ignored and the past can be chastised for its impracticalities and odd sense of proportion. Fashion thus narrates the body into existence, signifying against the substance of flesh and cloth in an elaborate, multiplicative system of meanings (Barthes, 1983, 277).

Fashion histories attempt to reinscribe individual ownership of styles onto the elites that physically create or stereotypically sport them. Fashion becomes separated from the collective memory and attached to nameable monarchs and designers (Lipovetsky, 1987, 51). As one selects one's own wardrobe, a similar attribution of taste takes place, only in retrospect, when faced with the horrors of past fashion does our conformity to larger convention reappear, as one hopes to disclaim personal choice over the now embarassing styles of old. But individualism itself is a fashion, a style of the intellect and of ideology. Fashion, politics, economics, and aesthetics are subject to its discourse. Like any fashion, individualism rules with an iron fist, and so personal style and creativity in dress are expected to the degree that they become a formal requirement (Lipovetsky, 1987, 53). Mass individualism returns fashion to the imitative style of the uniform, showing that mimickery and difference are not contradictory, but part of the social function of clothing (Lipovetsky, 1987, 52).

Unarguably, the clothing we wear affects our identity. We do not judge the suitability of clothing by mere practical concerns. Is it properly made? Is it comfortable? Does it suit my needs? Each time we try on a new outfit, we automatically run to a mirror to see how well we can wear a new role embodied by its uniform (Dichter, 1985, 30). In this way, clothing is selected to reflect our self-concept, how and where we see ourselves in the wider social context. The ideal of our "authentic" self is contrasted to a "contrived" costume, with clothing miraculously able to communicate both transparently truthful interiority and masquerading deceipt (Davis and Lennon, 1985, 177). Conformity to the occasion and the "need" to project a personal statement must co exist in clothing, but individualized communication in a larger context of uniformity results in the use of stereotypical means of display (Silverman, 1986, 32). Clothing is heralded as the best way to display our individuality within a mass society. Ironically, this is achieved through the consumption of mass produced goods.

Like a cybernetic system, the "negative feedback" of uniformity only becomes apparent when "positive deviance" intrudes upon this "homeostatic constancy". But fashion is not a mechanical device it is a flexible, creative medium manipulable by individuals within a context of collective agreement It is not designed for efficiency, as ambiguity is an integral component of its system It operates with varying degrees of economy, overcoding as in the case of a genuine uniform, or undercoding to permit social flexibility. Clothing communicates through polar oppositions and their subsequent transgression, [1] creating powerful, evocative meanings through contrasts and combinations as the variables relate to one another (Rugh, 1986, 3).

This interdependent tension in clothing extends into the categories and groups which are represented by its forms Leader and subject are fused together through the commonality of their uniform, each deriving their status in relation to the other (Roche, 1989, 74) Exhibitionistic display requires an appreciative audience, with all sharing a common understanding of the rules in operation and the stakes involved (Roche, 1989, 78). A mold must be formed so that it may be broken The ideal of the uniform is just that - a non-existant original against which all the variations and appropriations can be measured Attempts are made to define the original into existance, be it social hierarchies defined by sumptuary legislation or beauty ideals achieve through manipulations of the body. A natural individuality will break these molds, for the social world and the human body proove to be too irregular to conform to any ideal despite their temporary plasticity The variations in the shape, size, colour, place, and time of the human body requires its reorganization into meaningful patterns This make-work project of labelling individuals propels entire economies, giving structure to society Despite all efforts to render the world transparently symbolic and efficient, differences re-emerge as bodies refuse to conform to tyranical patterns and as alternative social organizations re-create social structure When it comes to the clothing that we wear, difference begets sameness, and vice versa.

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1 e g long / short, wide / narrow, light / dark, decorated / spare, modest / immodest, form concealing / form revealing, appropriate / inappropriate, garish / good taste These values are historically variable, but seem absolute during a definitive time and place

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