A-LINES: TEXTS, DRESSES, AND 1960s AMERICAN ICONS

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Abstract

This project draws attention to the modernist threesome of line, letter, and dress that reaches its formal apotheosis in the minimalism of the 1960s' A-line dress. Using Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* as a touchstone for understanding the queer relationship between the material and immaterial, I chart two objects and events from the 1960s that took the A-line into immortal places in art, aesthetics, fashion, commerce, and politics. In part one, I examine how technological advancements in paper and printing technology are constellated in the figure of the short-lived fad of the 1960s paper dress, an A-line shift. Tracing the long history of the interwoven cloth and paper industries, I also consider Andy Warhol's rarely discussed promotional happening that marketed a "DIY" paper dress painting kit. In part two, I move from a reading of the lines of Jacqueline Kennedy's storied Chanel suit worn on November 22, 1963, to an analysis of the lines of Elfriede Jelinek's one-woman play "*Jackie."*

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PART ONE

A Primer of A: Introduction

"A line distinguishes it. A line just distinguishes it."

-Gertrude Stein "A Long Dress" *Tender Buttons*

This project draws attention to the modernist threesome of line, letter, and dress that reaches its formal apotheosis in the minimalism of the 1960s' A-line dress. Forty years earlier, Gertrude Stein had gestured toward the queer, embodied drama of this trio. "A line just distinguishes it. A line just distinguishes it," she writes in a fragment in *Tender Buttons,* suitably titled, "A Long Dress" (1914) (18). Why does she repeat herself? To underscore the phrase? To underline it or unsettle it? *Just* is the important word in this passage. Used as an adjective, it connotes morality, as adverb, exactitude, and immediacy. In Middle English poetry, "under line" was an expletive: the triangular piece of fabric at the front section or lap of a gown that denoted in pre-Freudian fashion the "tender buttons" it covered and exposed. "A line just distinguishes it." It barely divides. It exactly divides. Can borders of orders ever be just? To distinguish comes from the Latin *distinguere,* "to separate between, keep separate, mark off," and, more amusing, "to separate by pricking."[1] A *line*, in Stein's gloss, then, might be said

[1] When the Latin word is divided into its component parts, it literally means "to separate by pricking": ("*dis-* 'apart'" + "s*tinguere* 'to prick.'

to just "separate by pricking," a wording that makes explicit her text's exposé of the entangled relation among lines of material and text, hand-sewing and sex.

The *A* in that phrase is not phallic for Stein, but tactile, material, a shape. A triangle. A pyramid.[2] "...It has that shape nicely," she writes. "Very nicely may not be exaggerating. Very strongly may be sincerely fainting. May be strangely flattering. May not be strange in everything. May not be strange to" ("Substance in a Cushion" 12). Here too, she insists upon the strange materiality of her words. Flattery, for instance, from the Old French *flater*, for "to deceive," has a physicality and violence often forgotten in English: It also means "to caress, fondle, prostrate" or "fling (to the ground)" (*"Flatter, n.1"*). For Stein, language signifies through physical touch. Elsewhere, she declares,

> A splendid address a really splendid address is not shown by giving a flower freely, it is not shown by a mark or by wetting. Cut cut in white, cut in white so lately. Cut more than any other and show it. Show it in the stem and in starting and in evening coming complication. (A Plate 17)

[2] In 1914, after *Tender Buttons* was published, the French poet, Guillaume Apollinaire wrote a calligramme in the shape of the Eiffel Tower. Stein, however, has already re-gendered that shape (Apollinaire and Chandler).

Stein adored puns.[3] A dress also may be a "splendid address." Dress becomes a vehicle for speech. And speech, like sex, is best addressed by attending to the way it generates sensation, is something *felt,* rather than how it engenders lines of marks on a page: "giving a flower freely, it is not shown by a mark or by wetting... Show it… in evening coming complication" (17). Stein insists her readers pay attention to the seams; seams, like signs, are always more than they seem.

Stein's signs are sensual *objects* rather than *vehicles* of meaning. The labor of writers, like that of tailors, she suggests, is a material act that depends upon the selection and arrangement of signs. Sounds and ideas adhere to visual signs, letters to words, words to meaningful phrases, sentences to paragraphs. As objects stitched together from parts, Stein knew they may also be ripped apart. Sewing, like writing and editing, like love, are all crafts–done by hand or aided by machine. She preferred handwork, taking the initiative, putting things together, pulling things apart. She left the typing, editing, and realignment, the re-seeing and re-seaming to A. Alice, that is.

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[3] Maria Damon argues wordplay expresses Stein's marginal experience as a lesbian, Jewish writer linked specifically to the idea of Yiddish (which appears slant in Stein's title "Yet Dish") as a Jewish female domestic vernacular of creativity, mobility, and instability reflective of the notions of Jewish homeland (*Dark Ends* 217). In "Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the 'Jewish Question'" she argues Stein's metaphors of lace fabric interrogate emptiness as a "power to 'unmean' from the rigidly semantical context of most discursive forms, including that of social science" and present the constructed nature of language and by extension the "Jewish Question" (499, 501).

Alice B. Toklas, an accomplished seamstress and needlepoint worker, was expert at piecing things together, including Stein's illegible handwriting and, at times, illogical prose.[4] The fictional Alice of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* writes, "I am very often able to read [her handwriting] when she is not" (737). Stein is "literally unreadable, that is, illegible, until transmuted by her typists;" writes Natalia Cecire, "...[t]ouching, dusting, merely (so to speak) processing, allowing the text to pass through the fingertips" (299). Eyal Amiran argues Toklas becomes Stein's hand, "a prosthetic receptionist" who gives shape to nonsense, giving "Stein's work its sense of unsupported autonomy" (Amiran 35). Toklas edited Stein's wardrobe as much as her writing, laboring over both fabrics and texts. She influenced Stein's sartorial choices, including what became her signature attire of decorative silk vests.[5] When they met, it was Stein's unusual style that caught Toklas' attention, particularly the stone brooch Stein wore fixed at the neck. In her own memoir *What Is Remembered* (1963), Toklas recalls meeting Stein as a "golden brown presence" in a corduroy suit, her brooch vibrating so much when "she talked, very little, or laughed, a great deal, [she] thought her voice came from this brooch" (Toklas 23–4).[6] The brooch gives solidity to breath, her voice materialized through the accessory.

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[4] Claire Pajaczkowska writes, "We experience cloth as neither object nor subject, but as the threshold between, as a liminality where meaning decomposes into materiality, and threatens nonsense. It is this quality of non-sense that makes textiles especially interesting (220).

[5] Documented in Carl Van Vechen's photograph of her surrounded by vests in 1935 (Corn 149).

[6] Toklas was always finely attired and never left the house without hat, gloves, and handbag (Corn 265).

Stein's writing emphasizes the tactile, material, and sensual practice of language production, as speech or as text. She adopts hands as a sensual sign, a mediating agent between surfaces, and flesh subject to fatigue ("after all there is a limit to the human hand," she writes in *Paris, France*) (Gertrude Stein, *Paris, France* 8).[7] *Tender Buttons* presents a way of seeing and reading the world as a "system arranged in a system to pointing," a gesture of the finger that has been read as an allusion to semiotics and the language of signs. Stein's finger directs, it is true. And it beckons. She insists upon an erotics of a hand that can point, touch, grab, labor–and fuck.[8] Her hands do not work alone. Texts are exchanged hand to mouth, mouth to hand. Toklas' contribution as editor, reviser and muse, destabilizes a traditional notion of authorship; it queers the relationship between creator, producer, and text, and upsetting the hierarchy of masculine creative authorship over feminized editorial hand.[9]

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[7] Gertrude Stein, *Paris France*. See also,

> When we were having a book printed in France we complained about the bad alignment. Ah they explained that is because they use machines now, machines are bound to be inaccurate, they have not the intelligence of human beings, naturally the human mind corrects the faults of the hand but a machine of course there are errors. (8)

[8] In the 1960s and 1970s the term five-fingered or dry-mouthed widow was part of service slang for masturbation (widow, n OED, *"Widow, N."*).

[9] Jani Scandura, *Down in the Dumps* on queerness of editing and collaborative writing/editing, blue pencil.

Tender Buttons is "a love letter." Or more to the point, a love letter to the letter *A*. A is an initial, shorthand, and beginning (Alice, Ada, Aider). The first letter of the alphabet. "A is for apple." The first phrase in a primer reasserts the priority of Adam (A is for Adam as well) and positions "Eve" (and "e") as the homonym, a co-conspirator in the tragedy of A's "original sin." *Tender Buttons* takes language in hand–as alphabet, address and re-dress—to undo it.[10] In what is perhaps the best portrayal of cunnilingus in all of literature, Stein's text declares, "THIS IS THE DRESS, AIDER./ Aider, why aider, why whow, whow stop touch, aider whow, aider stop the muncher, muncher, munchers" (31).[11] The text might be a strip show if it weren't so attentive to the nature of a dress. To a dress. A's dress. The A-dress.

A New Story of A

This project is not about *a* dress, however, but about what happens when *a* dress becomes *the* dress, the *A-line dress*. By the time Toklas wrote *What Is Remembered* in 1963, the A had become both the era's iconic dress shape and most visceral threat (atomic bomb). The letter A is index (finger), gesture, part of a pattern (match "A to a," etc.), a-line and line-edits, a "system of pointing," as it had been for Stein. After World War II, however, A also became a form that deforms–or destroys absolutely. In 1946, Stein dubbed the A-

[10] See Georgia Googer's "The Radical Ekphrasis Of Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons."

[11] Aider in the bilingual pun refers to both helping and accompanying, here both a collaborative and erotic act of cutting and conjoining.

bomb the symbol of the Atomic Age as "uninteresting" because "it is the living that are interesting not the way of killing them." What's the use of A, Stein wonders, "if all is destroyed and nothing is left?" (Stein et al. 163). It is no accident, therefore, that a few years later, at the height of the Cold War, *A* again became "interesting"–as "invention," origin, printed matter, and possibility, as something one might need to dread. The apocalyptic potential of the atomic bomb finds its formal analogue in the minimalism of the 1960s, which asks how much must be cut for there to be "nothing left" (Ono).[12] Yoko Ono's 1964, *Cut Piece,* in which the artist sat still while viewers used a pair of scissors to snip off parts of her clothes, was a performance of that question.[13] This project asks an analogous one: what is left of the feminine in midcentury America when a woman is shed of her dress?[14]

In *Landscape for a Good Woman,* Carolyn Steedman reads Christian Dior's post-war "New Look," an era-defining shape, as an allegory for British working-class women's desire and rage.[15] Released in 1947, the New Look's full circle skirts, cinched

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[12] See Clare Johnson's "Performance Photographs and the (un)clothed Body: Yoko Ono's Cut Piece" and James M. Harding's "Between Material and Matrix" (Harding 93).

[13] In 1974, Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 0* offered 72 items to viewers to use on her any way they say fit including a gun with one bullet. The audience eventually cut off her clothing (Abramović).

[14] The 1960s are also the era when trouser-wearing becomes normalized; they come to surpass dress-wearing by the following decade.

[15] The American editor of *Harpers Bazaar* had commented to Dior in 1947, "It's quite a revolution, dear Christian! Your dresses have such a new look!" (Benaïm et al.).

waists, and precise tailoring marked a clear departure from wartime utilitarian attire. The New Look skirt, according to Steedman, offered "a public language that allowed [her mother] to want, and to express her resentment at being on the outside, without the material possessions enjoyed by those inside the gate." She whispers an aside, writing, "(But within the framework of conventional political understanding, the desire for a New Look skirt cannot be seen as a political want, let alone a proper one)" (Steedman 121). What might constitute a "proper want, if this one is improper?," Steedman seems to ask. And why is high fashion the medium, object, and thing through which political stakes are at once sublimated and revealed? Steedman's working-class mother's resentment about her class, about the demands of patriarchy on women and mothers in postwar England, and Britain's emergence into consumer capitalism become projected, fetish-like, onto a fixation on a thing: not any skirt, but a New Look skirt, with the unattainable yards of rich fabric, precision pleating and darts upon which the style depended. Rather than using her resentment to activate political change that prohibits access to the good life,

Steedman's mother's resentment is deactivated in her unquenchable desire for a skirt. Ignoring the social and economic landscape that restricts her, and even the natural contours of her body, she seeks to edit her reality, her form, by wearing a new silhouette.[16] The passage, in short, underscores the embeddedness of the lines of a dress

[16] Steedman's mother's attachment to the New Look skirt as a sign of acceptance, of "making it, of the attainability of a "Good Life" in middle class terms, crystalizes the structure that Lauren Berlant calls,

(its hemline or girth) with the social, economic, historical, and political contexts in which they are produced. It foregrounds how 20th-century high fashion becomes the medium and figure through and against which "improper" affects take hold. Steedman's thinking is significant for this project: the broken clusters of promises ("cruel" and otherwise),[17] unruly affects and attachments can be articulated not only through a fetish-like relationship to the commodity form, but to form itself, the form of a letter, or a dress.

By 1954, however, Dior had shed the New Look, seeking more minimal and "natural" silhouettes. Primer-like, he turned to the alphabet. That year, he introduced the Y-line, with broad shoulders and slim skirts. The next season, he presented the H-line, which lowered the waistline, raised, and deemphasized the bosom, and the A-line, a silhouette that was so simple, so clean, so paired down, so *legible*, it could be drawn by a child. Dior commented, "By stylizing the extent of certain models from the Spring/Summer 1955 collection and leaving the size games free, I isolated the letter A which itself succeeded the letter H of the previous one"(Sinclaire 74) He then hedged his bets, "But each collection is made up of a wide variety of theses and no letter of the alphabet—A, H, Y alone is capable of embodying them all." While the Y and the H silhouettes have disappeared and reappeared over the years, none of them gained traction like the A-line dress, a kind of concrete poetry in fashion. According to *Vogue,* the A-line

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"cruel optimism," a relation that "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1).

[17] I refer here to Lauren Berlant's coinage of "cruel optimism" to describe attachments to the broken promise of the "good life" in the contemporary United States.

became the "most wanted silhouette in Paris" that spring (Vogue 1955). In Spring 1958, a year after Dior's sudden death, the house, left under the care of Yves Saint Laurent, launched a far more radical collection of A-lines called "Trapeze Line". Narrow shoulders and bias-cut voluminous triangular cut skirts that bordered the unwearable marked the collection (Sinclaire 72). The same year, Spandex was invented, girdles were shed, and the FDA approved the first birth control pills. The 1960s were born.

What I call the "1960s" is a loosely framed era that corresponds with this dress. It begins in 1957, with the sudden death of inventor Christian Dior, weaves through the hyper-consumerism and social movements of the 1960s, lingers, ghost-like through the 1970s and is supplanted, and re-gendered, by another "A," the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. By the end of that decade—or just past its end—most of those 1960s icons had already perished: Andy Warhol (1987), Jackie Onassis (1994). But *A* remained.

The A-line minidress (a popular shape for little girls in the 1950s) became *the* look of the 1960s. Standing apart from the body, the wider cut waists and loose tailoring allowed for greater freedom of movement, particularly for pregnant women during the baby boom. It was youthful, sleek, even "space age" in its streamlined modernism.[18] Its simplicity seemed to promise a democratized fashion, accessible to all (it could be handmade by an amateur seamstress), but that promise belied the way it ramped up

[18] Pan America Airlines, founded in 1927, had major footing in the 1960s and 1970s but deregulation of the airline industry transformed the symbol of modernity and progress (and a joke in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 *2001: A Space Odyssey* where several minutes of instructions is read before the bathroom can be used) into another financial disaster of the 1980s, stamped out in 1991.

consumerism, a hyper-disposability that made meaning through repeated consumption. Its significance as form–and form as letter, *a* letter, is important to underscore. (As Stein comments in her Primer *To Do A Book of Alphabets and Birthdays*, "Everything begins with A" (Stein and Potter 11).)

In *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from The New England Primer to the Scarlet Letter*, Patricia A. Crain observes that as the first letter of the alphabet, A is a stabilizing force; it is an organizing, pedagogical vehicle for literary practice, or "the art of reading," found in primers. It is also a notorious mark. The shame of an A sewn on a woman's dress drives the narrative of one seminal texts of early American literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (Crain 4, 32). Aide-memoire, a ritualized pairing, the letter A is at once linguistic and literal mark, visual image, shape, and sound (24).[19] Crain coins the term "alphabetization" to describe the exchange of reading practices that coincided with the expansion of print from the 16th to the 19th centuries (6). She points out that the very first children's book, *The Visible World* (1658), also contains the first pictorial alphabet setting in motion a model that continues in contemporary children's books.

The invention of the reading primer in the United States was inextricably linked to politics and the production of a Republican populace, she argues; instructions made through illustration and images increasingly displaced orality, aligning the child with the

[19] Ironically, Stein relates a childhood story in *Autobiography,* where she is unable to copy her poetry on to a fine piece of parchment, finding each time she copied the writing it became less and less legible (736).

book-object as pedagogical tool more directly than with an instructor (Crain 38). "The association of the alphabet with visual images functions to naturalize the sign," Crain writes, "makes it seem not arbitrary but necessary" (36). "Alphabetization" emerges out of a historical shift that prioritized knowledge of the alphabet as a fundamental precursor to learning to read; it describes both a transformation in reading practice and names the adherence of letter forms to and consumerism itself, and both to democracy.[20] In describing the alphabet as an "agent shaping the cognition and affect of future consumers and producers of literature," Crain relies on the language of dress (6).

Alphabetization also coincided with developments in print culture and the emergence of American literature and the way the alphabet reinscribes gender. When Hawthorne's Hester is forced to wear an embroidered A—for adulteress—on her dress, *A* becomes a sign of Americanness, feminine sexuality, and a feminized and nationalized original sin. This 1850 novel, which looked back to the 17th century, also coincided with some of the most important transitions in modern print technology: a shift from to printing on paper made of pulped wood (1850) and demise of rag paper (made from worn-out clothing); the advent of the platen job press (1851); the founding of the

[20] Patterns of alphabetization were changed over time to adapt to institutional and social needs but the pairing of letter shapes with images improved memorization. Crain argues that the images as well as the reading practices shaped the literary practice over time, interiorizing both the letters *and* the process of learning through images. The introduction of images in *The New England Primer* presented both theological and academic study. Alphabet books after 1750 contained images intended to interiorize the sound and shape of letters, often materialized on a letter board, or ruler marked with letters (Crain 56).

National Typographic Union (1852); and invention of the paper folding machine (1856).[21] As printing technologies advanced in the 19th century, the issue of legibility, as measured by reading speed and visual layout, became increasingly important.

Thus, font design and the visual design and layout of texts, particularly newspapers, became as significant as the content. Affordable and convenient, printing and material technologies made producing texts increasingly convenient. Phototypesetting was widely available in offices in the 1960s where photos of the type were taken and then prints created from the negative. Xerox copiers were introduced in 1959 and by the late 1960s manufacturers marketed special paper designed for runnability. Text collection projects like the World Cat Library database (1967) and Project Gutenberg (1971) were also developed at this time. Even Hypertext was coined in 1965, a sign of the coming digital revolution in 1984 that would do away with the need for typesetting entirely with the first personal computer.

Strangely, a lasting and widely used tool for digital textual design, originated from a low-tech approach to printing letters called dry transfer, was engineered by Letraset in 1959. The process allowed for letter decals to adhere to a surface with no water or solvents because they were transferred through burnishing. The sheets of various letters and symbols lumped together on the page inspired the 1960 invention of Lorem Ipsum, a visual nonsensical placeholder text used to show the layout of a document. The

[21] The job press could print small sizes of paper, such as for handbills. The press was linked to the growth of postal service then fell out of use in the 20th century.

era ushered in a new relationship to print and prints. During the 1960s, craft culture also reflected a growing desire toward customization that had begun earlier in the century with the advent of home sewing as a supplement and accompaniment to rather than replacement of cheap mass-produced clothes (the Singer Corporation began offering free sewing courses in New York in 1927).[22] It was also spurred later in the century by the widespread adoption of silk-screening machines.

Letter as icon

During the 20th century, the commerce of reading that Crain locates in the alphabetized primer was "internationalized" and stripped of its relationship to books and even to written language itself. Print was streamlined into a pattern. Reading no longer depended solely upon words. In 1925, the Viennese social scientist and philosopher Otto Neurath (1882-1945) opened the Museum of Social and Economic Affairs in Vienna, a venture that was bankrolled by the city's Social Democratic government. (It closed in 1934.) Arguing that it was easier "to remember simplified pictures…. than to forget accurate figures," Neurath developed what he called the "Vienna method" of visual statistics, which used charts, animated films, and interactive exhibits to describe complex statistical data rather than relying on lists of numbers or descriptive text. A Socialist and activist, Neurath sought a way to provide working-class people, who might be illiterate, under-

[22] See Singer Sewing Machine Company, *The Story of the Sewing Machine* (1897).

educated, or non-native speakers of German, access to information about the world they lived in through visual icons that did not require knowledge of reading or mathematics to comprehend (see image 1).

Inspired by the pictorial nature of Egyptian hieroglyphs, Neurath first designed simplified, standardized "stick figures," then positioned them on a grid to communicate scale, spatial relationships, and other complex information. Over the next few years, along with mathematician and physicist, Marie Reidemeister, who began work at the museum in 1925, and Gerd Arntz, a German graphic artist who joined the staff in 1926, Neurath developed what he called the Isotype Language (International System of Typographic Picture Education). Their regularized series of icon-images (Isotypes), flat, single-color images, drawn without perspective could be reproduced easily in print, adopted by others, and combined and organized according to a set of rules, or visual grammar, to convey information (Image 1). The museum published specific guidelines for how to combine and arrange isotypes, providing a pictorial grammar that would be easy to print and reproduce and be easily understood.[23] Ultimately, Arnts designed over 4000 different isotypes.

[23] Images could be combined to present a narrative with lone symbols used as one graphic unit and multiple symbols representing a specific quantity. Isotypes were designed to be read from left to right except where they appear on a map or other geographic plane the struggle of the alienated proletariat in growing industrialized cities.

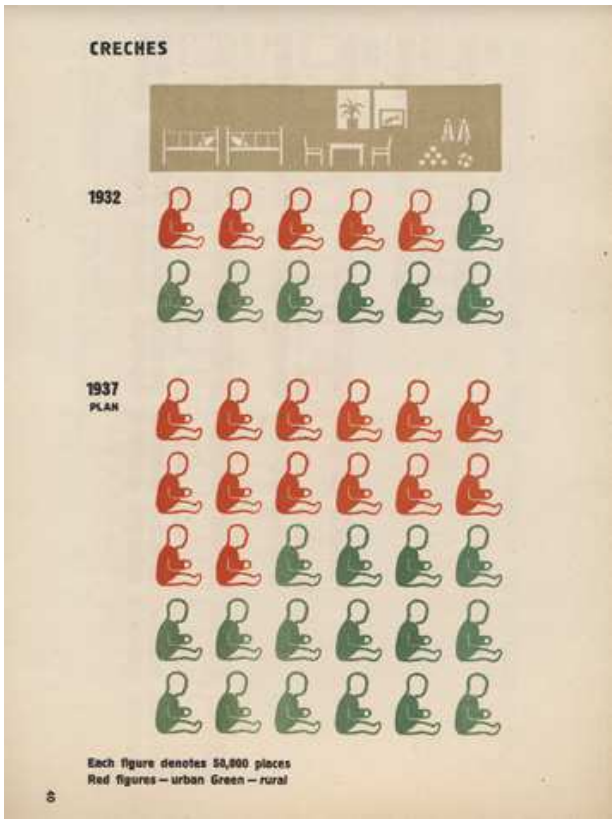

Fig. 1 A chart published by the IZOSTAT Institute in the book The Second Five-Year Plan in Construction (1934) shows the projected growth in "Creches" or nurseries in urban (shown in red) and rural (in green) areas between 1932 and 1937 as a result of the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-7).

Arntz, like Neurath, was attentive to the political significance–and controversial nature–of their work and the development and significance of the isotype shifted in meaning with the rise of Fascism in German-speaking Europe. In 1934, the Museum was shut down and Neurath fled to The Hague in the Netherlands after the Austrian government allied itself with Nazi Germany. Arntz, a Communist activist, who had been affiliated with the expressionist Cologne-based Progressive Artists Group (*Gruppe progressiver Künstler Köln*) before coming to Vienna, followed later that year. There, the

three created the International Foundation for Visual Education; Neurath, influenced by logical positivism, published the *Encyclopedia of Unified Science,* which laid out a common language in which to express scientific and social scientific information.

In the Netherlands as in Austria, Neurath was considered a "half-Jew"; he was prohibited from marrying his "Aryan" collaborator, Marie Reidemeister, who had traveled with him from Austria. After the Netherlands were invaded six years later (1940), Neurath and Reidemeister fled to England. They spent nine months in a British internment camp, were released, and finally married. They settled in Oxford where they continued to work on the Isotype language until Neurath's death in 1945. After the war, Reidemeister continued the work and with Robin Krinross, published a memoir of sorts, *The Transformer: Principles for Making Isotype Charts* (Henning 37). Unfortunately, Arntz did not escape in time. He was conscripted into the German military in 1943 and captured by the Allies, spending the bulk of the fighting as a prisoner of war. Upon his release in 1945, he returned to the Netherlands and resumed work with the Central Bureau of Statistics until retiring in 1965 (Henning 38).

While the creators of Isotype were considered enemies of National Socialism, Nazi Germany employed a variation of Isotypes and pictograms, including during the during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, as icons and non-linguistics descriptors for different athletic events (image 2). Pictographs were transported to the US after the war and appeared again in London during the 1948 games (image 3). Until 1964, however, pictograms rarely used human figures to convey meaning, as Neuruth's Isotypes had to describe scale. Then, in advance of the 1964 summer Olympics in Tokyo, a team of

designers, Masaru Katzumie and Yoshiro Yamashita, developed streamlined designs of individual human figures–attired and in action–as signs for different athletic events (see Figures 4, 5).[24] That year, the British Rail System also adopted pictograms of

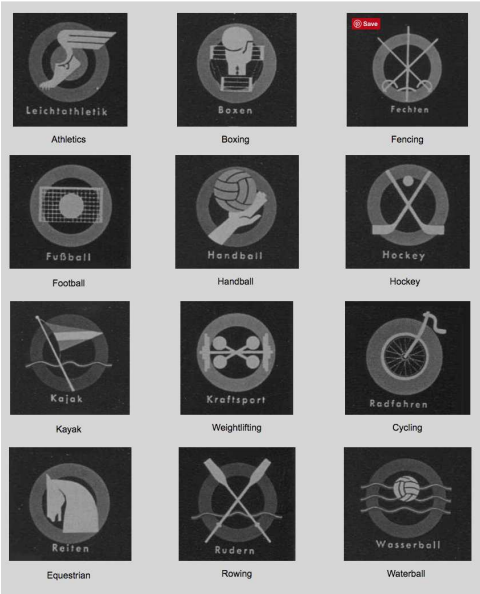

Fig. 2 Pictograms from the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

[24] For more on history of bathroom signs see Maria Popova "The Stuff of Life: The Origins of Bathroom Signs" and Lynna Ciochetto "Toilet Signage as Effective Communication".

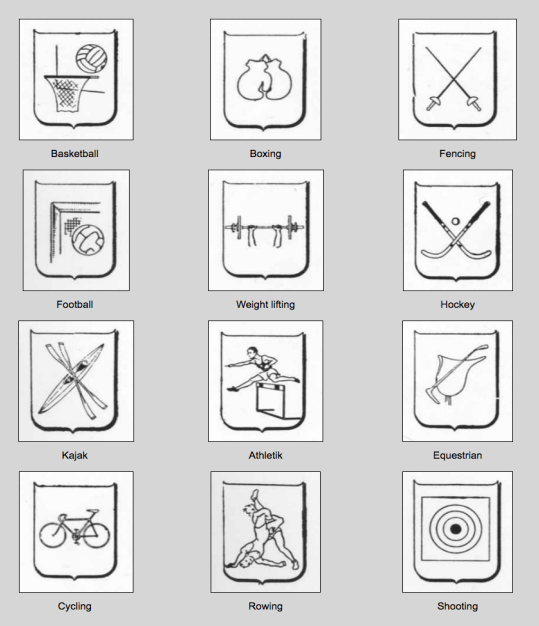

Fig. 2 Pictograms from the 1948 London Olympics

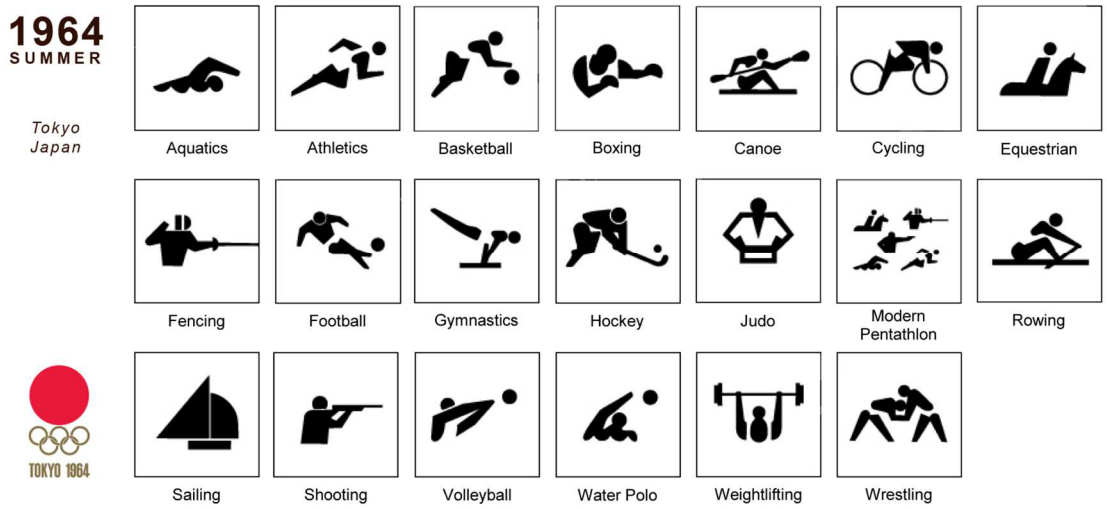

Fig. 3 Pictograms in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Stream-lined human pictograms, unmarked (gendered male), designate all sports except sailing.

Fig. 4 More schematic, ungendered stick-figures were featured in the pictograms for the 1972 Olympics in Munich.

clothed human figures to designate women's and men's lavatories. These were also color-coded as well (blue for men and red for women).[25] Two years later, the U.S. Department of Transportation followed suit, commissioning the AIGA, a professional association for design, to create a series of pictograms that could be used as non-verbal signs [...] Since then, male and female pictograms have been widely adopted internationally to designate gendered public toilets.[26] The female symbol is distinguished by a triangular skirt and the early men's symbol an inverted triangle connoting broad shoulders and a narrow waist. The "stick figure" was commercialized for the first time in New York City, and eventually used to create digital graphic assets called clip art in 1984 with the advent of the first personal computer.

Neuruth's Isotypes do not mark gender difference using visual markers of embodiment–breasts, hips, or penises–but through the adoption of masculine or feminine silhouettes marked by the gendered and historically-specific clothes that his figures seemed to wear (image 6). In the pictograms developed during the 1960s and early 1970s pictograms, however, gender differences are marked only for "women." And "woman"

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[25] The British Rail, as part of a modernization campaign, implemented a distinct rail type face and a series of sleek pictograms, designed by Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir for Britain's Design Research in signage and published materials. Male and female bathrooms were also designated by color; blue for men and red for women (Henning 10).

[26] In some Muslim countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, where men commonly wear a thobe, women are designated on bathroom signs as a veiled head.

became equated with a particular dress shape (image 8).[27] The stream-lined A-shaped bathroom sign becomes an internationally recognized mark of gender difference.

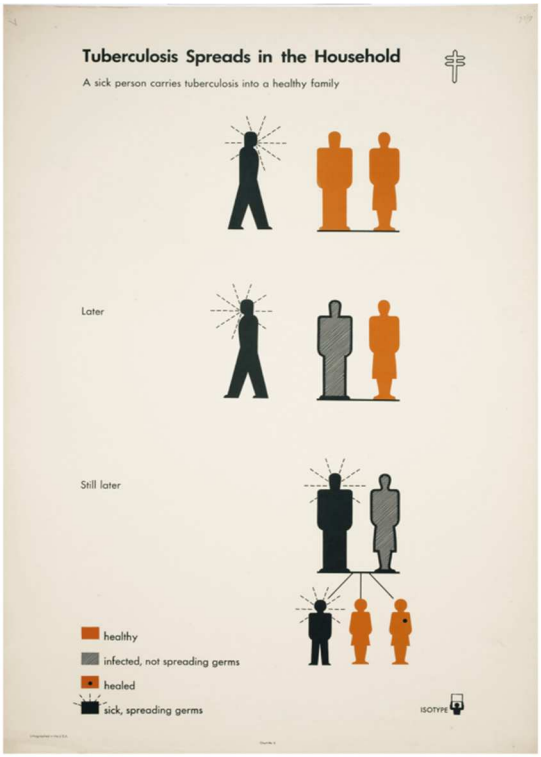

Fig. 5 Example of dressed pictographic humans in a 1938 chart called "Tuberculosis spreads in the household" now housed in the Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection at The University of Reading.

[27] For more on the history of British rail design see Eleanor Street's 2016 *Furniture Design: Contesting Modernism in Post-War Britain* (Herring).

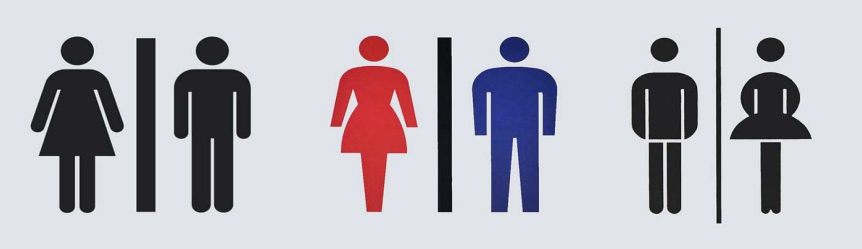

Fig. 6 From left to right: the standard restroom symbols for the U.S. Department of Transportation (designed by the American Institute of Graphic Arts with Roger Cook and Don Shanosky, 1974); The Japanese Industrial Standard restroom symbol (designers unknown); Olt Aicher's pictograms designed for the 1972 Munich Olympics.

Jacques Lacan coined the term “urinary segregation” in his 1957 essay, “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud,” in order to name the way that gender difference, required by his construction of the symbolic order, is literally inscribed in writing on the doors of public bathrooms at the turn of the 20th century. This particular inscription was endemic to 20th-century modernism. Prior to 1887, in the United States, for instance, public bathrooms in workplaces were only for men. As more women joined the workforce in the late 19th century, U.S. states began to mandate separate, segregated toilets.[28]

Lacan tells the story of a brother and sister who sit facing each other on a train. As the train pulls up to the station, two doors come into view: One is labeled “ladies,” the other “gentlemen.” The brother remarks to his sister, “‘We're at Ladies!' 'Idiot!' replies his sister, 'Can't you see we're at Gentlemen’” (742). Both the boy and girl enter into the symbolic order with different perceptions of gender, only recognizing only the otherness of the different sex. Lacan writes, "For these children, Ladies and Gentlemen will be henceforth two countries toward which each of their souls will strive on divergent wings..." and example, of what he calls Urinary segregation. The body ego of each child is thus projected outward into public spaces. Lacan writes, “It is Freud’s discovery that gives the signifier/signified opposition its full scope: for the signifier plays an active role in determining the effects by which the signifiable appears to succumb to its mark,

[28] Importantly, there was another urinary segregation, where “colored” bathrooms were separated. These signs did, however, rely on linguistic modes rather than images. See Shelia Cavangh “Gender, Sexuality, and Race in the Lacanian Mirror: Urinary Segregation and the Body Ego” in *Psychoanalytic Geographies.*

becoming, through that passion, the signified" (Lacan 274). A question for Lacan that underlies this project follows from the discussion of isotypes and pictograms above: What happens when what marks gender and an era is not a letter or word (hommes/femmes, gentlemen/ladies), but the shape of a triangular dress?

A in print: chapter outline

Stein's *Tender Buttons* stands as a touchstone, so to speak, for the case studies covered in this dissertation—two objects and events from the 1960s that took the A-line into immortal places in art, aesthetics, fashion, commerce, and politics. Here, I see the A as powerful organizing force full of associations that reflect the tensions of the era: America, Adultery, Abortion, A-bomb, Archive, Accessory, Artifact, AIDS, Alice, Alphabet, and of course, A-lines. This project draws a line from Stein's strangely queer postmodern modernist poetics, where fabrication is at once material and immaterial, to its instantiation in late modern and postmodern artifacts and design. This quality of clothing is tied to modernity, the development of print and writing technologies, artistic modernism, and the emergence of social scientific discourse, which ventured to codify how things should appear and when. The A-lines of this project chart the trajectory from Gertrude Stein's queer modernist purses to Andy Warhol's queer paper dresses, to Jacqueline Kennedy's "fake" Chanel Suit, to the Elfriede Jelinek's strange feminisms in her play, *Jackie.*

It is through the A-line, a line, that Stein's inaugural interruption of form and body and language becomes an element of style—one culminating in material forms (dresses—paper dresses) and spatial/literary ones (addresses, plays and poems) that are later found in Warhol's projects in the 1960s and in the attempts by feminists, such as Jelinek, to make sense of the social and economic changes accompanying the sexual revolutions challenging the status quo of gender and materialism. From these moments, ending, perhaps in 1967, when Toklas died, or maybe the late 1970s, with the beginning of lesbian and queer readings of Stein's archive, I point to my final destination: the early 1980s, which was marked by the election of Ronald Reagan, the release of *Holiday in Cambodia* by the provocatively named punk band The Dead Kennedys, and eventually to Jelinek's meditation on one of the icon of those dead Kennedys, Jackie herself who died in 1994, in her play.[29]

Chapter 1 "An Accessory: A Purse" extends my reading of Stein's *Tender Buttons* to focus on the purse, or handbag, and the production of queer objecthood. Through Stein's work, I understand the quality of clothing—at once material and immaterial/supernatural/symbolic—as tied to modernity, as an historical, political, and social praxis and condition that coincide with the development of modern technologies and social sciences. Toklas's editing of Stein's visual surfaces–her clothing lines, her written lines–constitutes a queering of language, authorship, and material. In fact, this

[29] In 1977, the first biography of Stein, *Everybody Who Was Anybody*, by Janet Hobhouse, makes the first published reference to Stein and Toklas as lesbians.

project explores the inherent "queerness" of editing and being edited during the 20th century. In Czech director Věra Chytilová's 1966 feminist film, *Daisies*, the girls are bad *because* of their edits: they edit men's money, they rearrange order, food, and print. Then, shedding their A-line dresses, they strike men from their text entirely and climb into bed together and eventually inhabit and smash up the world of politics by frolicking in form-fitting bodysuits made from daily newspapers while parading across a banquet table set for male dignitaries (Chytilová). Death, haunts Chytilová's film as well as the creators of and materials within most of the texts I discuss in this project, is the queerest editor of all. It is a strange and unknown erasure of that which is not seen in the animated living body, the corpse an abject remainder of what is left over, but in some ways resolved.[30]

In chapter 2 "A (Paper) Dress," I examine how technological advancements in paper and printing technology are constellated in the figure of the short-lived fad of the paper dress, an A-line shift, during the mid-1960s. Tracing the long history of the interwoven cloth and paper industries, I also consider Andy Warhol's rarely discussed promotional happening that marketed a "DIY" paper dress painting kit. Warhol used to the kit to personalize a dress while it was being worn by his muse of the time, Nico (Christa Päffgen) of the Velvet Underground. I argue that the Happening presents a queer arrangement of surfaces and texts that limited the event's legibility for the audience. Like

[30] Death is and is also not the last word, as is complicated with how Hughes goes on to edit her work after death.

Stein, however, Warhol also queers the production process itself, passing off the manual labor of painting to his longtime production assistant, Gerard Malanga. For Warhol, the refusal to participate in the scene signals a break from tradition, a reversal of roles. It is a queer arrangement indeed.

Warhol's queer performance displaces his artistic power with other agents; yet he executes a hidden labor more akin to Alice's containment of Stein's productions than to that of the artist. Exposing the delight of the spectacle, Warhol performs as a cuckold artist, refusing to enter into hands-on production with his muse. Where Stein's work emphasizes the "handsome" nature objects that can be felt, their surfaces explored, Warhol's refusal to touch upsets both the commercialized aspects of the scene as well as the artistic ones. If Warhol touches anything in the Factory, it is the notion of the newspaper as spectacle. Warhol, like Stein, also published a kind of autobiography full of important names. His work is interested in the by-hand nature of reproduction and his body would become stained with his own blood when Valerie Solanas shot him in the name of feminism (which bound him to textile forever having to wear a surgical corset to keep his organs in place). From Stein to stain, the figure of the errant body, the vulnerable body that can never be fully protected by its coverings, is part of the story of the A-line, as Muriel Spark's novella, *The Driver's Seat* makes clear.

In chapter 3: "A Suit: Jackie to *Jackie*, Line-by-line," I consider how Jelinek presents clothing as a supreme editor that fixes the female body in a ghost-like way so that even death cannot withhold it. I move from a reading of the lines of Jacqueline Kennedy's storied Chanel Suit worn on November 22, 1963, its rich pink stained forever

in the public imagination by her husband's assassination. Her suit was a "line-by-line" copy of an original, pieced together in the United States to avoid political scrutiny and now housed at the Smithsonian Museum, to an analysis of the lines of Jelinek's one-woman play "*Jackie,"* a mythic take on Kennedy's relationship to clothing. I take up the threesome of line, letter, and dress and their relation to a famous threesome of women who script, perform, and revise 1960s white femininity: Jackie Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and Sylvia Plath. All the women become editors; Kennedy, however, the only one who does not edit herself out, instead edits her body into garments. Jackie, Jelinek suggests, must, just like Steedman's mother, deactivate her body through garments or else she too would die.

A brief epilogue returns to the purse, this time on display in a playful analysis of my excursion to the Esse Purse Museum outside of Little Rock, Arkansas which makes visible the link between the object and bodies. The core of this project is a recognition of the incipient and overt violence entailed in the signifying the politics of gender (and much more—race, nuclear war, capitalism) within American modernity and in a United States culture that leaks across the Atlantic–which also begins with A.

Chapter 1: A Purse

Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* is an enigmatic text. It orients readers queerly toward everyday objects—and then makes them strange. Her formal training as a scientist prompted her to approach language as poetic experiment and language experimentation as inherently poetic (Meyer 80). Reflecting upon the self-generative capacity of collections of words, irrespective of grammar, Stein comments later,

> I took individual words [and] found out very soon that there is no such thing as putting them together without sense. I made innumerable efforts to make words write without sense and found it impossible. Any human being putting down words had to make sense out of them. (qtd. in Meyer 80)

Though she could not extract herself from language's referential function, she came to recognize the norms that disciplined objects and subjects into being "well-behaved." By changing the perspective or view of the objects she named and upsetting traditional linguistic and poetic forms, Stein could expose and challenge the social rules that undergirded everyday language and normalized subject-object relations.

Critical attention to *Tender Buttons* has largely been split between semiotic and social interpretations that often attempt to decode Stein's sexuality. Lisa Ruddick remarks, "the witty, riddling structures of *Tender Buttons* amount to a lure and an obstacle. These short prose poems, which have simple declarative titles ('Milk,' 'A Purse') but punning, elusive texts, sit before us like nuts we are meant to crack." And while, as Ruddick admits, Stein's critics are tempted to crack into the text, they have nonetheless been "alert

to the dangers of looking for 'an infallible pass-key' (Ruddick 190). But even wary attempts to "crack" the text's meanings miss something essential to it; attempts to "open up" *Tender Buttons* risk "closeting" it instead. (Certainly, Stein's attention to the details of dress, which I discussed in the introduction, must be seen to celebrate and display those objects a closet might be presumed to conceal.) But Stein's text asks readers to experience objects rather than decipher codes The collection is a tryptic of the familiar: "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms." But the familiar labels anchor an expected object-subject relationship that is constantly placed out of reach.

Stein's understanding of objects was influenced by her study with the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, one of her "three geniuses" identified in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Pablo Picasso and herself being the other two). Rather than seeing objects as passive recipients of a subject's actions, Whitehead conceived of objects as patterns of properties, not discrete entities that maintain stable meanings only in repeatable and relational event-sequences (G. Johnson 130). As a result, Whitehead believed that objects engage with subjects as active agents in ways that resisted codification (Butler, "On This Occasion" 7). In fact, according to Georgia Johnston, Whitehead's "objects" might be better seen as experiences produced through encounters and events that provoke affective responses (Johnston 130).

Objects *move* in *Tender Buttons;* they move among other objects, across spaces and pages, in context and syntax; they act upon each other in sensual co-inhabitation; they shape and are shaped by their relations and encounters. The text, as sensual object, presents it the objects it constitutes and through which it is constituted in sensual

mutuality. Her objects are both receivers and givers of pleasure; her text, is an object that "touches us when we touch it" (Ahmed 39).

By making language "strange" and allowing new combinations of word-objects and meanings to unfold through "accidental or chance encounters," *Tender Buttons* challenges reader's orientations—*queers* them, in Sara Ahmed's terms—both toward and away from the norms of language, the objects, and the social order.[31] Because *Tender Buttons* "open[s] up new worlds" and "[allows] things to move," the discomfort one feels in encountering the text must be seen as part of its work (Ahmed 19, 154). "We don't always know what might be unsettling," admits Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology*. But once things are unsettled, it can be impossible to return. One must turn somewhere else, and that "turning" can open up different horizons (Ahmed 155). Stein claimed she used "words as objects out of which you manufacture a little mechanism you call a poem" (qtd. in Meyer 69). Stein's resistance to the norms meaning-making and its reorientation away from language as conveyer of meaning to a sensual, material object in itself challenges readers to find new ways to "be with" it—and its objects—in ways that are uncomfortable, unfamiliar, hard to handle. And potentially transformative.

[31] See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 54. Ahmed points out that "orientation involves at least a two-way 'approach,' or the 'more than one' of an encounter. Orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface: we, in approaching this or that table, are also approached by the table, which touches us when we touch it."

Each poem in the first section of *Tender Buttons* is titled after an object name. The titles are evocative, presenting the objects first as a surface to be understood through a presumed subject. When no subject arrives, the reader is left in a new and perhaps puzzling these strange encounters.[32] In Stein's text, the strangeness of these surfaces decouples sensation from perception.[33] This process, left *in medias res*, allows, as Rita Felski notes, "that which was previously taken for granted [to become] newly visible, in both its new and its traditional, disappearing forms" (16). Everyday objects cannot be entirely neutral or pre-existing material, Felski argues; and Stein's objects are especially "freighted down with layers of meanings and associations" (30). Stein's text itself introduces readers to the tactile and sensory pleasure of exploring familiar surfaces, as Felski notes, "that which was previously taken for granted becomes newly visible, in both its new and its traditional, disappearing forms" (16). [34] Stein is not staging an intervention

[32] The titles therefore constitute, in Ahmed's terms, "failed orientations," or extensions. At this moment of failure, such objects 'point' somewhere else or they make what is 'here' become strange" (Ahmed 160)

[33] Timothy Morton argues, "to get to queer objects you simply extend strange strangeness to everything" (166).

[34] Tracking the material, aesthetic, imagistic, sonorous, and affective associations with objects, In *Tender Buttons*, queer possibilities unfold, prompting mutual production of the text through "accidental or chance encounters […that…] redirect us and open up new worlds" (19). The translational and affective experience of the text challenges lines of text and image production. It is part portraiture, part "studies in description" (Stein xi). *Tender Buttons* takes objects as images and turns them into language. The translational and affective experience of the text challenges lines of text and image production *Tender Buttons* is part portraiture, part "studies in description" (Stein xi).

through a recovery or correction of already existing formal, linguistic, or material forms, which would be a project of self-erasure. Instead, Stein demonstrates how contact between surfaces which, though familiar also appear disorienting and strange. The text's insistence upon the disorientating and reorientating effects of linguistic forms and object surfaces, digs deep. This queering of perspective and approach is a vital force for material and social change; in the case of *Tender Buttons*, such moments of disorientation act as a refusal to inherit an existing poetic and genre-based legacy by disorienting the world at hand.[35] Stein produces forms and formal relations that are entirely new and test the limits of how objects, particularly clothing-objects (dress and accessories), can be encountered, worn and adorned.

Pursed

By the time Stein's readers encounter, "A PURSE," a few pages into *Tender Buttons*, they are already attuned to the strangeness of Stein's objects. The text opens with the warning that, "A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS." "Carafe," a homonym of "craft" (i.e., or poetic structure), is an opaque surface that shields or blind readers to its contents—when seen from certain perspectives. The poem obscures and subverts semiotic relationships between subjects and objects.

The poem reads,

[35] In fact, Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* offers a way of reading Stein's queerness and Ahmed writes, "The task is to trace the lines for a different genealogy, one that would embrace the failure to inherit the family line as a condition of possibility for another way of dwelling in the world" (178).

A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS.//A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading (11)

The carafe, or the craft or poetic structure, is an opaque surface that shields, or blind readers to its contents from certain perspectives. An astute reader might gain entry to meaning if they engage in a new form of reading that can tolerate "all this" strangeness. Readers may also be "blind" to seeing the poetic structure for what it is or are blind to the contents to follow. "All this" poetic strangeness should not be dismissed as nonsensical word salad but are ordered to "point" toward that which is nonrepresentational. The project as "not resembling" takes objects outside of direct linguistic representation, transforming them from perception of the object to word, to image/imagined. The order moves toward greater abstracted forms of "not resembling", from the objects to the letters on the page which are ordered to make words, to the material of the physical book. In "A Method of a Cloak" Stein reminds again "all this" draws attention to its excessiveness poetics which different in format and feeling: "all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success" (15)

To not resemble can mean to not appear in a certain way, it can signal a relational gap. Subjects in this collection appear in the margins as implied, imagined, or removed from the title objects. The poem presents a strange navigation of how something seems or appears and what remains blind. It suggests that even without subjects, objects can arrive with "spectral histories" which unsettle the relationship between subject/object and ways

of seeing (Ahmed 44). Mena Mitrano argues, "OBJECTS" tells the story of "a subject that emerges only reluctantly from rupture with the object", engaging a "disembodied" or "fragmented" authorial persona that "regresses back and inside the estranging descriptions of objects" (Mitrano 92).

The word "resemble" does not simply appear similar but can also indicate a craft as copy, imitation, or depiction of likeness (OED, *"Resemble, v.1"*). To not resemble is to oppose and compose form, subject, or artistic tradition that are not alike. To do this, Stein and readers strangely must see the forms of other poetic traditions strangely to orient oneself in the poem. Stein's poetics bear a mark of traditional poetics that are cousins to her own "kind" of legacy (German for child). *Tender Buttons* turns these familial relationships into uncanny linguistic. Though the poems are "not resembling" traditional poetic structures or "cousin" artistic lineages provide familiar orienting points which help to differentiate Stein's "kind" from the rest. T. Cousin lineages present spectacles which dissolve into "a single hurt color." The "system in pointing" or family tree, directs meaning making in particular ways toward the familiar way of attention to language to derive meaning. The system too presents objects in expected ways which direct interpretation. *Tender Buttons* challenges this by presenting an unusual relationship between object and subject, linguistically subverting normative use. Laboring over a new "kind," or child, the text is born to a different lineage that which linked refuses to inherit modes of writing and living that sustained prior ancestors (Ahmed 178).[1]

The difference between these lineages is one of sensual production that can allow one to view inside the carafe: "The difference is spreading." Readers join a queer space

of the "not ordinary" where they are directed toward objects in new ways. *Tender Buttons* is made to spread. It spreads objects across its sections. It spreads semiotically and formally. It spreads meaning with clever puns and linguistic play. It spreads what is read and how. It spreads ideas, parody, inspiration. The relationship is figured sexually, as "spreading" can be understood to apply to both the difference of the text and the different reading practices needed to penetrate the poetic surface. Thus, reading is mutually sensual; the text spreads for the reader and the reader spreads the text. The sensual production of the text is based on material and linguistic connections to the sensed body. In this way, if the difference between Stein's collection and other poetic experiments is in spreading, the text/child is birthed through a sensual reading of it. It relies on a relationship with readers that engages with the pleasures of disorienting possibilities rather than retreating to familiar lineages of reading. Just as lesbian sex itself is different in how both partners spread open, the reader too spreads open before the open pages of the book.

Address, as I mentioned in the introduction to this project, is also "a dress." And a purse? Stein's poem reads in full,

> A PURSE
>
> A purse was not green, it was not straw color, it was hardly seen and it had a use a long use and the chain, the chain was never missing, it was not misplaced, it showed that it was open, that is all that it showed. (21)

In encountering one of Stein's titled object-names, the attentive reader already knows to first ask: What is "a purse" if it is "not" all these things? What can it do? What is it supposed to do? Stein's use of the non-specific "a" in "A Purse" implies that there is a subject that belongs to the object, but that subject is elusive, hovering somewhere in the periphery of purse and poem. In this way, that elusive subject comes to serve as an "accessory" to the purse, its supplement or addition, rather other way around.

This reordering of the subject-object hierarchy, is reiterated in the ways it disrupts a reader's habitual expectations of its matters, uses, and forms. Stein describes the purse almost entirely through negation: It "not green," "not straw color," "hardly seen" "not misplaced." In this way, the purse *is* hardly seen by the reader in part because it is *a* purse—generic rather than specific—calling the reader to consider what the/a purse *is* by seeing what it is not. What queers the text, its purse, its implied, not-quite visible subject is that what is present is itself "hardly seen."

More importantly, one is directed toward an opening. The purse *was* open. Is it now closed, and, if so, why? The "purse" of the first line both repeats and remakes, it both shuts down and opens up the purse that makes up the poem's "title." However, although the purse is open, ironically, it now only shows a state of openness. Just as the poem is about to open up to an affirmative statement, it snaps shut. The "open" purse "open" purse only *shows* openness in its negation of the closure of negation. The poetic object and the material object shift in representation and action here, suggesting a fluidity of relation among language and matter. As the poem opens, the purse closes; as the purse opens, the poem shuts.

purse is a precarious object because of its liminal and shifting position on the body, the repeated turn to and engagement with the body, and its insistence on its own separate physical materiality. Purses "draw near" in ways that disorient the distinction between the purse-object and wearer-subject. Purses can stand alone as sculptural art objects—especially in contemporary fashion, in which they are among the most prized and expensive of accessories. However, even when standing alone, detached, they refer to the bodies and beings to whom they are or might be attached. In ongoing tug-of-war that blurs the lines between body and object, purses are both separate from the body and are subsumed limb-like or organ-like into the body.

Linguistically, psychic, social, and culturally, they mediate the public and private spaces, promising the possibility of access to a subject's interiority. Because purses hold essential tools, identifying documents, communication technologies, and beauty aids, such as lipstick, they mediate the body's extension into the world, the subject's self-presentation and social access, and offer the promise of financial and spatial mobility. Still, one's purse is a private place, a portable closet containing objects that can—or *must*—be concealed or might be exposed only selectively. A now-obsolete figurative use of *purse* referred to it as "[a] person's conscience, heart,... regarded as a place of safe storage or supply; a person's thoughts or store of ideas" that indicate concealment ("Purse, n1"). Protected with clasps, buttons, zippers, and ties, a purse materially and figuratively incorporates both the desire to maintain a realm of privacy—and to breech it.

The related "handbag," a composite of both "hand" and "bag," makes the connection between object and human bodies more explicit. The handbag is a precarious

object that is strangely both at hand and *in* hand. "Bag" was a slang term for a "worthless woman, strumpet" from the 1590s. By the 1670s, "bag" became a playful, eroticized term for a "saucy or flirtatious woman" ("bag, n"). The repetitive, even compulsive way, handbags enter speech and daily use reveal our desire to contain and control the object. We reject the handbag as superficial, yet in it we also confront the other containers, including the womb, that hold us together. The handbag is "the toolbox of femininity," writes Faird Chenoune, a place for objects that can fix identity and normativity. In other words, handbags might be seen as containers that resist containment (qtd. in Cox 8).

As Sherry Turkle notes, some objects are experienced as part of the self, holding a "special status" (7). They have the power to render us vulnerable to "their disorienting qualities" which we experience as uncanny reminders of what is "mundane yet take us away from it" (Turkle and Misa 320). Psychoanalyst and critic Adam Philips argues, for example, that purses and handbags are evocative entry points to consider how our visual, material, and linguistic forms manifest in the psyche. "In the most literal and suggestive—and perhaps most fundamental—sense, handbags are an imaginative elaboration of physical function," he writes. "We are what we carry around with us — and what we used to carry things around" (Phillips 25). At the same time, he points out, purses and handbags are inherently *strange*, "at once alien and integral, disturbing in familiar, mine and not mine" (Phillips 26). Even in our language, we think of the bag as linked to the body. Critical discussions about handbags "can obscure how intimate they are as objects," he warns, "how much like (sexual) body parts or Phantom limbs or practical Necessities they are often felt to be" (Phillips 26). Within psychoanalysis, in

fact, purses and handbags have a rich narrative function and legacy as tropes. Phillips asks, "What … psychoanalytic stories want us to wonder is how a bag fits into the pattern and the project of a woman's life. The stories warn us away from trivializing these objects" (31).

Writing about luxury handbags, Julie Schulte declares what she sees as "the obvious truth of the handbag: From chatelaine to reticule to designer bag, the handbag has always offered both freedom and yoke. It encapsulates a fact about its owner, and reveals that fact as much as, or more than, it conceals her belongings." After all, a purse cannot be abandoned for long without returning to its place on the arm, back, side, or in the hand of its wearer, who faces a gripping anxiety at the realization that a purse and its contents have been lost. Even as the container of one's life, body, and, as Phillips would argue, mind, the bag's weight, style, size, or fittings always insist on its otherness, its separateness from the body, the identity as accessory or add-on and locus, or place (27-28).

Stein's purse in "A Purse" negates the body. Just as her language of negation produces more points for meanings to emerge, the purse is disembodied from any human subject. Even as the poem admits the purse had been embodied, that time has passed: "it *had* a long use." Stein makes clear the purse is entirely disembodied by specifying that it "was not misplaced." In this way, the object forms its own narrative in which it becomes both sign and symbol by rejecting the possibilities for direct association with another subject. Stein's terse description reveals that the purse is entirely divorced from a human subject it had once been intimately involved with.

Again, negation becomes a vehicle for elaboration. As the poem emphasizes and particularizes the object's agency separate from an embodied practice, it moves toward a narrative that suggests the intimacy between the absent wearer and the purse. That the purse had been put to "long use" yet was "never missing its chain" and "not misplaced," all suggest that the wearer had been careful, perhaps even vigilant about its care. Yet the intimacy is not one that is directly embodied. The use might suggest a specific proximity to the body but little else in the poem contributes to a physical representation.

The purse/handbag performs an openness that stands in contrast to Stein's terse, apparently closed even as they are utterly enigmatic, descriptions. Even as the purse withdraws from view, each single negation offering endless possibilities in what might be true. The possibilities are part of the material pleasure of its complete openness (with chain intact). The purse becomes a location of desire and fulfilment. Stein's construction also raises the desire inherit in its "long use" where it could hold other objects related to femininity. Further, that the purse is filled and, in that filling, comes both the desire to fill and to be filled. A purse with nothing except openness is an object whose use provides desire but when not in use it is for visual display. The connection to money too is an important addition to a sign of the economics of exchange between reader and text.[36] An empty purse has no use. It must be filled with the accouterments of femininity to function. Purchasing the purse fulfills a desire to consume—and be consumed. Therefore,

[36] Stein is interested in the exchange of money. In "Glazed Glitter" she writes, "It certainly showed no obligation and perhaps if borrowing is not natural there is some use in giving" (11).

Stein's open purse signals that longing for fullness. Not only is the object/subject "open" for to display the interior but it is also open to possibilities of what might enter.[37] The purse, rarely without its chain, restates the object's completeness, though it is open and empty. Thus, it exposes its private inwardness outwardly. The purses, never without its chain presents the objects as a couple, linking the object of desire to the hand more directly.

The poem that precedes "A Purse" should really be read after it. Reading backwards, way one grasps the object *before* the action of "A Frightful Release," which reads,

A FRIGHTFUL RELEASE

A bag which was left and not only taken but turned away was not found. The place was very like the last time. A piece was not exchanged, not a bit of it, a piece was left over. The rest was mismanaged." (Stein 21)

Of the preceding eighteen poems, this is the first to be titled without a noun that names a domestic object, such as "a carafe" or "a box." Unlike these others "release" presents a challenge. The word can be used both as a verb and a noun. The verb release

[37] Compare with the following selection from "Rooms" where the purse becomes a sack without an opening suggests more than nothing: "The stamp that is not only torn but also fitting is not any symbol. It suggests nothing. A sack that has no opening suggests more and the loss is not commensurate. The season gliding and the torn hangings receiving mending all this shows an example, it shows the force of sacrifice and likeness and disaster and a reason" (66-7).

means to remit, revoke, or free something or someone, typically used within the confines of a relationships between parties. A release also names a substitute, the giving up of one of position for another; one is "released" one another from a contractual duty or position. The noun, by contrast, names an act or sensation as well as something material: "a handle, catch, button, or lever that releases part of a mechanism" ("release, n" "release, v1"). The orgasmic quality of the homonym cannot be missed here, recalling the text's erotic title, *Tender Buttons,* and its cheeky allusion to the clitoris, which is made more explicit in the bilingual puns that proliferate in the text. In French translation, the title, "les boutons tendres," was French slang for nipples and female genitals (G. Johnston). The late 12th-century Old French form "relese" referred to the residue of impression/effect, taste, or scent ("release, n"). Release, therefore, cuts both ways, it connotes what is missing, but remembers what is left.

"A Frightful Release" reminds the reader that the text, depends upon an ordered system, albeit a strange one that shifts temporal orientation and resists linearity. If the text is indeed a "system of pointing," it does so through a mechanism of disorientation, that unhinges the familiar and normative without altogether abandoning those systems. Even, or perhaps of special significance, Stein's purse is "turned away." To make the connective leap to the previous poem, we need only to recognize that both are about a bag/purse to which several events have occurred, and some that have not. After all, the place/purse was "very like the last time." It was "not exchanged," and never detached. After all, as the "A frightful release" announces, "the chain"—of thought, of structure, of

association, and syntax—"was never missing." That chain was, however, borrowed and left.

A Case: Freud's *Dora*

Though Stein does not create dialectical unity between the assumed subjects and objects of her text, her project reveals how both positions change as the text is read. This is in contrast to, and perhaps in dialog, with Sigmund Freud whose interest in objects is to shore up the subject. Yet, in doing so, he, like Stein, makes both object and subject appear as queer others. Stein's material world is a surface which "exchanges nothing" delighting in its playful superficiality (21). While Stein's poetry turns real objects into imagined objects to expose the playfulness of the surface to be explored through texture, Freud decodes the imaginary more directly as desirous bodily surfaces rendering them, ironically, even more strange. In turn, Freud's attempt to align his subjects further disorients.

Just as Stein's treatment of purses alluded to a dis/embodied subject that uncertainly carried affective weight, Freud's reading of clothing re-inscribes the object as subject while avowing it through his own reading practice. His reading of the handbag, one of his most famous dream symbols, reinstates the object as part of the body and by extension grants it an agency to speak for the analysand. For clothing and handbags specifically, the already difficult distinctions between garment and body, self and representation, fuse more fully. Freud's attempt to sort out the subject by interpreting such symbols, performs an adjunctive fusion between subject and object already at hand

in dress. In short, his interpretations align subjects identifying them as already a part of the self, rendering them all the stranger. It is in this framework that Freud argues homosexual desire is a result of a physical displacement of proper sexual objects.

Stein's objects collectively gather at the limits of imaginary or suggested human (particularly female) bodies, Freud's objects are stand-ins for the body itself. Freudian readings of purses perform the body through visual similitude, the folds and openings of the bag correspond to the folds and openings on the female body. The vaginal resemblance of the object makes it one of Freud's persistent dream symbols, a place where hands slip in and out. The dialectic construction of purse as body is made through affect and gestures that in Freud's reading blur the line between subject and object. In the confusion between body and handbag, self and other, there is a destabilization of subject and object that makes both strange. The reduction cuts both ways when objects are ascribed *as* the body, resulting ontological confusion renders both ambiguous. The object is uncanny, strangely familiar, a home that is not home. Turkle writes "Uncanny objects take emotional disorientation and turn it into grist for the philosophical mill" (320).

The transition from Stein to Freud is another backwards jump, moving chronologically back in time, but also backward from the influences on Stein's object portraits. While there has not been evidence that Stein was directly influenced by Freud's ideas, Ruddick makes a convincing case that Stein was exposed to the ideas of Freud through her brother, Leo, who wrote about Freud in his diary as early as 1909 (93). Ruddick argues that by the time *Tender Buttons* was published in 1914, Stein "denaturalizes" the categories of male and female Freud "explains but also naturalizes"

(2). Indeed, the lack of subjects among so many objects may contribute to readings that suggest gender categories are more fluid if not entirely arbitrary.[38] Regardless, Stein's emphasis on negation to create meaning may reflect Freud's interest in how linguistic reversals can paradoxically reveal truths. In his essay, "Negation," Freud writes, "the performance of the function of judgment is not made possible until the creation of the symbol of negation has endowed thinking with a first measure of freedom from the consequences of repression and, with it, from the compulsion of the pleasure principle" (*The Penguin Freud Reader* 238).

Apart from negation, *Tender Buttons* embraces a similar strangeness of objects as occurs in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), wherein objects are both images, mentalizations, and stand-ins for human subjects. In particular, the sexual images that many read in Stein are reflected in Freud's categorization of dream symbols as masculine or feminine based on an object's visual likeness or sexual expression. He writes, "[t]he very great majority of dream symbols are sexual symbols" (Freud, Strachey, Gay, et al. 198). Indeed, the list for female genitalia is daunting:

> The female genitals are symbolically represented by all such objects as share their characteristic of enclosing a hollow space which can take something into itself: by pits, cavities and hollows, for instance, by vessels and bottles, receptacles, boxes, trunks, cases, chests, pockets, and so on. Ships, too, fall into this category. Some symbols have more connection

[38] Note about Stein's relationship with Alice as read as heteronormative

> with the uterus than with the female genitals: thus, cupboard, stoves and, more especially, rooms. (192)

The list continues, "[d]oors and gates, again, are symbols of the genital orifice. Materials, too, are symbols for women: wood, papery and objects made of them, like tables and books. . . .snails and mussels at least are undeniably female symbols; among parts of the body, the mouth (as a substitute for the genital orifice); among buildings, churches and chapels" (194).[39] And still more, he observes, "[t]he complicated topography of the female genital parts makes one understand how it is that they are often represented as landscapes, with rocks, woods and water" and also gardens and flower though not fruit because fruit stands for breasts (195). Finally, he adds as a near afterthought, the "jewel-case" where "Jewel and treasure are used in dreams as well as in waking life to describe someone who is loved" (193).

The symbols require the reading, or "transcription," skill of an analyst to derive clear meaning. Thus, the self is a strange other, made of unseen objects. Freud sees the process as an actual translation of inscriptions of images. His process then circulates between reading bodies, objects, and images which are contained and described in language. He writes,

> dream-work carries out a very unusual kind of transcription of the dream-thoughts: it is not a word-for-word or a sign-for-sign translation; nor is it a

[39] Wood seems to be a puzzling inclusion for Freud who notes it is difficult to understand how "the material came to represent what is maternal and female" but finds a satisfying enough answer in the various etymologies of the word beginning with the German "Holz" meaning "raw material" (196-7).

> selection made according to fixed rules - as though one were to reproduce only the consonants in a word and to leave out the vowels; nor is it what might be described as a representative selection - one element being invariably chosen to take the place of several; it is something different and far more complicated. (231)

Indeed, it is a kind of translation among objects, words, and images. Even if dreams include more straightforward images of the things themselves without censorship, such as the vagina, "dreams would still not be easily intelligible" and would require "translating the symbolic language of dreams into that of our waking thought" (208). The goal is to use one's knowledge of symbols and the ideas of the dreamer "till you have penetrated from the substitute to the genuine thing" (290). Even translation resistant images, can, he argues, still be identified well enough for treatment. Freud's reading is penetrative, turning the bodily surface into imaginary depths. But is the genuine thing reachable? And how can one be sure it is "genuine"?

Stein's interest in negation pairs productively with Freud's reasoning that negation is a psychological defense. In his reading of Freud's *Dora: A Case Study*, Lacan argues that "the case of Dora is laid out by Freud as a series of dialectical reversals," in which Dora's negation can be read as a sign of the truth. The result is "a scansion of structures in which truth is transmuted for the subject, structures that affect not only her comprehension of things, but her position as a subject, her 'objects' being a function of that position" (Lacan *Écrits* 218). These reversals feature the shifting figurations between subject and object apparent in Stein's project. For Lacan, Dora's case presents the first case of transference where Freud could see how "the analyst plays a part" (219). The

performative nature of transference reflects the generative nature of reading. As Lacan notes, Freud's interpretation of Dora is a penetrative performance where in his attempt to decode her, he constructs himself (226). In turn he offers a restaging of the abuse Dora suffered at the hands of Herr K.[40]

Transference is a disorienting positionality that opens possibilities of interpretation: "transference always has the same meaning as indicating the moments where the analyst goes astray and takes anew his bearings, and the same value of reminding us of our role: that of a positive nonaction aiming at the ortho-dramatization of the patient's subjectivity" (226). Lacan's takeaway is that Freud's complicity of ego joined with Dora's in a unity of that obscures the true subject—Dora's analytic treatment.

His subjectivity as translator is one that is engaged in direct disorientation. He notes that dream work itself is "regressive treatment" in so far as "our thoughts originally arose from sensory images of that kind: their first material and their preliminary stages were sense impressions, or, more properly, mnemic images of such impressions. Only later were words attached to them and the words in turn linked up into thoughts" (227). In this way, dream symbols are disoriented from verbal associations toward a sensory and affective position. Just as Stein's ambiguous grammar renders objects in emotional

[40] See feminist readings of Dora's case including Madelon Sprengnether and Shirley N Garner's 1987 collection *The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation* and M. Ramas's "Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion" (Ramas).

resonances that make uncertain relationships between or among objects, Freud's interest in interpretation is rooted in disorienting connections.

Freud's translation functions much like filtering through several languages to arrive at an original text. He notes that the most psychologically interesting aspect of dream-work is, "[i]t consists in transforming thoughts into visual images" (215). Though not all objects in a dream are substitutes, or visual images the only way thoughts are transformed into dreams, "[n]nevertheless [images] comprise the essence of the formation of dreams" (215). The "real object" translates into dream as symbol-image that the analyst then links to a symbol image. Through a complicated grammar of the analysand's case history, cultural considerations, and neurosis an analyst can decode and reflect the meaning back in words attending to the language, movements, and dreams of the analysand to uncover hidden meaning. These symbols, "in fact give expression to unconscious thoughts and impulses, and are therefore most valuable and instructive as being manifestations of the unconscious which have been able to come to the surface" (204). Freud presents several puzzling aspects of dreams. The first: the dreamer has a "symbolic mode of expression" that is not recognized while awake. Freud suggests that while the existence of the unconscious has been assumed, the more interesting question is "of unconscious pieces of knowledge, of connections of thought, of comparisons between different objects which result in its being possible for one of them to be regularly put in place of the other. These comparisons are not freshly made on each occasion; *they lie ready to hand* and are complete, once and for all" (204; emphasis added).

Symbolism is an independent factor in the distortion of dreams that is itself disorienting. Freud argues, "[i]t is plausible to suppose, however, that the dream-censorship finds it convenient to make use of symbolism, since it leads towards the same end - the **s**trangeness and incomprehensibility of dreams" (240). In fact, "the dream-censorship only gains its end if it makes it impossible to find the *path back* from the allusion to the genuine thing" (174; emphasis added). That the unconscious mind uses material objects to disorient from waking life, as a cover for those impulses which cannot be acted out.

For Freud, objects, particularly those that are related to the human body, are substitutes for parts of the human body: "Underclothing and linen in general are female. Clothes and uniforms, as we have already seen, are a substitute for nakedness or bodily shapes. Shoes and slippers are female genitals" (194). Not only does clothing have a charged sexual identity for Freud, the symbolic actions that one does while wearing clothing are also expressions of the unconscious:

> All the things that a person does with his clothing, often without realizing it, are no less important and deserve the doctor's attention. Every change in the clothing usually worn, every small sign of carelessness - such as an unfastened button - every trace of exposure, is intended to express something which the wearer of the clothes does not want to say straight out and which for the most part he is unaware of." (*Interpretation* 541)

Freud's treatment of clothing as an extension of the unconscious poses an interesting dualism, where clothing as objects are never incidental, but always express unconscious

desires. This seems to suggest that clothing represents an interior subject, though layered. For Freud, clothing represents an inaccessible interiorized subject that even the subjects themselves find their case unlike themselves. In the case of Little Hans, for example, upon reading his case he claimed to not recognize himself in it (452). As Freud attempts to substitute objects as symbols of the human body, those of clothing demonstrate how clothing and accessories as objects extend the body or exist at the limits of the body, and always assert their otherness from it, making strange both the object and the body—a fact reflected in the many different objects that can be read as any part of the female body.

Freud's interest in symbolism restated and reoriented the relationship between body and object. Though Freud saw real objects like clothing, communing with unconscious desires, he flatly rejected the belief objects hold powers of their own. This is most clear in his extensive writing on how objects are used to act out sexual fantasies. Magical totems, he notes, may rely on direct visual representation; some can be instilled with magical features through proximity to the body:

> One gets possession of some of his hair or nails or other waste products or even a piece of his clothing and treats them in some hostile way. It is then exactly as though one had got possession of the man himself; and he himself experiences whatever it is that has been done to the objects that originated from him. (*Totem* 93)

More closely related to his treatment of homosexual desire as physical displacement, he concerned himself with fetishes and their adherents, "for whom parts of the body are of

no importance but whose every wish is satisfied by a piece of clothing, a shoe, a piece of underclothing" (*Totem* 193). Clothing then becomes sexual stand-in.

To read such object stand-ins, Freud lays out a methodology that foreshadows Stein's particularities and linguistic strangeness. Though dream objects "are connected with the element they replace by the most external and remote relations and are therefore unintelligible" to both the analyst and analysand. Yet a clever reader can find clues to the alternative affective qualities of language through sight. Freud turns what can be seen, discerning displaced objects with his gaze (215). For example, an untrained critic entrenched in "the thick of sexual symbols" may wonder, "Are all the objects around me, all the clothes I put on, all the things I pick up, all of them sexual symbols and nothing else?" Freud's response proffers an internalized intertextuality, absorbed "from very different sources from fairy tales and myths, from buffoonery and jokes, from folklore (that is, from knowledge about popular manners and customs, sayings and songs) and from poetic and colloquial linguistic usage" (195). We are haunted by a pervasive and felt symbology. He suggests that turning to, "these sources in detail, we shall find so many parallels to dream-symbolism that we cannot fail to be convinced of our interpretations (196).[41]

Freud's translations among dream materials, real life objects, and the subject, negates slippages between these categories. Though he lauds symbology as a key to

[41] To his point, he argues "[e]very one of you has probably at one time or another spoken impolitely of a woman as an 'alte Schachtel' [old box], perhaps without knowing that you were using a genital symbol" (199).

understanding the unconscious, Freud is not interested sheer metaphor or symbolism. His interest in objects is a phenomenological process where material (objects) turns into images (dreams) then is translated into speech (interpretation). There is a truth to the tactile experience with objects that are connected visually or tactically to the human body. When Freud connects these experiences, unconscious or not, to the human body the objects suddenly appear strange others, disambiguating them from the self. The effect is most clear in Freud's interpretation of homosexuality as a transposition of bodily openings.

While the case of Dora offers a pointed moment of consideration of the purse, Freud first linked purses to the following dream analysis:

> the early age at which people make use of symbolic representation, even apart from the dream-life, may be shown by the following uninfluenced memory of a lady who is now twenty seven: She is in her fourth year. The nursemaid is driving her, with her brother, eleven months younger, and a cousin, who is between the two in age, to the lavatory, so that they can do their little business there before going for their walk. As the oldest, she sits on the seat and the other two on chambers. She asks her (female) cousin: Have you a purse, too? Walter has a little sausage, I have a purse. The cousin answers: Yes, I have a purse, too. The nursemaid listens, laughing, and relates the conversation to the mother, whose reaction is a sharp reprimand. (*Interpretation* 493)

A handbag left behind connotes "People who forget to take away articles they have brought to the physician's house, such as pince-nez, gloves and purses, are showing by

this that they cannot tear themselves away and would like to come back soon" (*Interpretation* 548). He also cites Brill who links a forgotten purse to the exchange of money that unconsciously represents a rejection of paying for intimate contact:

> The fact that women in particular evince a special amount of unpleasure at paying their doctor is connected with the most intimate impulses, which are very far from having been elucidated. Women patients have usually forgotten their purse and so cannot pay at the time of consultation; they then regularly forget to send the fee after they reach home, and thus arrange things so that one has treated them for nothing - for the sake of their 'beaux yeux'. They pay one, as it were, by the sight of their countenance (Psychopathology Freud, Strachey, and Gay 206).

Still more associations can be found in the story of Little Hans who, upon being told a stork would visit with a new sibling and seeing a doctor's bag in the hall "declared with conviction: 'The stork's coming to-day' (*Introductory Lectures* 253). Later, Freud exemplifies what he saw as a woman's "unconscious impulses meets [a sexual] attack with encouragement" with a selection from *Don Quixote* where a woman wins a purse of money from a man who raped her, only to have to Judge allow the man to pursue the woman and take the purse again. "The two returned struggling, the woman priding herself on the fact that the villain could not take the purse from her. Thereupon Sancho declared: 'If you had defended your honour with half the determination with which you have defended this purse, the man could not have robbed you of it'" (*Totem* 86).

Freud's sexual associations disorient the object from normative use and place it as part of the body-- both physically in its visual representation and psychically as speaking

for the unconscious mind. This status of the object as both object and subject, unsettles any attempts to read the object as material surface.

Freud's analysis of the purse in *Dora*: *An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* makes it both a metaphor and metonymy for the vagina. Of one session, Freud writes, "she wore at her waist—a small reticule of a shape which had just come into fashion; and, as she lay on the sofa and talked, she kept playing with it—opening it, putting a finger in to it, shutting it again, and so on" (69). *"*The movement, was an entirely unembarrassed yet unmistakable *pantomimic announcement* of what she would like to do with them—namely, to masturbate" (69). The image is clear for Freud who suggests that the unconscious cannot be hidden from him, he can see it in any man's fingers: "If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish" (70).

When Dora dissents, "Why should I not wear a reticule like this, as it is now the fashion to do?" Freud sees her language as avoiding the question at hand and thus affirming "the action in question having an unconscious origin." Freud's conclusion upon seeing this "symptomatic action," and considering other elements of Dora's story proved, "circumstantial evidence of her having masturbated in childhood seems to me complete and without a flaw" (68).

Dora was not the only patient to present an object to him. Freud reflects on an "entertaining episode" where an older woman: "brought out a small ivory box, ostensibly in order to refresh herself with a sweet. She made some efforts to open it, and then

handed it to me so that I might convince myself how hard it was to open" (69). When Freud remarked he suspected the box was special, given the woman had been seeing him for more than a year, the woman replied, "I always have this box about me; I take it with me wherever I go." According to Freud, "She did not calm down until I had pointed out to her with a laugh how well her words were adapted to quite another meaning. The box, like the reticule and the jewel-case, was once again only a "substitute for the shell of Venus, for the female genitals" (69).[42]

Freud's analysis of genital dream symbols spurs discomfort. His translation of objects into human doubles spurs Ahmed's disorientation. She writes, '[t]o be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins' (134). She contends that disorientation is the physical gesture that shows the limits between world and body. As Ahmed argues, disorientation is characterized by "bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground" (157). It is telling that in response to Freud telling Dora that her jewel case, a gift from Herr K, is a vaginal symbol and expression of her queer desires Dora scoffs, "I knew you would say that" (61).

Freud's reading of garments, especially handbags, as sexual objects reflects the same type of disorientation that he argues is at the heart of homosexual desire. Indeed, aside from Dora's sexualized reticle and jewel case which Freud translated to her as

[42] See Manuela Fraire "No Fills, No-body, Nobody," in *Habits of Being I.*

objects of queer sexual desire, Freud also relayed other stories about queer garments. Freud argues that some queer dream symbols were derived from the work of K Schrötter, who reportedly "gave a suggestion that the subject should dream of normal or abnormal sexual intercourse, the dream, in obeying the suggestion, would make use of symbols familiar to us from psycho-analysis in place of the sexual material" (*Complete* 396). In one session Freud relates, "For instance, when a suggestion was made to a female subject she should dream of having homosexual intercourse with a friend, the friend appeared in the dream carrying a shabby hand-bag with a label stuck on to it bearing the words 'Ladies only'. The woman who dreamt this was said never to have had any knowledge of symbolism in dreams or of their interpretation" (*Complete* 384). Freud does little to unpack the dream but notes that the experiment, and others like it, would contribute to uncovering more dream symbols.[43] The fact that Freud does not linger to explain the dream, as he does in so many other aspects of his lectures and writings, suggests that the bag and the lettering should already be known. Indeed, if for Freud the bag is a symbol of female genitalia, homosexual desire is literally spelled out across it.

Freud's concept of homosexuality as disorientation creates an indirect line to Ahmed's concept of queerness as aligned against normativity. However, Freud saw this disorientation as inscribed on the body. For Freud, much of homosexual desire is about

[43] The experiment was never finished. As Freud reports: "Difficulties are, however, thrown in the way of our forming an opinion of the value of these interesting experiments by the unfortunate circumstance that Dr. Schrötter committed suicide soon after making them. The only record of them is to be found in a preliminary communication published in the Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse (Schrötter, 1912)"

misplaced psychic objects. He writes that there is great frequency "with which sexual repression makes use of transpositions from a lower to an upper part of the body" (*Complete* 359). These transpositions make it possible for "all kinds of sensations and intentions to be put into effect, if not where they properly belong - in relation to the genitals, at least in relation to other, unobjectionable parts of the body" (359). He explains, "One instance of a transposition is the replacement of the genitals by the face in the symbolism of unconscious thinking. Linguistic usage follows the same line in recognizing the buttocks as homologous to the cheeks, and by drawing a parallel between the 'labia' and the lips which frame the aperture of the mouth" (359). Freud's own method of reading handbags as disoriented objects of the body suggests the same transportation of desire. These objects become both the symbolic, speaking unconscious, and the transported genitalia out of place on the body. This makes queer the object, the translated desire, and the embodied object and opens up the possibilities explored in the remaining chapters.

PART TWO

Chapter 2: A (Paper) Dress

A PAPER.

A courteous occasion makes a paper show no such occasion and this makes readiness and eyesight and likeness and a stool.

-*Gertrude Stein,* Tender Buttons "A Paper"

On November 9, 1966, a group of 80 people gathered around a makeshift stage, covered in tin foil in a corner of the notions department of Brooklyn's Abraham & Straus department store. The event, billed as a "Happening" the day before in the *New York Times*, enticed audiences with the bold declaration, "SEE ANDY WARHOL PAINT A PAPER DRESS ON NICO" (Abraham & Straus Department Store 19). It was a marketing ploy as well as an instance of pop art in action, a promotion for the first paper dress craft kits from Mars of Asheville Company's paper garment line, "Wastebasket Boutique" (Mellow 32). Mars's two-dollar kit included a "bilious yellow palette, a few pats of watercolor and a scrawny little brush," which could be used to decorate a bright

white paper dress, one of the first of the era, proudly advertised as, “the whitest white of keycel” (Mellow 32).[44]

[44] Though this set was new, Warhol was not the first to paint a white paper dress. Artist Novella Parigini painted a white paper dress with the face of a cat over the lap of the dress and cut panels from each side of the waist (Keystone Features & Hulton Archive via Getty Images).


ABRAHAM & STRAUS
IT'S A HAPPENING!
TOMORROW AT A&S
SEE ANDY WARHOL PAINT A PAPER DRESS ON NICO
It's what's happening baby... the big "with-it" paper dress in whitest white will get its colors painted on by the one, the only Andy Warhol. He'll do the painting on the gal of the hour... Nico of the Velvet Underground. And you can buy a paper dress made of Kaycel®, a product of Kimberly-Stevens Corp. for just $2 (complete with paint set to do it yourself).

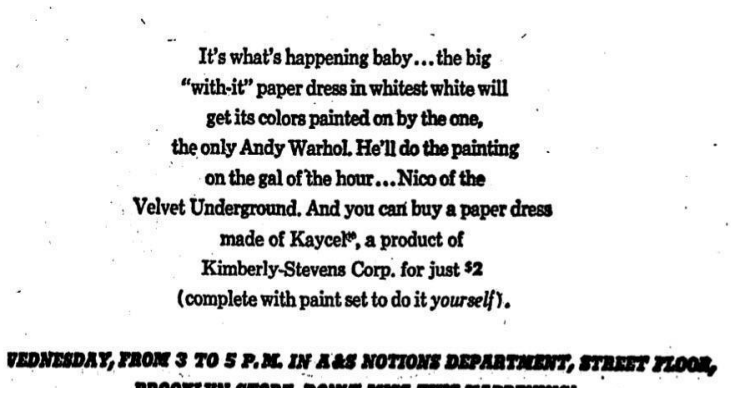

Fig. 7 "It's a Happening" Display Ad 260, New York Times, November 8, 1966

The "Happening" began as follows: A modern blond wood desk covered with rolls of paper towels stands in the middle of the small stage. Nico, one of Warhol's favorite models, has shed the chic tan wool slacks in which she had been seen and reappears wearing that "whitest white" girlish A-line paper dress with "little girl white lace stockings and t-strap shoes." She lays across the desk, cushioning her head with a roll of paper towels ("The Painting on the Dress Said Fragile" 49). Warhol enters with his production assistant, Gerard Malanga, a dancer and painter, enters holding a rectangular silk screen that reads, "FRAGILE" in commercial block lettering. The painting begins. "Nico's job was to supply the right bodily exertions in order to get a good impression, explained James Mellow, a journalist at the scene. "…Rolling about and turning on her side, she has the look of a beautiful dumb animal to who something incomprehensible but not necessarily unpleasant was being done" (Mellow 33). As Malanga paints under Warhol's direction, Nico struggles—unsuccessfully—to keep paint out of her hair. Her son, Ari joins them now. Ari sprays her tights with green paint, capturing Warhol's

attention, the artist turns to direct him (Mellow 33). When Malanga finishes, Nico's triangular dress is inscribed with a column of messy rectangles running down its front, scattered on the sleeves and down the back. Although many of the inscriptions are illegible, each triangle reads, "FRAGILE." Just below the front collar, Warhol signs the dress in marker, "Dali," a nod to the Surrealist artist, who by the mid-1960s has achieved enormous fame and become wealthy in part because of his mass-produced lithographs. The dress is textured like a paper towel, and Warhol's pseudonymous signature shakes and blurs.

Fig. 8 Andy Warhol, Gerard Malanga, Nico and her child Ari Boulogne at Abraham and Straus Happening, Brooklyn, New York, 1966. Photo by Herve Gloagun via Getty Images.

The crowd is baffled. A woman scoffs, "That's a good painter? I could do it better myself. I thought he was going to hand paint, not just spill the paint all over " ("The

Painting on the Dress Said Fragile" 49; Mellow 34). Another yells, "What is the purpose of this?" ("The Painting on the Dress Said Fragile"). Warhol looks blankly at the crowd without speaking. A hesitant Abraham & Straus spokesperson ventures, "This is to show you what you could do yourself with the white paper dresses and the paint kit," adding that the dresses would be donated to the Brooklyn Art Museum ("The Painting on the Dress Said Fragile").

One woman confuses Malanga for Warhol, and the latter explains he is "Mr. Warhol's assistant" and "always did the work while Mr. Warhol supervised" (Mellow 33). Meanwhile, Warhol has pulled two large screen-printed, adhesive-backed bananas from the pocket of his leather jacket. The crowd becomes increasingly vocal. But Warhol remains silent as a disembodied voice from loudspeaker describes his movements (Mellow 33). Malanga and Warhol paste four bananas to a second white paper dress Nico changed into. One banana on the front, one of the back, one draped over the shoulder, and a last one dangling several inches off the front hem (Warhol "Banana Dress"). [45] This dress is set to go to a wealthy patron for a party so Andy Warhol signs this dress with his

[45] The bananas were similar to those used on the cover of *The Velvet Underground & Nico* released in March 1967. Like his artistic approach to painting, Lou Reed noted despite being labeled a producer, Warhol had little input on the sound of the band, acting more as a cinematic agent who orchestrated events. When he would attend recording sessions, Reed said, Warhol "sitting behind the board gazing with rapt fascination at all the blinking lights … Of course he didn't know anything about record production. He just sat there and said, 'Oooh that's fantastic'" (qtd. in Harvard 107).

own name, then sits at the back of the stage, faced away from the audience. A reporter mocks that he must be "fatigued by the creative excess of it all" (Mellow 34).

A teenager bristles, "How can you say he's painting it? … All he did was design the stencil." Perhaps the confusion was due to how the "happening" was advertised. Three times in less than 60 words, it had promised that viewers would "SEE ANDY WARHOL PAINT A PAPER DRESS ON NICO" and the "'with-it' paper dress in whitest white will get its colors painted on by the one, the only Andy Warhol. He'll do the painting on the gal of the hour" (Abraham & Straus Department Store 19). What was being performed? The execution of a piece of art? And by whom? The enactment of an amateur craft project? A commercial promotion—one of Warhol's many? This *thing*—happening, collaborative performance, installation, marketing ploy—failed to cohere into a singular namable *something* though it satisfied the basic criteria of many. Disorienting viewers, Warhol's campy display cast things as out of line, orchestrating a scene in which the strangeness of capital, artistic agency, motherhood, and models of the feminine were what was put on display and, perhaps, undermined.[46]

In his mocking send-up of the event, Mellow expressed disappointment at what he saw as a pedestrian cash-grab. He writes, "Warhol's assorted activities provide such a glaring example of the corruptibility of contemporary art, but that having decided to go commercial, he should do it so badly, with such perfunctory showmanship" (Mellow 32).

[46] Worth noting is Sara Ahmed's observation that "when one thing is 'out of line,' then it is not just that thing that appears oblique but the world itself might appear on a slant which disorientates the picture and even unseats the body" (Ahmed 160).

Earlier that year, Warhol advertised in *The Village Voice* that he would be available for promotional work, declaring, "I'll endorse with my name any of the following: clothing AC-DC, cigarettes small, tapes, sound equipment, ROCK N' ROLL RECORDS, anything, film and film equipment, food, helium, whips, MONEY!! Love and kisses ANDY WARHOL, EL 5-9941" (The Voice Archives 2018). Mellow, however, pronounced Warhol's Happening a failure because it lacked the artistic spectacle that seemed promised by commercial marketing gimmicks. If it was true that Warhol's performance failed to perform the routine duties of the commercial, however, then Mellow's assessment of "the corruptibility of contemporary art" must be rendered moot. A "Happening" that is not legibly one thing, or another does not demonstrate, as Mellow would believe, a glaring example of an artist turned sell-out. Rather, it exposes the fallacy of a pure contemporary art separate from the commercial, a concern that is consistent in most of Warhol's art and of high modernism itself. Though Mellow argues the scene demonstrates the *contamination* of contemporary art by commerce, in fact, the event showcases the commercial *as* artistic spectacle [47] Warhol's performance, boring as it may have been, was not a failure of contemporary art, but a reorientation of it. One of the first production of A-line paper dresses during the 1960s, its unprinted white surface emphasized the fragile, even disposable, material from which it was made and its relationship to the blank page. Because the dress was painted while being worn, it was

[47] It seemed dresses were on Warhol's mind. In the limo ride to the event, he explained the night before he made a film "about being paranoid in a dress shop … called 'Paranoia'" ("The Painting on the Dress Said 'Fragile'" 49).

not only ornamented, but animated. In displacing himself from being "at hand" as the sole creative force, Warhol exposed how other bodies, tools, and objects interact to produce art on the blank sheet of paper. He enacts a literal reversal of the equation of the virginal young woman as "a sheet of blank paper" in American literature, by emphasizing Nico's status as mother, whose son quite literally makes his mark.[48] Signing the Fragile Dress, a dress he has never touched with the name of another artist, "Dali," who was not even there, he emphasizes the fallibility of artistic originality, even as he directly capitalizes on it.[49] Warhol's mode of artistic production turned both object and artistic

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[48] As Susan Gubar observes, "the metaphors of literary creativity are filtered through a sexual lens [from which] female sexuality is often identified with textuality" as in Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* where the young woman is described as "'a sheet of blank paper'" unstained by the ink of other authors (245). Gubar offers Isak Dinesen's short story "The Blank Page" as a feminist intervention in idea of woman as canvas for the impressions made by male creativity, suggesting that even in moments when access to formal artistic training was limited men, women could construct themselves as art objects within domestic spaces (249). See also Sara Stambauch's reading "Witch as Quintessential Woman: A Context for Isak Dinesen's Fiction" which connects to posthumous readings of Sylvia Plath I discuss in the next chapter.

[49] According to Pierre Bourdieu in "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods,"

> The art business, a trade in things that have no price, belongs to the class of practices in which the logic of the pre-capitalist economy lives on (as it does, in another sphere in the economy of exchanges between the generations). These practices, functioning as practical negations, can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing. Defying ordinary logic, they lend themselves to two opposed readings, both equally

practice into commodity, dislocating both categories from their meaning and sending the dresses into a fluctuating continuum between the two. In doing so, it opened a glimpse into the material that allows for consideration of how the scene in the department store enacted a repetition of the historical and metaphorical lineage of paper itself.

Bill Brown has argued that appreciation of objects and the experience of its *thingness*, distinct from its status as object, can be grasped only through moments of misuse (*A Sense of Things* 76). Brown saw thingness as part of an intentional modernist aesthetic that "teaches us that finding a new place for detritus, recycling it into some new scene, confers new value on it" (*A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* 73). Modern art that emphasize the thing-like nature of the object shake objects out of their first epistemological contexts, imbued by habit, and into alterity (*A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* 78). To focus on a single aspect of an object misses glimpses into the thing world that shows a fluid and ongoing

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> false, which each undo their essential duality and duplicity by reducing them either to the disavowal or to what is disavowed—to disinterestedness or self-interest. (74) (Warhol, *Fragile Dress*).

production of subjects and objects.[50] Yet such glimpses can be overwhelming when the familiar object is turned into something strange and unknown.[51]

Warhol's strange scene of "painting" at the middle-class department store Abraham & Straus during the 1960s is an instantiation of Brown's modernist model of misuse within the growing post-industrial capitalism of late modern commodity culture. The scene confirmed and unsettled existing expectations of paper—and dresses themselves—as matter, form, and commodity fetish. The malleable nature of the paper material out of which the dress was crafted made it at once something to mark, read, handle, and wear, endowing the garment with a queer sensual quality. Since wood-pulp paper is easily ripped or destroyed and was cheap to consume, dressing in paper seemed to make manifest the underlying nude body it clothed, heralding its exposure, a risk that seemed close at hand. Warhol played on its fragility and the erotic risk it embodied. According to the holding at the Brooklyn Museum, Warhol signed the dress on its label, which

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[50] Brown argued such glimpses show less about getting to an essential life of the object itself as much as exploring the "life that is [the object's] fluctuating shape and substance and surface, a life that the subject can catalyze but cannot contain" (*Other Things* 51).

[51] Both Brown and Ahmed asserted object disorientation can be felt as a violent intrusion on the limits of the body. Ahmed said disorientation "can be a bodily feeling of losing one's place, and an effect of the loss of a place: it can be a violent feeling, and a feeling that is affected by violence, or shaped by violence directed toward the body" (*Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* 160). Brown wrote outside the ordinary use of objects, "the physical world confronts us with its alterity, not as a thing-come-to-life but as an utterly familiar thing that can suddenly feel life threatening" (*A Sense of Things* 80).

includes washing instructions by the manufacturers that bears the warning, "do not wash/this material is fire resistant unless washed or dry cleaned. Then becomes dangerously flammable when dry/size" (Warhol, *Fragile Dress*). Warhol's action *inflames* (in both the material and sensual senses) modern artistic practice and the nature of art material itself.

In fact, the paper garment is permeated and formed by multiple narratives and metaphors associated with paper. Paper invites the look and often reading, whether as a page in a book or a dress on a body. Paper garments expand the reader's gaze, offering up much more than the page itself but also the form of the body.[52] The material itself offers a way of reading while also disorienting the surface and mechanism of reading practice. In short, even as the material allures the form denies the full pleasures of the object

Warhol emphasized the sensuality of paper material, an attention that hearkened back to Stein's modernism, but he did so as a form of recycling. His "new scene" was a recycled one that placed art as a logical, though uncomfortable, component of post-industrial production. Warhol's paper dress—as both event and object—performed the interconnectedness of aesthetic art object and positioned himself as mundane producer and "company man." In turn, mass consumers of paper dresses became artists and actors, performing and participating in the production, animation, display, and commodification

[52] As Ann Hollander demonstrated, the nude body is shaped by the clothing bodies wear (Hollander).

of images as wearable craft.[53]As Warhol once quipped, "Nothing can always be the subject of something" (*Cast a Cold Eye: The Late Work of Andy Warhol* 198).

A Rag: Clothing & the Paper Industry

The paper dress not only part of a short-lived 1960s fad, however, it represents a natural progression of paper garments, a trajectory that was hundreds of years old. What is more, it highlights the strange entanglement of clothing, cloth, and paper within overlapping systems of exchange, use, and both figurative and material production. The paper A-line form of the dresses do not register as clothing solely because of the material out of which they were produced, but, as I suggest in the introduction, because of the rich significance of the A-form and its complex relationship to bodies and genders.

Nonetheless, the history of paper and its connection to textiles *is* encoded in those paper dresses. That paper has come to signify artistic creativity and the literary imagination demonstrates how the material of the 1960s paper dress is directly linked to a lineage of papermaking and the technological innovations in paper and cloth. The innovation in rag paper starting in the 13th century until the move toward pulp at the turn

[53] Brown argues that in a landscape where all objects are commodities, art can "serve as a mode of rehabilitative reification: a resignifying of the fixations and fixities of thing-ification that will grant access to what remains obscure (or obscured) in the routines through which we (fail to) experience the inanimate object world" (*Other Things* 222).

of the 19th century comes full circle in the 1960s paper dress when the development of pulp cloth made paper clothing a trend. These dresses are an inverted repetition of the early rag paper and the material itself takes on layered meaning when considering how the material has been used in art printing.

Pre-industrial papermaking was considered an art,[54] rather than craft and artists were loath to share their secrets (Müller 46).[55] As Thomas Churchyard wrote in praise of John Spillman's paper mill in 1588, "'sundry secrete toyes/makes rotten ragges, to yéelde a thickned froth' which is stamped, washed, and dried to form paper" (qtd. in Craig 8).[56]

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[54] Western paper production differed from much older Eastern traditions, which were kept secret in China and exported to Europe along the Silk Road until the 10th to 11th centuries (OED, "'Paper, N. and Adj.'"). European papermaking used the strong metalworking industries available to mechanize the laborious process by using stiff metal screens to gather pulp and wire pulleys to make dip molds (Müller 23). These technologies are credited in part for the first widely credited paper mill created in the 1390s, in Nuremberg, Germany (Schmidt 21). For a more comprehensive history of papermaking, see "Early Paper Making Process and Methods" in Dard Hunter's *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft*, and Denis Diderot *Encyclopedie*.

[55] While the history of Asian paper and printmaking is critical in the development of the Western paper industry, this chapter focuses on the growth of the European rag paper industry directly. See Jonathan Bloom's "Papermaking: The Historical Diffusion of an Ancient Technique".

[56] The material of paper is the "evenly distributed and dewatered fiber soup" that has, since the Middle Ages, "developed into the indispensable substratum of our literacy-, calculation- and accounting-based culture" (Schmidt 21). Yet, like the material which refuses to be limited to any particular use, industry, or social strata, is similarly elusive in what is known about its history.

The "secrete toyes" for making paper may have been obscured, raw material "rotten ragges" were far more visible. To gather the essential, though often scarce rag cloth, paper makers relied on rag pickers to travel through villages gathering rags door-to-door and in waste piles (Müller 49).

As the papermaking industry grew, the demand for linen rags outpaced supply, given how infrequently cloth was discarded.[57] "Europe faced chronic rag shortages between the medieval period and the 18th century, and the search for rags (or for reliable substitutes) was the primary preoccupation for papermakers over this period" (Craig 3). Ragpickers would have been one of the most visible aspects of the European paper making industry, linking readers with the rags-to-paper-economy. Jonathan Senchyne explained, "not only were readers likely to be familiar with what went into the paper they read from, but they were also called to take an active role in its creation" ("Vibrant Material Textuality" 69). As such, readers could easily see how the material might provide comment on the aesthetic. The expansion of European paper and textile industries, which both relied heavily on the same materials and technologies, saw the

[57] The growth of the paper industry is linked directly to the innovation in the cloth industry. The mass production of cotton started in Europe in the 12th century with the arrival of foot pedal spindles from India (Strand and Mannering 21–9). Cloth production has been credited as "ushering in the industrial revolution" in the 18th century (Schneider 180). These innovations in the Middle Ages prompted the shift from wool to linen for undergarments, resulting in more rags for paper making generally (Calhoun 334).

"production of paper interlocked print culture with the culture of clothing" (C. W. Smith 48).[58]

Given the rarity of cloth, paper makers and printers also printed calls for used cloth, often directly noting the circuit between clothing, rags, paper, and the literary imagination (Senchyne, "Vibrant Material Textuality: New Materialism, Book History, and the Archive in Paper" 69). A frequently reprinted example from a November 14, 1777 issue of *North Carolina Gazette,* assured young women that "sending to the paper mill an old handkerchief, no longer fit to cover their snowy breasts, there is a possibility of its returning to them again in the more pleasing form of a *billet doux* from their lovers" (qtd. in Senchyne, "Vibrant Material Textuality" 70).[59] More than an expressed need for material, the call shifted the exchange from purely economic to intimate. The call

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[58] While many have suggested the invention of Gutenberg's printing press was the democratic equalizer that allowed literature to spread, Heri-Martin and Lucien Febvre described the development of European paper technology "from the thirteenth century onward as a prerequisite for the spread of printing with moveable type" (Müller 27). Without the rise of cheap, accessible paper made possible through use of rags which displaced the use of parchment, the printing press would have not been possible. As such, rag paper, far more than the invention of the European printing press, transformed the visual and industrial shifts of the late Middle ages. Lothar Müller argued more than typesetting itself, cheap paper is responsible for loosening the cramped lines of writing which had been customary to save valuable parchment. The invention of cheap rag paper, not the press, "gave texts a more reader-friendly breathing space" (27).

[59] This exchange is imagined from the perspective of the rags in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Rags" in which a patriotic Norwegian goes to great lengths to degrade Danish poetry and European poetry before becoming a piece of paper on which a Norwegian wrote a love letter to a Danish girl.

suggested in the close connection to the woman's body, the material itself retains erotic pleasure, even after it has been soaked and beaten into paper, such that it inspires a love letter. In uncovering her breasts, the "more pleasing" return of the material as love letter implies the erotic conclusion. As Jonathan Senchyne aptly pointed out,

> without regard to what might be printed or written upon it … (and sometimes actually dictating what might be written upon it), rag paper was thought to retain traces of the people it touched or the experiences it "witnessed" while a piece of cloth. Readers were prompted to think of a circuit between the clothes on their body and the public or private sphere of material textual exchange, all mediated by the paper manufactory. ("Vibrant Material Textuality: New Materialism, Book History, and the Archive in Paper" 72)

It was not just readers who were prompted to consider the circuit between their dressed bodies and the ragged material of paper, but the rag trade itself was also interested in the bodies that supplied the rags. Rag prices were related to the quality of color and texture of the cloth with finer linen and white cloth more sought after. An 1869 article on the manufacture of paper in *Scientific American* suggested, "the greater portion of the rags from the north of Europe are so dark in their color and so coarse in their texture that one naturally wonders how they could have formed part of any woman's garments." Rags imported from England, Scotland, and the United States reportedly had a higher value and "appear evidently to have belonged to a people much better clad" ("The Manufacture of Paper—Paper Made from Rags").

The value, and at times anxiety, about stained or coarse rags became a popular metaphor for the religious transformation of the material in oral sermons and illustrated books (Müller 51). For example, Samuel Gardiner's *A Pearl of Price* (1600), imagined God as the ultimate papermaker, sending souls, like "vilde and filthy ragges, raked out of a dunghill" that "can not but prouoke the stomacke, and procure vomite," to the papermill to produce, "very white, smoothe, and fine paper" (qtd. in Craig 5). These figurations confront the strange value of dirty rags as a resource only of value to papermakers. Just as Hans Christian Andersen's "The Rags" suggested, "a rag is a rag in every land the world over; they are considered of no value except in the rag heap" (Andersen). The material economy of paper itself offered a compelling visual for religious redemption to turn a corrupt and cast-off soul into a prized, snow-white surface.

The metaphor was even more powerful given clothing was already linked to the soul or spiritual imprint of the humans who wore them. Henry Vaungh's "The Book" (1655), crafted a conceit on the secrecy of papermaking and bookmaking, as the reader is reminded of the vast knowledge the "maker of all" has about the material of paper: "Thou knew'st this papyr,/ when it was a Meer seed, and after that but grass/ Before 'twas drest or spun, and when/ Made linen, who did wear it then:/ What were their lifes, their thoughts & deeds/ Whither good corn, or fruitless weeds" (qtd. in Calhoun 329). While the papermaker may have knowledge about how the material elements are combined to make paper, only God can see the spiritual imprint left by whoever wore the linen. Given the textile and papermaking industries were materially related, it was easy to interpret paper as a spiritual garment (Müller 51).

Although these metaphors were employed as figures of salvation, they were also statements about the close relationship between the paper and textile industry. That papermaking could figure as a metaphor for salvation demonstrates the symbolic power garments had/have to represent the self. Even when torn to shreds and turned into a new material, the connection for clothing to represent the self continues. In the Baroque era, "paper quality was equivalent to the clothing one wore when appearing before a ruler at court" (Müller 76). This connection between paper quality, clothing, and displays of respect and status have persisted. Arthur E. Andrews 1920s sales pamphlet closed with a short poem extolling the virtue of rag paper: "When you meet the work in person, it is with a clean collar, a smile and a handshake. When you meet the world on paper, be it equally certain that your *true* personality is reflected in its quality. To obtain with character,/ Just Remember:/'THE BEST PAPER IS MADE FROM RAGS'" (21). In 1991, Bret Easton Ellis's novel, *American Psycho*, subverted the premise of sales pitches like Andrew's in a now famous scene in which protagonist Patrick Bateman is driven into a jealous rage when he sees business cards more elegant than his own (44–5). For Ellis, the cards are only surface, lacking insight into any truth, except for the persistence of commodity culture.[60]

[60] Much has been written on the interplay between the surfaces of Patrick Bateman and his inner narrative. See Thomas Heise, "*American Psycho*: Neoliberal Fantasies and the Death of Downtown" and Namwali Serpell, "Repetition and the Ethics of Suspended Reading in *American Psycho*."

Narrative re-figuration of garments into paper, demonstrates the possibilities of symbolic transference between related materials. In Andersen's "The Shirt Collar," the material in a narrative is made evidence by the material of the book itself. [61] The story follows an incompetent and unscrupulous shirt collar which, sensing the end of his life, attempts to secure a wife by proposing to a garter, iron, and scissors. Having been flatly rejected by all, he claims to have no interest in sexual exploits at all. Ending up on the rag heap, the collar fabricates stories about his many sexual exploits before exclaiming, "Oh, I have a black record, and it's high time I turned into spotless white paper" (Andersen). Given the collar's penchant for crafting boastful lies it eventually becomes the very paper the story is printed on. In a wry rejection of the entertainment of fiction, the tale warned the reader the material never lies: "Some day we may end up in the rag bag, and be made into white paper on which the whole story of our life is printed in full detail. Then we'd have to turn tattletale on ourselves, just as the shirt collar has done" (Andersen).[62]

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[61] Andersen, an avid paper cutter, was strongly attuned to the material paper as a material. For him, paper was not just an incidental carrier of his stories, but in a July 1867 letter he called paper cuttings as "the prelude to writing" (Brust 5). He created over 1000 paper cutouts, sometimes featuring his cuts with his stories (Brust). In 1986, Andy Warhol paid tribute to Andersen with two series of screen prints based on the cutouts. The series "depicts Andersen with sincere respect rather than veiled irony … [in] a sweet tribute to a man who equally valued childlike curiosity and modern thinking" (Sørensen and Warhol 4).

[62] See Nate Mills *Ragged Revolutionaries: The Lumpenproletariat and African American Marxism in Depression-Era Literature* (2017) for a reading of literary history of the rag and paper industries as symbols for the 1930s left.

Other narratives inverted the notion of paper as purity, focusing on the cycle of paper material as one that will always degrade into filth. Far more than the lofty metaphors of redemption, these narratives draw attention to the material economics of daily life by tracing the trajectory of paper production. For example, in Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668), readers listen to a piece of toilet paper which pleads to be spared from use and retells its life story "starting from hemp seed, to plant, then crushed, sold, spun into yarn, and woven on a loom to make Dutch cloth" (Müller 103).[63] Eventually, a weaver makes the cloth into a shirt, which is an observer to the illicit romance between the weaver and his maid.[64] Eventually impregnating the maid, the shirt is turned into a diaper for their "bastard child," until it decays into rags, is sent to the paper mill and then is made into fine writing paper for an accounting book for a corrupt bookkeeper before turning into waste paper. The bookkeeper loved the book as much as "Alexander the Great loved Homer … this book was the Bible, he studied day and night" (von Grimmelshausen 242). In a hilarious reversal to narratives that figure the transformation of rags into religious texts or literary masterpieces, the forged accounting book takes the place of both. The fictional aspects of the book are crafted by the bookkeeper rather than a great poet and delivered without

[63] Heidi Brayman Hackel argued "scatological uses for printed paper were often recorded and imagined" (81).

[64] The material is linked to the sexuality of the humans it interfaces with, seen here and at the close of the story where the paper is the interfacing between two pieces of a cloth skirt "so that neither it nor what was under it would be damaged" (von Grimmelshausen 242).

strong moral judgment. The text functions as a comment on the materiality of fiction, paper, and bookmaking.

The decline in paper quality meant the working class had greater access to cheap newspaper, spurring a connection between newspapers and a decline in literary genius. In Honoré de Balzac's *Illusions Perdues* (1837-1843), Devid Séchard lamented his struggling printing business, linking the decline in paper quality and by extension literature with the decline in clothing quality through industrialization. He suggested cheap materials are equivalent to oppressive modern law, which capitalizes on the ephemeral:

> We are nearing a time when, as fortunes are equalized and so diminished, poverty will be wide-spread; we shall require cheap linen-wear and cheap books, just as paper are beginning to require small pictures for lack of space in which to hang big ones. Neither the shirts nor the books will last, that's all. Sound products are disappearing everywhere. So then the problem facing us is of the highest importance for literature, the sciences, and politics. (qtd. in Müller 157–8)

Thus, the circuit between clothing, paper, and fiction has historically been interwoven, developing together as the material itself changed.[65] In short, in these materials, the connections are not just mere representations, but express how entwined these materials are in terms of production, consumption, and imagination.

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[65] The textile industry also drew inspiration from literature and figurative prints were common (C. W. Smith 53).

Christina Leitner argued the distinction between paper and cloth is more superficial than we might at first suspect: "one might say that the word textile means neither cloth nor material such a metal, stone, or paper, but merely expresses one way or another way of joining, no matter which basic fibres are used" ("Paper-A Textile Material?" 126). For both paper and cloth, the plant fibers, or cellulose, found in wood pulp and linen, cotton, and viscose, adhere to each other in similar ways, regardless of joining method. The shared material gives both a similar texture, even called felt in papermaking, and surface strength. These material similarities are also reflected in the ways paper and cloth are substituted for each other, evidenced by cultures that have used reinforced or oiled paper as textiles and paper cloth, or Shifu, used in knitted garments (Leitner, *Paper Textiles* 11).

Although paper had been used for fans, hats, and masks as early as the 15th century, the examination of paper in clothing beyond accessories has been overlooked. The technological advances in the paper and textile industry at the turn of the 18th century changed not only the way clothing was made into paper but also how paper was used as clothing. At this time, "sheets of paper were turned into bags and medicine capsules in the paper processing industry; they were used to line clothing, shoes, and headwear; they found their way into the middle class homes and palaces of Europe in the form of wallpaper; and they were an everyday companion in a multiplicity of other guises" (qtd.

in Müller 71). In 1860, the first paper clothing patterns were marketed for sale.[66] In the 19th century, fine linen paper, rather than wood pulp, was substituted to make textiles that wore out quickly such as ties, cuffs, collars, underwear, and bed linen. Paper linen was originally invented in the US and eventually spread to Europe where men's paper garments were made fashionable (Leitner, *Paper Textiles* 31). Similarly, the wide availability of cheap paper meant accessories, including shoes and garments were often produced for masquerade balls and parties. Paper costumes, usually made from brightly colored crepe paper sewn to plain muslin were sold well into the 1950s (Walford 9).

Newspaper printing provided cheap and widely accessible materials for costumes as early as 1831 when Mademoiselle Déjazet appeared as the character "La Politique" in a dress pasted with newspapers, and again in 1893 when newspaper costumes turned into advertisements for subscriptions, featuring text patches along the hem (Callahan 37). By the 1900s, women fashioned newspaper dresses as a sign of modernity and sexuality of the new woman as the outfits invited the lingering gaze of readers as over the Sunday paper, and thus also the wearers body. The sexual connotation of newspaper dresses are commemorated in a morbid limerick: "There once was a girl from St. Paul/Who wore a newspaper dress to a ball,/But the dress caught on fire/And burned her entire/ Front page, sporting section, and all" (Callahan 39). The limerick recalls Vera Chytilova's 1966 film, *Daisies*, which ends with the lead characters casting off their A-line dresses and donning

[66] Paper dress patterns have their own interesting history as paper material. See Emery, Joy Spanabel *A History of the Paper Pattern Industry: The Home Dressmaking Fashion Revolution* (Emery) and Barbara Burman *The Culture of Sewing: Gender, Consumption and Home Dressmaking (Burman)*.

elaborate newspaper suits with distinctive political messages before setting a fire and the screen fades to the bomb of the opening sequence.

The garments crafted from printed newspapers were precursors of the commercial unprinted paper dresses that emerged in the late 1960s, which were fashioned like the cloth dresses shed by Chytilova's "bad girls" in a typical A-line shift style (see image). These dresses, as Richard Martin reflected, transition between "text and dress [which] gives it new context: editorial becomes advertising; headlines become graphic art" (Callahan 40). Indeed, paper dresses are unique in the capacity to occupy the spaces between the categories of fashion, object, art, and text.

> On the one hand, paper is being used as a surrogate material to achieve a "textile" optical effect as real as possible, and, on the other hand, a complementary tendency can also be observed whereby the character of paper is imitated through modern high-tech-material textiles, in order to convey up-to-date concepts such as flexibility and lightness—an eternal interplay, today just as in former times. (Leitner, "Paper-A Textile Material?" 144)

A Dress: Lines in the 1960s

If paper technology changed the landscape of Victorian cities, culture, and fashion at the turn of the century, innovations in plastic similarly transformed post-World War II America. The era was marked by accelerated technological developments of materials that were sometimes extensions of the chemical research undertaken by the military during and after the war. Nylon, for example, was pioneered by Dupont the 1930s as the

company researched plutonium for the Manhattan Project. By the 1960s, innovations that brought these new A-lines to market were linked to a different A, the atomic bomb.

The investments in Cold War science of petrochemicals translated into new synthetic fabrics associated with affordability, modernity, and youth (Pavitt 33).[67] Innovations in synthetic fabrics provided affordable alternatives to cotton and wool, reflecting also an excitement about the futurity of technological advancements. Manufacturers boasted the new materials as easy to wash, wrinkle resistant, and quick drying as efficient and highly functional. Unlike earlier inert plastics of the 1920s and 1930s, thermoplastics of the 1950s were lightweight, flexible, and could be made into any shape, making them ideal for fabrics (Pavitt 34). New plastics reflected the era's obsession with newness, signaling optimism and efficiency of scientific innovation.[68] Post-World War II, people ascending into the middle class rejected wartime scarcity, hence the New Look, but they also embraced rapidly changing styles in cheap materials over consistency, made for what Jeffrey Meikle calls "an expansive culture of impermanence" (68).[69] With constant technological innovations, an uncertain Cold War era of seemingly imminent threats, contemporary experience was presented as ephemeral and efficient with the promise of managing daily life; this promise, by extension,

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[67] See Alice Lovejoy "Celluloid Geopolitics: Film Stock and the War Economy, 1939–1947"

[68] For more on the development of nylon, see Pap Ndiaye, *Nylon and Bombs: Dupont and the March of Modern America (*2007) and Susannah Handley, *Nylon: The Story of a Fashion Revolution* (1999).

[69] See Justus Neiland's *Happiness By Design: Modernism and Media in the Eames Era.*

maximized profits (Pavitt 34).[70] "Consumers accepted the notion of cheap, throwaway clothing as they embraced disposable cutlery, plates, razors, napkins, lighters, and pens" and disposable garments too (Paton 550–1).

A 1959 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, speculated about the growing trend toward disposability, linking it to a space-age optimism which had never before been possible. Though symbols of modernity and militarization, the entry of these materials in consumer spaces sought largely to improve on the drudgery of household labor:

> Do your clothes need to be cleaned or washed? Are you tired of the old patterns or colors? In the future, if your answer to any of these questions is yes, you'll simply throw the old clothes away—and maybe kindle a campfire with them. Much of tomorrow's wearing apparel may be made out of treated paper, intended for use a few times, then for discard. The Quartermaster Corps is already investigating the use of such processed paper for parachutes, disposable uniforms, pup tents, and other shelters. It wears well, and its insulating qualities make it usable in all kinds of weather. (qtd. in Pavitt 36).[71]

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[70] As Stephanie Amerian explored in "The fashion gap: the Cold War politics of American and Soviet fashion, 1945-1959," American fashion innovations demonstrated the economic and political power of the U.S., serving as an ideological endorsement of capitalism.

[71] The origin of paper garments related to the military recalls the German folktale "Des Knaben Wunderhorn," "The Weavers Song," where linens are recycled into canvas for soldiers in battle before the material's "true value is realized" and becomes paper which, "one prints the word of God on it/and writes

Though paper garments were already used in some hospitals and military settings, there was little interest in application for consumer fashion until the development of reinforced cellulose, or wood pulp mixed with nylon or rayon, made production of paper garments sturdier without the need of a fabric lining and could tolerate movement without tearing (Walford 10). The innovation ushered in a fleeting fashion trend in the mid-1960s that celebrated both popular culture and emerging industry: The paper dress. The simple A-line dresses sat above the knee and featured bold designs and were intended to be thrown away after a few wearings (Paton 550).

The first modern paper dress was created in 1966 by Scott Paper Company in Philadelphia as part of a mail-in promotion to sell paper towels (Paton 550). The dresses were made of Dura-weve, a material patented by the company in 1958 for use in paper towels (Paton 550).[72] For just $1.25 and a few paper towel labels, women could have their own "Paper Caper" to "wear for kicks-then give it the air" (Walford 13). The company offered two prints—a black and white Op Art print or red paisley—in four sizes (Palmer, "'Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad'" 88). The prints themselves reflected the growing tensions between generations without alienating either. The "paisley print recalled the working-class cotton bandanas associated with the frontiers of the Wild West and evoked nostalgia for the entrepreneurial spirit of early America, while the Op Art design was inspired by contemporary art" (see fig 3. Below) (Palmer, "'The Sixties Paper

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on it with in" (Müller 49). In this folktale, weavers are heroes just as soldiers and they are immortalized in their contribution to paper itself, as "The weavers work endures forever."

[72] Companies developed names for these new fibers to avoid the possible association with paper as flimsy.

Caper Fashions'" 158). Paper dresses were made to reflect contemporary art iconography, a playful nod toward the material they were made from.

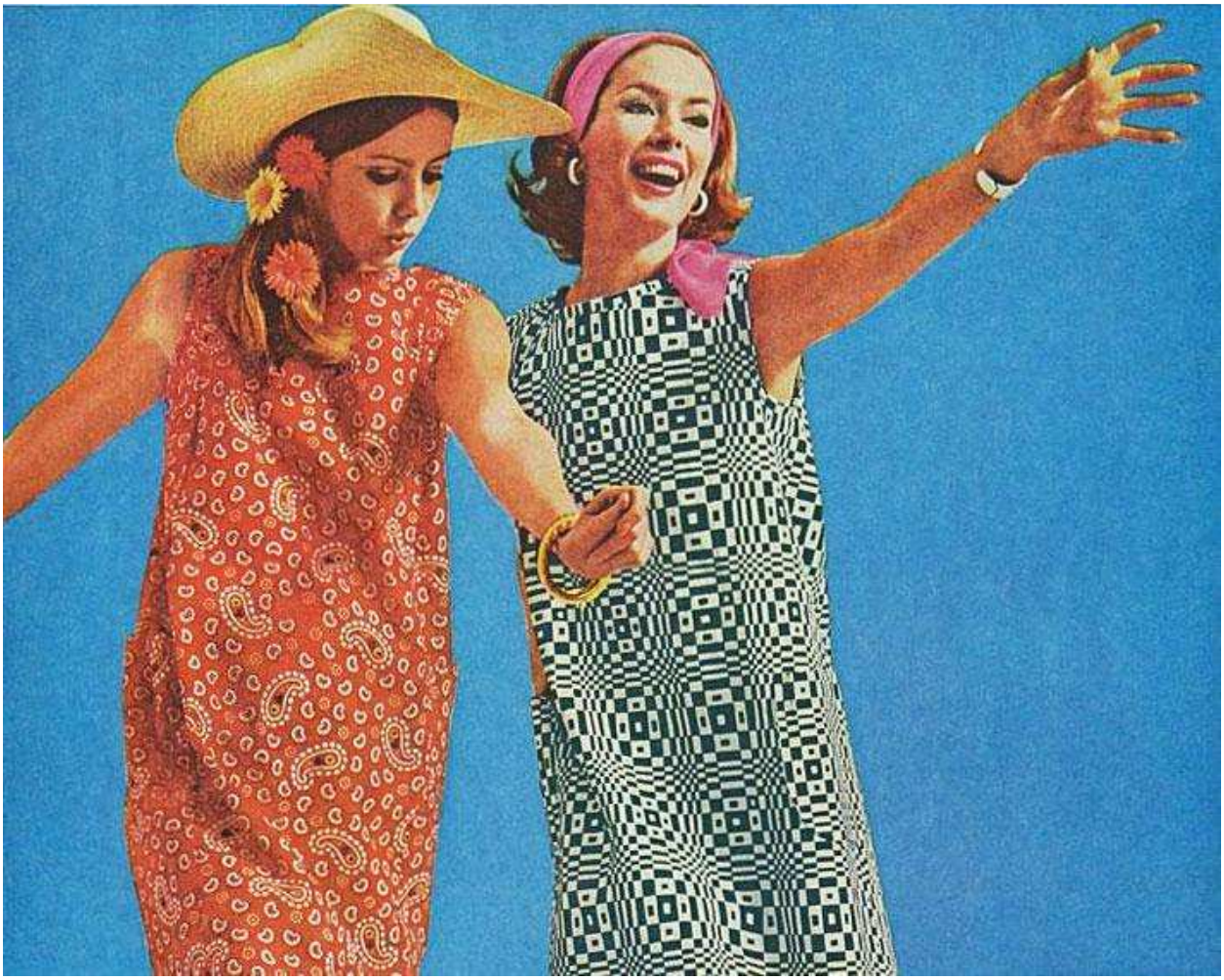

Fig. 9 The first paper dresses featured in Scott's 1966 promotional ads in *Seventeen*.

The garments quickly captured the 1960s cultural zeitgeist. Jonathan Walford wrote, "the self-consciously modern 1960s and its optimistic quest for a space-age future had created a progress-minded society that was ready to embrace the ephemeral quality of disposable apparel" (Walford 45). The garments offered women a fashionable, cost

effective, and no maintenance option that could change as quickly as the trends. The versatility was linked to their modernity. As one textile designer quipped, "Who is going to do laundry in space?" (Walford 111).[73]

The Scott Paper promotion was a surprising success. By year end, the company had filled nearly half a million orders inspiring other manufacturers to produce their own paper dresses for sale in department stores (Walford 111). Mars Hosiery of Asheville, N.C, known as the first company to sell a range of paper garments including men's bell bottoms, reportedly manufactured 100,000 dresses a week at the height of the paper craze (Palmer, "'Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad'" 88). "The speed with which the manufacturing and marketing of the dresses was accomplished testified to the advances used by the American garment industry which produced these clothes at 'disposable prices'" (Palmer, "'Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad'" 90). The dresses cost about $8 and were extolled in the June 1967 issue of *Mademoiselle* as "the ultimate smart-money fashion" (Paton 550–1).

The technological advancements enabled the growth of fast, disposable fashion, but fashion trends themselves were also rapidly expanding. Designer Betsy Johnson noted the connection between technology and fashion innovation of the 1960s. She argued, "There will never be another chunk of time of such pure genius, from the invention of pantyhose to landing on the moon to the Pill to the drugs. And it was the first and last time that fashion really, really changed" (Larocca).

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[73] Wartime paper clothing in Germany had its own history that grew as a result of the ban on imports. See Irene Guenther's "Nazi 'Chic'? German Politics and Women's Fashions 1915-1945."

The dresses were the very image of Pop Art. As design critic Reyner Banham explained in 1963: “the aesthetics of Pop depend on a massive initial impact and small sustaining power, and are therefore at their poppiest in products whose sole object is to be consumed” (qtd. in Pavitt 27). The dresses were at home in specialty boutiques including the famous New York shop, Paraphernalia. Designed by modernist architect Ulrich Franzen, the shop was a sleek backdrop to the cheap clothes displayed like art (Larocca). Like many of the shops that sold paper dresses, Paraphernalia sold clothes as an art experience about impermanence. Warhol noted “everything in the shop would disintegrate within a couple of weeks, so that was really Pop” (Warhol and Hackett 224).

The popularity of the shop embodied the contradiction of originality and reproduction reflected in the fashion trends of the era. Warhol called the shop a “mass boutique” that marketed to the “masses [who] wanted to look non-conformist so that meant nonconformity had to be mass-manufactured” (Warhol and Hackett 224). As Marilyn Bender observed, fashion of the era shifted from a top-down model where “haute couturiers and the women of educated taste whom they dressed” set the trends to bottom up, starting with the masses (Palmer, “‘Paper Clothes’” 89). As fashion, “ascended from the populace to the plutocrat,” previously held notions about the rule of dress were rejected in favor of trends in art, music, and design (Bender qtd. in Palmer, “‘Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad’” 89). The paper dress reflected this shift in fashion consciousness while catering to notions of practicality and flexibility.

Like Pop itself, paper dresses presented a way to inscribe the body with wry political commentary. The material instability of the garment was a sly nod toward social

and political realities of the day that too suggested it could be cast aside. In part, the shift toward expendability was due to the shift in what fashion meant. “[F]ashion stopped being clothes and became a value, a tool, a way of life, a kind of symbolism” (Bender qtd. in Palmer, “‘The Sixties Paper Caper Fashions’” 181). Paper fashion represented a casting off of oppressive norms and the embrace of the present moment. Optimism about the future was bound to a cultural anxiety about permanence and austerity the material actively countered. As one advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times* exclaimed, "they're guaranteed not to last" (qtd. in Walford 90). The guarantee the dresses would degrade means the material would not stand in the way of the wearer’s future, a future premised on mobility and traveling light.

In particular, paper dresses reflected the rapidly shifting presentation of female sexuality. In the popular press, the ephemeral nature of the dress was often a punch line, “If you spill, you’re dead” (qtd. in Palmer, “‘Paper Clothes’” 93). Yet the dresses were tough and held up to repeated washings and wear tests. “It was the anticipatory nature of the garment that actually unsettled the wearer” (qtd. in Palmer, “‘Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad’” 93). A woman named Carol recalled while she liked to wear paper dresses in public, she was too distracted by the material to wear them in school. She wrote, “I had to pay attention and could not afford to be distracted by my paper dress … all day all I could think about was the dress and not ripping it” (Zēdianakēs and Mouseio 214–5).

The material invited reading women’s bodies (see image below). The “Paper Caper” dress was in fact marketed “as a conversation piece, as an attention attraction” (qtd. in Walford 14). But some women found the attention too much. Marion Lynch said

her first paper dress attracted too much male attention and "as the evening wore on, the dress wore out" (qtd. in Palmer, "'Paper Clothes: Not Just a Fad'" 93). Similarly, Carol found wearing the dresses on dates in college "seemed to send the wrong message. The paper dresses made it appear way too easy" (Zēdianakēs and Mouseio 215).

Fig. 10 Yellow Pages Paper Dress advertisement featured in *Vogue* 1968

Warhol's A-Warhol Paper Dress

Perhaps more clearly than other examples of his work, the 1967 Warhol paper dress Happening demonstrated his fixation on the fluidity of material objects (canvas, cloth, film, paper, skin) that are able to be literally inscribed with social and economic meaning. The entirety of the event played with how material objects can belong to seemingly disparate categories of the commercial and art worlds at the same time. It is precisely this confusion between categories that Mellow observed when he criticized Warhol's banal performance as a sign of "the corruptibility of contemporary art." Mellow's critique pointed to the ontological confusion between art and commerce, noting the performance lacked the formal components of an artistic production and the marketing exuberance of a commercial enterprise.

Warhol's attention to materiality was not limited to what could be painted. Rather, like painting, Warhol layered and manipulated the material around him (including his body and those bodies around him) to produce a larger effect of strangeness. The Happening negotiated the material of both commodity and art through layered materials that when assembled were both seemingly straightforward and frustratingly puzzling. Warhol was interested in commercialism and started his career as a window dresser. He created illustrations of products, famously reproducing commercial products. Fascinated

by advertising, consumerism, and the sensational, he was drawn to newspapers.[74] The newspaper became the subject, as he reproduced the front pages of newspapers by hand, including the 1956 front page of the "The Princton Leader," including the misspelling (Donovan 90).

Staged in the middle of a department store, Warhol's set arranged with a shiny silver backdrop was intended to appear as his pop-up studio, the Factory. The Factory, made popular in the press by David Ehrenstein's interview in 1965, already famous for its space-age walls, garnered a reputation as Warhol's artistic space (Berg 63).[75] The geographical and aesthetic separation of the stage from the rest of the department store mark it as a space of difference where artistic production could happen.

This stage could have easily been a space where the commercial could fade away while Warhol, as the advertisement insisted, painted. Yet Warhol's performance constantly brought artistic production and commercial production into view at the same time. Perhaps the best example of this is Warhol's reticence to speak when asked by the crowd to explain the point of it all. In his refusal to offer clarity, a department store spokesperson took the stage to interpret for the audience and to engage with the art more directly. In this way, Warhol's co-production of the dresses with Malanga was also in co-

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[74] Warhol also had a visual and textual interest in letters. See Matt Wrbican's *A Is for Archive: Warhol's World from A to Z.*

[75] The name of his studio reflected another break from the dominant mythology of the lone male artist as he turned his studio into a production line with many assistants, turning the space into a hang out as well as creative space (C. A. Jones).

production with the commercial realm whose representative became Warhol's mouthpiece. Amazingly, the spokesperson went on to affirm the same ambiguity between commodity and art. The spokesperson argued the scene was intended to demonstrate what the consumer can do with a do-it-yourself dress kit before adding that these dresses would be donated to the Brooklyn Museum. With that, the irony of the event was sealed. The final dresses were museum artifacts that, also happen to be something one can do at home without the Factory set.

The paper dresses themselves similarly amble between art and commodity through Warhol's explicit engagement with the materials of both. The audience sees the white paper dress at the Happening enacting a reversal of the historical narrative that tracks rags into paper, instead seeing the flat surface of paper as garment. The white paper dress fails to cohere to traditions of paper as cloth, which used the material as a fabric Trompe-d'œil. More than printed paper dresses, the white paper dress was used to disorient the audience from the surfaces around them.

The scene presented an array of overlapping and odd arrangements of material associations that perplexed onlookers. The audience, likely aware of the trendy paper dresses, was confronted with the surface of the garment in a way previously not possible as paper dress prints ventured to approximate fabrics. The blank garment may have been challenging on its own, as the paper instantiates its difference from fabric. Within the context of the happening, the surface of the dress was altered by the expectations of Warhol's artistic production, bolstered by the newspaper advertisement insistence Warhol would paint on the dresses. As such, the paper material is at home with artistic production

as art, though Warhol's lackluster performance, emblematic of what Robert Hughes called his "aesthetic of noninvolvement," undercuts the scene or dress as art at all (Hughes, "The Rise of Andy Warhol | by Robert Hughes"). The object, failing to conform to any one category of association or meaning, oscillated between them, not quite garment, not quite art, not quite paper. The happening, like many of Warhol's "elaborate contrivances of queer performances, [posed] an allure that was as challenging as it was seductive" (Geczy and Karaminas).

The intersection of these surfaces is a queer alignment with what Susan Sontag called camp art: "Camp art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content" (Sontag 278). Camp is "Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater" (Sontag 280). Warhol has been famously discussed for his explicit interest in surfaces and performance. Carter Ratcliff argued Warhol's art has no point of view at all, embodying "the allure of absolute nothingness" that "appropriates an image not to improve it but to leave it blunter, starker, more aggressively itself than before" (qtd. in Glick 135). In Warhol's campy attention to the surface, particularly of those images of daily life, he laid bare images as material constructions. In turning the image on itself, or making it "more aggressively itself," the surface was explored as material, and in doing so, the invisible aspects of its construction lose the mysticism of commodity fetish. Warhol's campy turn toward images engaged in the fluidity of materiality to travel around categories, particularly of art/commodity, and explored the ways objects are created through specific repetitive material engagements including those of bodily performance.

Warhol's use of bad performance, in particular, was overtly camp. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, he argued for virtues of bad performance to present difference, a break from normativity that exposes something new. He wrote "Every professional performer I've ever seen always does exactly the same thing at exactly the same moment in every show they do … [amateurs are interesting because] you can never tell what they'll do next" (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 82). Further, these performers are more original and real because they cannot screen viewers from the fact they are performing. "Whatever [bad or amateur performers] do never really comes off, so therefore it can't be phoney" (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 82). Bad performances are thus performances explicit about their fictionality, lacking the ability to create the illusion the performance is real. Bad performances are not performances at all and thus are always prone to be marked with authenticity. In this way, Mellow's critique of Warhol's "bad showmanship" is a request for the illusion of contemporary art's role to inhabit the commercial in a way that could fool one into believing the two are still separate, even as they appear together. Similar to Ahmed's concept of disorientation as a productive force which opens up more horizons of possibility, Warhol said he strives to make something bad "Because doing something the wrong way always opens doors" (Wolf 147).

The allure of Warhol's work has long been a question of critical discussions, attempting to make sense of his puzzling aesthetic, exemplified in his notoriously banal interviews in which he commented obtusely, fond of answering "yes," "no," and "I don't

know."[76] Lacking insight from the artist, many critics have turned to his formal elements and modes of production—his use of grids, repetition, and silkscreens—to make sense of why the artist's work is compelling at all. Much of the early reception debated the extent to which Warhol's images were complicit or critical of commodity consumption and celebrity culture (Maizels and Warhol 5). The debates reflected the same puzzling dualisms found in Warhol's work, with critical readings attempting to align contradictions rather than explore them. As Hal Foster argued, Warhol's blankness is a mirror that reflects a viewer's own projected identifications (39).[77]

On the one hand, the artist is figured, as Hughes argued, a passive, amoral machine, solely surface. On the other hand, the same works are read by critics such as Gregory Battcock, as engaged social commentary, actively promoting overt sexuality (Glick 134–5). Foster wrote, "[b]oth camps make the Warhol they need, or get the Warhol they deserve; no doubt we all do" (44). Simon Watney identified these opposing treatments as part of Warhol's work, deeming it "The Warhol Effect." For Watney, Warhol's difference from other traditions meant "Warhol simply cannot be reconciled to

[76] For example, in a 1966 interview with Gretchen Berg, Warhol said "The interviewer should just tell me the words he wants me to say and I'll repeat them after him. I think that would be so great because I'm so empty I just can't think of anything to say" (Berg 95).

[77] Foster referred to these opposed readings as either "simulacrum" (attempting to be the object) and "referential" (that the object refers to different themes) which he differentiated from his mode of reading he calls "traumatic realism."

the type of the heroic originating Fine Artist required as the price of admission to the Fine Art tradition." Rather, Watney suggested approaches to Warhol cannot impose "restrictive attempts to measure him against the criteria of predetermined models of artistic value which his own work quietly invalidates" (Watney 118). Watney, among other queer readings of the 1990s, called for a nuanced consideration of both surface and (queer) subtext.[78] Critics such as Bradford R. Collins and Roy Grundmann, argued Warhol's images, particularly of men, "are predicated on a certain kind of multivalence, one which speaks differently within a mainstream image culture and an underground gay iconograph" (Maizels and Warhol 5). Queer readings urge consideration of desire as a function of interpretation and in so doing also guide readings in alternative directions. For Ahmed, heteronormativity is a physical act of repeatedly turning attention toward one object over others such that "Perception involves such acts of relegation that are forgotten in the very preoccupation with what it is that is faced" (31).

Warhol's art is compelling because it is self-consciously aware of dualisms, exploiting the way "parallel economies of meaning could function alongside one another" (Maizels and Warhol 6). While critics have explored how Warhol's images navigate multiple economies of meaning at once, few have considered his similar negotiation of the material. As Michael Maizels noted, "'the commodity Warhol' and 'the queer Warhol' were bound up in one another to an extent that has not been sufficiently

[78] Queer readings also played a role in evaluating the historical censorship of homoerotic images Warhol's work often drew from. An analysis of the ways readings of Warhol have tended to avoid queerness are presented in the introduction of *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* by J. Doyle, J. Flatley, and J.E Muñoz.

appreciated—linked by imagery as well as through their means of production" (5). These figurations of Warhol are also linked through the use of material.

The 1967 event demonstrates an attention to how mixed media constitutes a "rebellion against the oppositions of art/industry and erotics/economics" and a "'queer' desire to disobey and disregard the central oppositions of modern culture" (Glick 137–8). One refusal of such oppositions is in the expected performative repetitions of art making, drawing attention to the way that even the categories of artist/viewers are made and unmade through repetitive alignment with material. Elisa Glick argued "Warhol's artistic production stages those fundamental, inseparable, and opposed tendencies we have come to recognize as constitutive of the modern world: contradictions between the ephemeral and the eternal; surface and depth, fragmentation and standardization; and avant-gardism and commercialism" (Glick 137). This interest in repetition as creation is apparent in his use of screen printing. As Steven Shaviro argued, "Everything Warhol paints is already, in itself, a multiple and a copy. That is to say, his paintings, unlike mimetic representations, have the same ontological status as their referents. Warhol does not step back from the world in order to reproduce it. His art is rather a way of embracing the world's indifferent logic" (Shaviro, "The Life, After Death, of Postmodern Emotions" 126).

Known for his distinctive silver wig, dark glasses, and flat affect, Warhol cultivated his appearance with the same emphasis on surface over depth as his art. His interest in fashion, reflected in the subject of his work and in his many side projects, demonstrated Pop Art's increasingly narrow distinction between fashion/art, high/low

culture, and the serious/frivolous (Geczy and Karaminas). It was because of Warhol's early experience working in fashion advertising he understood "the unspoken 'open secret' of 'gift exchange:' The conversion of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic exchange between the dominant and the dominated and successfully exploited it" (Cook 71). In 1961, Warhol was hired as a window dresser for Bonwit Teller on East 57th Street in New York City.[79] The exhibit included accessorized mannequins in front of five large paintings that drew inspiration from recently printed comics and advertisements. In a 1977 interview, Claire Demers asked Warhol what the future of art would look like; he responded, "I think it's going to be fashion art" (271). For Warhol, there was a fluidity between art object and garment.[80] His fluid treatment of art and fashion demonstrates how both are bound up in a campy aesthetic of surface that queers constructions of the exterior and interior. Indeed, Warhol drew on the "self-proclaimed virtues of queerness and queer style" to celebrate "the artificial and the flamboyant—the decorative remainder to a stratified and utilitarian idea of society" (Geczy and Karaminas).

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[79] The store had a long history of employing artists, including Salvador Dali, to create window displays that included some pieces that would later be displayed in collections such as the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, now called the Guggenheim (Vail 46–9). Warhol's overt interest in fashion was a striking contrast to the masculine abstract expressionists of the era that shielded themselves against the commercial such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg who completed window displays for Tiffany's but used the butch pseudonym "Maston Jones" (Warhol and Hackett 4). Kenneth Silver argued Warhol's interest in fashion was a rejection of these earlier masculine painters (Silver).

[80] Warhol even made his last public appearance at a fashion show in a small New York club (Church).

As Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas argued, dress and fashion, more than other forms, can "begin to uncover queer less as a category or system and more as a dynamic of slippage, a site of renegotiation, undermining, overstatement and reinstatement." Warhol was keenly aware of how even the surfaces of his body and clothing could be tools for navigating systems of normativity.[81] Juan Suárez argued in addition to Warhol's previous experience in advertising, his "experiments as a gay man must have sharpened his sensitivity towards how marginal groups theatricalize themselves and used style to underline their difference and to identify their peers, or to stake out sporadic, ever shifting habituses in city spaces" (Suárez 238). Similarly, Roger Cook argued Warhol's artistic persona, his social class, his queer identity, and interest in the commercial were linked to position himself as between the queer underground and commercial (Cook).[82]

Surface/Skin/Screen

Shaviro argues, "Warhol's art really *is* about fashion and style. It couldn't care less about what's beneath the surface" (Shaviro, "Andy Warhol"). He continues, "Warhol prefers style over substance, swish over machismo, images over things. Why even bother to dig beneath the surface? You can always make selections and corrections on the skin itself" (Shaviro, "Andy Warhol"). Shaviro's comments reflect what Warhol said of

[81] Warhol had an affinity for drag as well as shown in Nina Schleif's *Drag & Draw: Andy Warhol: The Unknown Fifties*.

[82] See Anthony E. Grudin's *Warhol's Working Class: Pop Art and Egalitarianism*.

himself: “If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There is nothing behind it” (Berg 90). Yet Shaviro’s insistence on pinning Warhol down reduces the categories of fashion and style to be without depth. Even if Shaviro is correct that Warhol’s work was about style, it misses a much more interesting analysis of *how* Warhol achieved such attention to the materiality of fashion without adding meaning. Warhol was keenly aware of how surfaces can be desired or rejected, inscribed with meaning, or emptied of meaning entirely. What Shaviro observed was in fact Warhol’s emphasis on the materiality of commodities that delinks them from their normative “use value or the labour that produces it and becomes its own free-floating quantity” (Geczy and Karaminas). Leaving a queer object that exists as a stylized exterior that mystifies as it allures, Warhol’s images are bound up in materiality, which Shaviro was quick to write off, arguing “[t]he world, for him, is not deficient, but overly full. The junk we collect, Warhol warns us, will fill up all our spaces” (Shaviro, “Andy Warhol”). Even as he nodded toward Warhol’s massive collection which has yet to be fully catalogued, Shaviro ironically ignored what is at the surface of Warhol’s obsessive collection of junk—a deep commitment to the material and the stuff with which to construct images.

Warhol’s treatment of the commodity reflects what Rosemary Hennessy called industrial capitalism’s “aestheticization of daily life,” where “social relations on which cultural production depends are even further mystified” and in turn “pursuit of new tastes and sensations as pleasures in themselves while concealing or backgrounding the labour that has gone into making them possible”(Hennessy 57). Warhol’s attention to the surface

extends Hennessy's argument that "the aesthetic emphasis on cultural forms, 'style' becomes an increasingly crucial marker of social value and identity" (Hennessy 57). In his embrace of fashion and style, Warhol turned himself into a commodity fetish that could be desired (or not) and consumed or rejected. As Adam Grezcy and Vicki Karaminas wrote:

> Just as Warhol would famously leave a party once he was photographed there—the ultimate reduction ad absurdum of "being seen"—gay dress from the 1960s to the present day, especially when it is for parties and get-togethers, is seldom an informal, vernacular affair, for it anticipates being made into a picture, enframed as a type or by the friend who photographs you for an album or, preferably, for the social pages of a magazine. (Geczy and Karaminas)

Warhol mimicked the idea himself, writing, "The thing is to think of nothing, B. Look, nothing is exciting, nothing is sexy, nothing is not embarrassing. The only time I ever want to be something is outside a party so I can get in" (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 9).

In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol,* Warhol explained beauty as contextual, a sensual experience of the materials that surround something.

> If you draped a beautiful person in jewels and beautiful clothes and put them in a beautiful house with beautiful furniture and beautiful paintings, they wouldn't be more beautiful, they'd be the same, but they would *think* they were more beautiful. However, if you took a beautiful person and put them in rags, they'd be

ugly. You can always make a person less beautiful." (Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* 67)

Here Warhol distinguished between the affective illusion of beauty and the actual results of aesthetic materiality. The sentiment is like Warhol's favorite song by The Velvet Underground, "All Tomorrow's Parties," which played at the happening at Abraham & Straus's (Harvard 107).[83] Written by Lou Reed, the song is about the material (dis)organization of style. Reed claimed it was "a very apt description of certain people at the Factory at the time" (Harvard 108).

"All Tomorrow's Parties," was, as David Fricke described, "the immortal opening vision of the go-go Cinderella" in which a poor girl, clothed in hand-me-downs, is left empty and shallow at the end of the party (qtd. in Harvard, "The Songs" 108). It was modeled on an 1838 nursery rhyme called "Monday's Child," which ascribed a personality trait to children based on the day of their birth. The song takes "Thursday's Child" as the main character, who is given a short shrift in the original rhyme described as having "far to go." In the song, Reed's sexist vision of the Factory it-girls labor over their clothing only to remain vapid and talentless. Thursday's children may put on the "silks and linens of yesterday's gowns," but when midnight strikes they are turned back into their own tattered rags and "blackened shrouds," so lackluster that when the illusion fails, "none will go mourning" (qtd. in Harvard 108).

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[83] The selection may have been incidental, it was after all the first single off the debut album and one of only three songs in which Nico sang lead, though none of the songs were particularly new having been released a year prior as b-side singles (Greene 144).

Reed's treatment of these "poor girls" trivial sartorial problems takes for granted that in Warhol's factory, the surface of anything can represent depth accurately. Aside from this, the song stages a particular rejection of style that parties at the Factory were driven by and that Warhol directly cultivated. Hughes argued well-styled, talentless outcasts populated the Factory, but they served a purpose for Warhol:

> If Warhol's "Superstars," as he called them, had possessed talent, discipline, or stamina, they would not have needed him. But then, he would not have needed them. They gave him his ghostly aura of power. If he withdrew his gaze, his carefully allotted permissions and recognitions, they would cease to exist; the poor ones would melt back into the sludgy, undifferentiated chaos of the street, the rich ones end up in some suitable clinic. (*The Spectacle of Skill* 140)

"All Tomorrow's Parties" presents a strange set of contradictions. First, it suggests an illusion that dressing can cover the surface but not the inside, an idea Andy's persona played with often. Second, it rejects the notion of style as a vehicle for social relationships. In particular, if we take Reed's comment that the song is about hangers-on at the Factory, style was an essential element to proving one's values and identity. These contradictions frame the inclusion of the song in the event as another example of Warhol's fluid consideration of the role of dress and style and present a conflicting message about the role of the material. Like the event itself, the song suggests a way of reading the surface of the paper garment as an artificial cover for the "poor girl" beneath.

Far from a hand-me-down, the paper dresses were, as the audience was reminded by a department store clerk, intended to be designed by the wearer giving Thursday's

Child a kind of artistic autonomy. This reading would readily appeal to the commercial nature of the event itself, playing up the commodity as the sanitized corporate solution to Thursday's blackened shrouds. Yet, this ideal was subverted by Warhol's orchestration of the event, styling Nico as she crooned darkly was a way of highlighting that the dress has been constructed. The song's negotiation of style alongside the material realities of the dress itself are at odds with the do-it-yourself branding of the paper dress kit. If the song is assumed to clarify, it only further confuses.

In some ways, Warhol's attention to the layers of material to cancel out or subvert individual meanings is suggestive of how forms of collage are similarly attuned to textures and layers of material. The inclusion of "All Tomorrow's Parties," incidental or not, frames the event in terms of the power of material transformation, though whether that transformation is empowering or shallow is uncertain. The uncertain role of fashion is also reflected in the material of dresses themselves. Paper as a material is multivalent, presenting both inscription and blankness. Jacques Derrida argued inscription gives the page "volume, folds, a labyrinth whose walls return the echoes of the voice or song that it carries itself" (Derrida 44). It is perhaps the echo of newspaper's advertisement insistence on Warhol as creator that gave weight to his disengaged performance. Such inscriptions have the capacity to create social objects, both real and imagined. As Maurizio Ferraris argued "social objects are made of inscriptions, impressed on paper" (Senchyne, "Rags Make Paper, Paper Makes Money: Material Texts and Metaphors of Capital" 547). Paper is the material on which identities are formed, authored, and circulated. It is the material

that "represents memory, human progress and the dissemination of knowledge" (Leitner, *Paper Textiles* 9).

Fluctuation between categories related to the material in Warhol's performance and his presentation as an artist in this happening were made through a relationship with paper. Given these relationships are materialized in paper, it is important to recognize Warhol too was bound up in paper inscriptions, both about him and by him, which mark him as an artist.[84] As Derrida noted, the relationship to paper is physical as much as imaginative: "Paper is utilized in an experience that involves the body, beginning with hands, eyes, voice, ears; so it mobilizes both time and space" (Derrida 44). The blank sheet has long served as a symbol of artistic intention and the vastness of creative spirit, a material engaged in both being and becoming at the same time, a site of creativity and symbol of creativity itself. Derrida observed, "spacing, gaps, the blanks which become

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[84] Warhol cited his childhood interest cutting out paper dolls in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (1975) writing:

> I had had three nervous breakdowns when I was a child, spaced a year apart. One when I was eight, one at nine, and one at ten. The attacks—St. Vitus Dance—always started on the first day of summer vacation. I don't know what this meant. I would spend all summer listening to the radio and lying in bed with my Charlie McCarthy doll and my un-cut-out cut-out paper dolls all over the spread and under the pillow. (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* 21)

In a 1977 interview with Glenn O'Brien, he cited cutting out paper dolls as his earliest artistic work, crediting Walt Disney's paper Snow White doll as his artistic influence (O'Brien). This past time, true or not, might be reflected in his revenant 1986 series based on the paper cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen (O'Brien 260).

what is important … always open up onto a base of paper" that are present on even printed surfaces (Derrida 53). The possibilities of the blank sheet and the symbolic connection to artistic production can also be deeply unsettling, as anyone with writer's block can attest. Paper "waits to be covered with writing numbers drawings and as a symbolic form it moves into the center of the original, the site of writing in *actu,* the symbolic source from which authorship unfolds … not just the site of production but an organic component of it" (Müller 92). Derrida pointed out Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,* compared paper and paper inscription to sexual reproduction: "As soon as writing, which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube on to a piece of white paper, assumes the significance of copulation, or as soon as walking becomes a symbolic substitute for treading upon the body of mother earth, both writing and walking are stopped because they represent the performance of a forbidden sexual act" (Derrida 53).

The happening draws attention to the way paper is physically impressed or shaped by bodies and how these bodies shape the material. Warhol's use of paper and bodies is an example of Ahmed's concept of a co-inhabited space where boundaries between skin and object are fluid, constructing and orienting each other. She sees "nonopposition between the bodies that move around objects, and objects around which bodies move, shows us how orientation involves at least a two-way 'approach,' or the 'more than one' of an encounter. Orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface: we, in approaching this or that table, are also approached by the table, which touches us when we touch it" (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* 56). Even though the dress is explicitly figured as the blank material for artistic inscription, Warhol

challenged the concept of a passive canvas, instead choosing to animate the paper through the use of other bodies.

The happening takes up these figurations of the material and queers the surfaces through use of the material itself. Perhaps more than his images or mode of production, Warhol's use of the material was a distinctly queer engagement with the physical surfaces that engage bodies. To that end, Warhol's staging subverts the ideal of a lone masculine artist impregnating a surface with his "work." Instead, he presented a queer orchestration of art production that relies on the joint production of both bodies and objects. The paper garment is literally figured on the female body, becoming the canvas. Yet, the material insists on its difference from the body, drawing attention to itself as a surface. In the paper's "bad" performance as a garment pretending to be a dress, the body is never fully subsumed, never reaching the illusion it could be more than paper. In that way, the paper and body never fully reduce neatly into Freud's symbolic awaiting nude female and the paper becomes more of a shield than womb.

While the paper dress does function as the surface for the work, Warhol further removed himself as the virile artistic figure relying on Malanga to physically take over artistic production. Warhol's lack of direct contact with the dress highlights how making and physicality are bound up in the idea of what an artist is and does. His hands-off production disorients the figure of the artist from the artistic tools of production, challenging the gestural trope of male Abstract Expressionists that have been read as

aggressively masculine.[85] For example, Anna C. Chave argued Jackson Pollock's gestural paint drippings simulate spreading of semen, figuring himself as heterosexual progenitor (Chave 335). In *POPism,* Warhol noted, "the world of the Abstract Expressionists was very macho. The painters who used to hang around the Cedar Bar on University Place were all hard-driving, two-fisted types who'd grab each other and say things like 'I'll knock your fucking teeth out' and 'I'll steal your girl'" (Warhol and Hackett 13). His "swish," or overt homosexual performance was exaggerated to reject the lineage of painters who were obsessively worried about their creative production:

> As for the "swish" thing, I'd always had a lot of fun with that—just watching the expressions on people's faces. You'd have to have seen the way all the Abstract Expressionist painters carried themselves and the kinds of images they cultivated, to understand how shocked people were to see a painter coming on swish. I certainly wasn't a butch kind of guy by nature, but I must admit, I went out of my way to play up the other extreme. (Warhol and Hackett 11–3).

Warhol's work stands in stark contrast, presenting a flaccid image of "artistic production not as the fertile spreading of seed, but instead as something deviant, kitschy, mechanized, and masturbatory" (Maizels and Warhol 16).

Warhol did not work in a vacuum and was responding the cultural and artistic movements of the era. Yves Klein's 1960s *Anthropometries* series where nude models

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[85] See Rosalind Krauss The Optical Unconscious (294–367).

were painted with blue paint and instructed to press their bodies against large pieces of paper. Feminist artists were also constructing performances that made similar comparisons between the female body and artistic production as with Yoko Ono's 1964 *Cut Piece* which featured the artist sitting motionless with a pair of scissors as audience members were invited to approach and cut off pieces of her clothing. Carolee Schneermann's *Up to and Including Her Limits* from 1973 to 1976. Schneemann hung from the ceiling and swung around drawing on the walls in crayon in a comment on the masculine gestures of abstract expressionists. Maura Reilly argues the performance "comments on the hyper-masculinity of Action Painting – in particular, the sexualized nature of Pollock's ejaculatory drip" (qtd. in Puglies 2). In her 1979 *Interior Scroll* she famously pulled a text from her vagina and read it aloud.

As Nico, the model/canvas, moved under Malanga's hands, a strange family photograph emerged. Malanga and Nico moved together to produce images while Nico's child sat under the table. A woman in the crowd mistook Malanga's active role as indication he was the artist and addressed him as "Mr. Warhol" (Mellow 33). Warhol's mute detachment was acknowledged as Malanga explained he did the work while Warhol supervised (See fig. 4). The happening appeared to be an overt, though displaced, figuration of Freud's metaphor that exposes it as a veneer where the artist collaborator is distanced from the creation. As Michael Maizels argued, "the mass production to which Warhol appealed functioned as a subversion in both registers, undercutting high-minded appeals to aesthetic transcendence and also mocking the notion of artistic creation as akin to heterosexual coitus" (Maizels and Warhol 16).

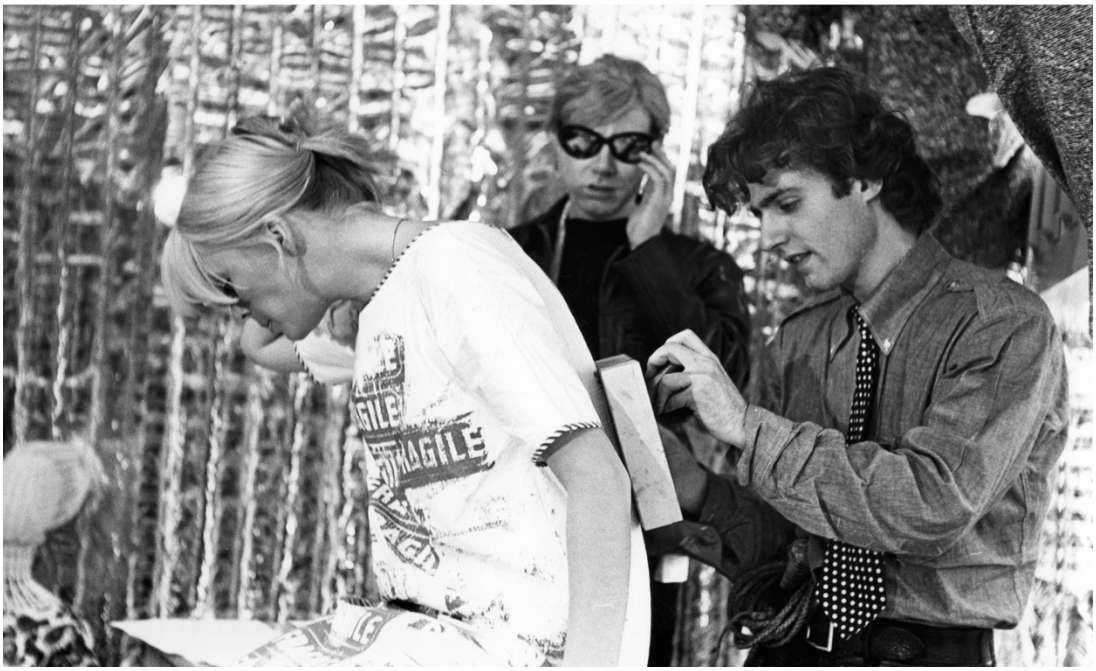

Fig. 11 Warhol watches as Malanga stencils on the back of the paper dress worn by singer Nico. Photo by Fred W. McDarrah via Getty Images.

Warhol queered the family metaphor through his hovering, though apathetic presence, distancing himself from Nico's embodied and active role as surface. Warhol used Malanga as a kind of male artist prosthetic for the sexualized contact with Nico's body, opting instead to attend to a "swish" task of cleaning paint out of her hair. If Malanga's role was uncertain, during the creation of the second dress, Warhol handed Malanga a large banana sticker that he held over his head in an "uncertain display of showmanship … and did a few surreptitious bumps and grinds" (Mellow 33).

Although Malanga figured as the heterosexual artist at the happening, Warhol had previously presented him as an object of homosexual desire. Just two months earlier, Warhol photographed Malanga and Edwin Denby together for the literary magazine, *C.*

The photograph was the first known instance of Warhol turning a photograph into a silkscreen. The front cover featuring the two men standing next to each other and upon finishing the volume, an image of Malanga kissing Denby presented a campy, homosexual take on formal portraits of husbands and wives. Warhol instructed Malanga to kiss Denby, posing the two to deliberately produce a rumor about their relationship (Wolf 24). Warhol's play with images of queer family in the photos for *C,* drew a clear connection the familial configuration presented during the happening. In posing Malanga in these conflicting ways, Warhol played with how arrangements of bodies and material can signal or confuse markers of sexual desire, hinting toward a fluidity linked to contact with some materials over others, regardless of category.

A key feature of postmodern art was "that the edifice of the artist as the awe-inspiring font of creation was dismantled" in favor of critiques of the artist as "a nexus of forces, desires and influences; the artist is a respondent of a certain need, a receptor of contemporary expectations and influences" (Geczy and Millner 28). The scene, intended to show the versatility of paper dresses as craft, instead incites confusion from onlookers who attempt to verify the object as "art" by looking toward signs of contact between artist and surface. Warhol's use of other bodies in the creative process exemplifies the goal of the paper dress kit, namely to make art accessible to many. However, Warhol's strange configuration of the event simultaneously produced distance between himself as artist and the labor or art while keeping the specificity of high art by donating the dresses to a museum. As such, the event's attempt to make artistic production accessible to consumers is further obfuscated when their position in relation to the work does not

change. Warhol's approach to do-it-yourself culture was, like the rest of his work, a variety of conflicting messages couched to complicate the more straightforward interpretations posed by commercial marketing.

Warhol's use of silk screening at the happening is a keen reversal of another project also focused on emerging Do-It-Yourself art culture. Warhol's 1962-1963 *Do It Yourself* series featured five large scale paintings including two still lives, two seascapes, and a landscape (Maizels and Warhol 7). The paintings replicated images from popular color-by-number kits, including the instructional numbers, but leaving many of the fields unpainted. Ironically, these paintings were among the last Warhol would paint freehand without the use of silk screens suggesting a link between doing it yourself and the physical contact between hand and canvas (Maizels and Warhol 7).

While the series has largely been seen as a comment on the commodification of artistic production, Michael Maizels argued convincingly the series and its title "functions as a double entendre speaking both to the by-number source imagery and the taboo subject of male masturbation (Maizels and Warhol 7). For example, *Flowers* (1962), is set apart from the rest of the series because it is the only painting not drawn from a commercial kit, but was based on a freehand sketch of the flower narcissus. The inclusion of this flower is a queer allusion to the Greek myth, where a man refuses to be seduced by a woman and is instead "doomed to love only his own reflection, to desire only his own body" (Maizels and Warhol 16). Maizels convincingly argued the series was keenly aware of historical discussions of masturbation as unnatural and sexually deviant. He wrote, "the *Do It Yourself* works suggest that for early Warhol, subversive

sexuality was not merely an effect at the level of content in his art, but was in fact woven into the very form of its (simulated) mass production" (Maizels and Warhol 6).[86]

Fig. 14 Andy Warhol*, Do It Yourself (Sailboat)*, 1962. Image courtesy of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

The 1967 happening enacts a reversal of these earlier paintings where Warhol's use of screen printing over painting complicates, rather than replicates the parameters of the advertised set, which included paints and a brush. If the open spaces of Warhol's *Do It Yourself* paintings can be seen as an invitation for the viewer to finish the painting, the happening is for watching. Rather than reflecting the range of kit's creative possibilities, Warhol's marketed presence at the event highlights the particularity of the artist as creative producer. If the scene was intended to demonstrate, as the spokesperson suggested, that the audience can "do it themselves" it is unclear both what is to be done and who is to do it.[87] After all, Warhol was not doing the painting himself and even

[86] Warhol was at least also thinking early on about how his work fit in among a lineage of other painters. The DIY Series suggested it could draw connections between the Pop commercialism of how his own work and those great images that had been co-opted by the kits. In an interview with David Bourdon, Bourdon made a comparison between Warhol's soup cans and the Mona Lisa and asks if Warhol has an image of the painting for reference. Warhol replied: "Just this paint-by-number diagram which I decided not to copy. Why doesn't she have any eyebrows? Have they left out the numbers?" (Goldsmith 11).

[87] Consumers had long been encouraged to take part in the visual construction of their paper garments by altering hems, necklines, adding embellishments, and repurposing prints for other uses. With few worn

Malanga could not truly be called the sole producer of the work, as the screen prints were shaped by Nico's movements and body.

Where the kit was intended to further mystify the commodity by intimately tying it to the labor of the consumer, Warhol's production restated the distance between categories of product and producer, including the subcategory of artist/artwork. His reluctance to touch the garment at all queers the trope of male artist as seminal creator, moved into action by female muse. That Malanga was confused for Warhol by a member of the crowd demonstrates how the heteronormative image of hands-on artistic production is bound up with the artists themselves (Mellow). Instead, he joined multiple bodies in a co-production of the garment, in a sly refusal of the artistic trope and double entendre of "doing it yourself." To highlight his model of influence without anxiety, Warhol evoked another artist's body by signing the *Fragile Dress* "Dali." By joining so many bodies in the construction of the garment, Warhol complicated the role of the artist as sole source of creative output. Warhol's use of screen prints of an unknown origin, "scraps from around the house," draws attention to the way art production is an

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garments in museum collections, it is difficult to assess the extent to which women freely altered the dresses. Regardless, manufacturers embraced craft as a prime selling feature of the dresses already printed with high fashion prints (Walford 15). In 1966, Scott's "Paper Caper" dress labels extolled versatility: "To shorten the dress, all that is needed is a steady hand and a pair of scissors. To mend it, sticky tape is dandy … You can cup up the dress for use as disposable guest towels, placemats, or [an] apron" (Walford 11). By 1967, non-woven paper fabric was sold by the yard alongside Butterwick and McCall's patterns ("Fashion: Real Live Paper Dolls").

assemblage of materials that have their own, often unknown histories. As Ahmed argued, "Objects appear by being cut off from such histories of arrival, as histories that involve multiple generations, and the 'work' of bodies, which is of course the work of some bodies more than others" (Ahmed 41–2).

Warhol's use of screen printing ensured contact between surfaces was never direct even for Malanga. The image was never directly touched, only skimmed through the screen or through another piece of paper. The use of the screen is representative of Glick's claim that "Warhol captures the aesthetic abstraction, seriality, and reification engendered by Fordist production even as he lays bare postwar commodity culture's new and seductive forms of beauty, pleasure, and desire" (Glick 136). Screen printing[88] exemplifies the tension between originality and replication and artist and creation that the event plays with. Warhol's use of the fragile screen demonstrated how "Warhol's embrace of mass production became a way to stake out an aesthetic that celebrated the qualities of repetition, sterility, and immanence in much the way that traditional, hetero-normative criticism trumpeted singularity, fecundity, and universality" (7).

The screen used for the "Fragile Dress" is without a direct origin or creator, though it does have a companion used to create a pant suit for Sarah Dalton to wear to an art opening. That screen print included the phrase "handle with care." The multiple screens are like many of Warhol's work, drawing in repetition and multiple reproductions

[88] Much has been made of Warhol's interest in repetition and screen printing. Foster, for example, saw Warhol's use of screen printing as a way to screen the real as traumatic. Richard Meyer on the other hand saw Warhol's use of screen printing as a way to express desire the sameness of homosexuality.

rather than mimetic copies. As Foster argued, the imperfections in the copies are more suggestive than incidental (Foster et al.). The evidence of these paired screens offers entry into consideration of how both garments function as funhouse mirrors to one another. While Dalton's one-of-a-kind suit was meticulously printed, suggesting the screen was handled with care, the "Fragile Dress" is messy, in practice and product. The imperative text included on Dalton's suit suggests a coyly sexual instruction to viewers to take care with either/both wearer and garment. Without the added text, the word fragile becomes a label, warning or taunting the wearer or the material. Even in their application, the use of the screens is similar. Both garments feature repeated patterns traveling in rows down. In this way, the garments are doppelgangers to each other, both visually figuring the printed text and the text that was redacted.

Fig. 12 Andy Warhol (American painter, printmaker, and filmmaker, 1928-1987). "Fragile Handle with Care". 1962 via Artstor.

The redacted text on the "Fragile Dress" is critical because it allows us to consider how Warhol used language as material. Kenneth Goldsmith argued convincingly "the

visual and verbal are the weft and warp of a seamless fabric that is Warhol's art" (Goldsmith and Kenneth xxx). Warhol's performance of his persona was deeply connected to his understanding of how language was a material object. Before tape recorders became pervasive, Warhol noticed reporters would take notes. He said, "I liked that better because when it got written up, it would always be different from what I'd actually said—and a lot more fun for me to read" (Goldsmith and Kenneth xxxv). Warhol saw interviews as a material art form which could be transformed into text and mined for meaning as any other text. His background watching TV in the 1950s, especially the formulaic interviews of Hollywood stars, provided Warhol with language and formatting for his own interviews. His famous quote "I'd like to be a machine, wouldn't you?," [89] for example, may have been lifted from Marilyn Monroe who exclaimed an "actor is not a machine, no matter how much they want to say you are … this is supposed to be an art form, not just a manufacturing establishment" (Goldsmith and Kenneth). In addition,

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[89] The full quotation reads, "Paintings are too hard. The things I want to show are mechanical. Machines have less problems. I'd like to be a machine, wouldn't you?" (Demers). The quote also references Marshall McLuhan's opening of *Understanding Media:*

> Many people would be disposed to say that it was not the machine, but what one did with the machine, that was its meaning or message. In terms of the ways in which the machine altered our relations to one another and to ourselves, it mattered not in the least whether it turned out cornflakes or Cadillacs. The restructuring of human work and association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology. The essence of automation technology is the opposite. It is integral and decentralist in depth, just as the machine was fragmentary, centralist, and superficial in its patterning of human relationships. (12)

Warhol co-opted the critical reviews of his work, for example, suddenly calling painting hard work after an art critic lambasted Pop Art as lazy (Berg). Eventually, Warhol began taping all of his interviews and much of his life in the Factory, to eventually publish *A Novel* in 1968.

Warhol's use of language was physically disorienting. Goldsmith noted, "[a]fter an encounter with the words of Andy Warhol, one's relationship to language is never the same: long-held assumptions of place, time, and self are all up for grabs. Although Warhol was known for his surfaces, what we are left with is an unusually strong sense of interiority" (Goldsmith and Kenneth xxxv). Warhol's seeming interiority, along with his likeable affect, left others to fill in the blanks for him. Interviewers supplemented his tacit answers with their own interpretations, revealing their own perspective rather than locating his. In this way, he never had to nail down any answers about his work because they were offered for him.

Warhol's use of others' voices as a supplement to his own has been widely documented. In addition to his playful evasion of questions, Warhol hired Allen Midgette to dress like him and deliver lectures at colleges in 1967 (Goldsmith and Kenneth xxxv). At this happening, the spokesperson answered for Warhol, becoming an interpreter of his art while also forwarding the marketing goals of the company. His silence was then a tool that forced others to categorize and explain the event.

The Business of Art & Art as Business: Paper Dress Prints

Warhol's work expanded the idea of what it meant to be an artist and what constituted art itself. As Adam Geczy and Millner noted, "Like his contemporaries the conceptual artists, one does not contemplate a Warhol as one would a Goya, but unlike the same contemporaries, Warhol thrust the viewer into the web of commodity fetishism, desire and its limit, death" (Geczy and Millner 22). In 1966, Warhol stunningly announced he would retire from painting, yet he continued to produce work. Instead, he took on the position of manager, first creating an idea and then overseeing the production of the idea by assistants. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, Warhol was outspoken about the links between commerce and art:

> Business art is the step that comes after Art. I started as a commercial artist, and I want to finish as a business artist. After I did the thing called 'art' or whatever it's called, I went into business art. I wanted to be an Art Businessman or Business Artist because making money is art and working is art, and good business is the best art … Business art. Art business. The Business Art Business. (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* 92)[90]

[90] This sentiment is reflected in Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the art business as "a trade in things that have no price, belongs to the class of practices in which the logic of the pre-capitalist economy lives on (as it does, in another sphere in the economy of exchanges between the generations). These practices, functioning as practical negations, can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing. Defying ordinary logic, they lend themselves to two opposed readings, both equally false, which each undo their essential duality and duplicity by reducing them either to the disavowal or to what is disavowed—to disinterestedness or self-interest (Bourdieu and Bourdieu 74).

A Dress: medium is the message

Warhol was not the only one to explore the material and bodily flexibility of the paper dress as a vehicle for art. The idea that the body could be a visual representation of art, beyond being represented in art, oriented the wearer toward a modern sensibility. When it was then retained as paper image, the circle was completed, a central aspect of artist-produced paper garments. In March 1968, American graphic designer Harry Gordon, launched a series of "poster dresses," geared toward young women.[91] The dresses were simple A-line reinforced paper garments that sold for three dollars apiece (Sheppard E2). Printed with blown up commercial photographs, the dresses straddled the line between reproduction and commodity. The series included five designs: "Mystic Eye" (a close up of Audrey Hepburn's eye), "Giant Rocket," "Rose," "Pussy Cat," and "Hand" (Sadlier 46).

[91] This market is reflected in the production of just two sizes: small (32-inch chest) and medium (36-inch chest). According to Gordon, focusing on youth culture was in an effort to start a trend that would lead to larger consumer markets like supermarkets and department stores (Sheppard E2).

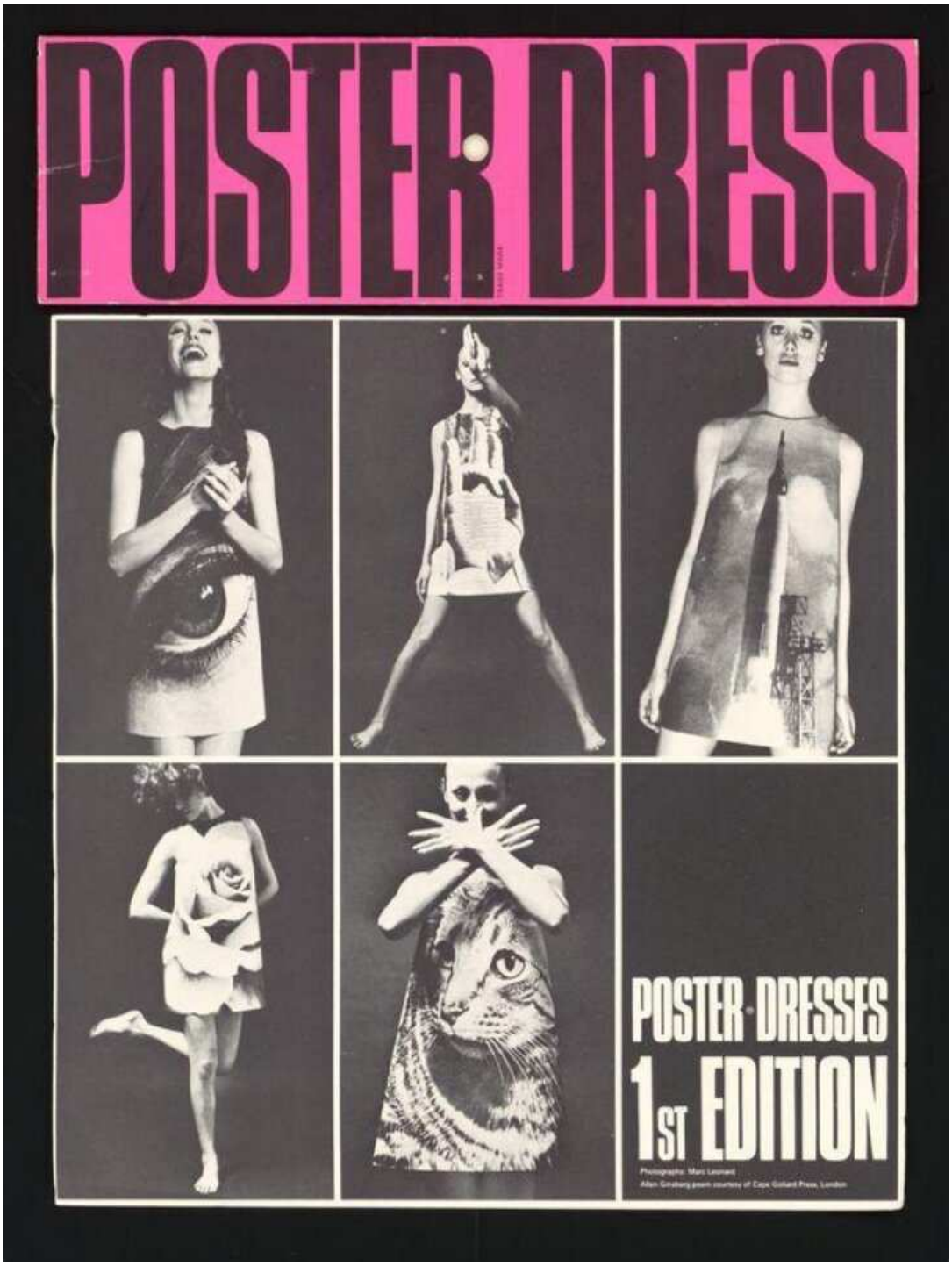

Fig. 13 Harry Gordon 1955 first edition Paper dress collection, V & A South Kensington

These dresses captured the 1960s poster craze, a cheap and temporary way to decorate domestic interiors.[92] The poster dress was both art and fashion, intended to circulate the body and domestic space. As the packaging suggested, "… why not … Cut open all the seams and hang it on your wall as a poster … or cover pillows … or as your collection grows, sew them together to make a bedspread or curtains or a table-cloth …" ("Harry Gordon Poster Dress 1967"). Gordon's paper dresses offered women the opportunity to wear and by extension become art.[93] Like low cost paper, posters, which could be ripped from walls as tastes change, the transient nature of paper dresses that could be "ripped from the body" speak to the desire for disposable fashion, and perhaps models.[94]

Among the paper dress fad, Gordon's poster dresses were set apart because of their reflexive insistence on their own materiality. Fashion critic Eugenia Sheppard remarked, "[m]ost of the paper dresses have tried to be pretty and chic, as much as possible like real dresses. The posters make no such attempt." Poster dresses drew attention to the fact they are made from paper, making the connection between dressing one's body and dressing one's wall closer.

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[92] See Ervine Metzl's *The Poster: Its History and Its Art* and Elizabeth E Guffey *Posters: A Global History*

[93] Though Gordon planned over 60 additional dresses he only managed to produce just one series. At least one of his designs, a close-up of Bob Dylan had to be trashed, because Dylan "didn't like being worn" (Sheppard E2).

[94] While the dresses themselves were sturdy, Gordon's collection featured a Velcro shoulder strap which could be "ripped" off (Sheppard E2).

Fig. 14 Paper dress designed by Harry Gordon in 1968 that features image of with ring finger and thumb touching, printed over with poem "Uptown N.Y." by Allen Ginsberg. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven CT.

In "Hand," the dress makes the link between the visual and material with a direct link to textuality. Featuring a close-up of Allen Ginsberg's hand with thumb and fourth finger touching in the Buddhist gesture of peace, Ginsberg's 1966 poem "Uptown N.Y." [95] is printed down the palm. The poem, set up as a series of contrasts, is a commentary on

[95] The poem reads in full:

"Yellow Budweiser signs over oaken bars, "I've seen everything"—the bartender handing me change of $10, I stared at him amiably eyes thru an obvious Adamic beard—with Montana musicians homeless in Manhattan, teenage curly hair themselves—we sat at the antique booth and gossiped, Madame Grady's

the generational differences in public perception of the Vietnam war. At this bar off Amsterdam, gossiping with other young artists, the speaker was met with violent interjections: “If I had my way I'd cut off your hair and send you to Vietnam.” In reply, the speaker offered a labored blessing, seeming to come only “decades later,” “Bless you, then.” In an ironic turn, the man’s vitriol intensified adding, “And if I couldn't do that I'd cut your throat,” though the speaker replied by repeating his blessing.[96]

The speaker’s non-violence emphasizes the brutal masculinity associated with the Vietnam War. The speaker was figured as a feminine subject, glancing with amiable eyes, gossiping about Madame Grady’s salon. His long hair, perhaps the most overt feminine quality, spurred the man’s aggression. Printing the poem on the dress made the speaker's place as part of the feminine clear. The poem is animated and performed by the female bodies that wear the garment, highlighting the absurdity of the Irishman’s violence. On the dress, the poem does not come to be a part of women’s bodies, but rather exposes how masculine violence toward other men is also about the dominance of women.

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literary salon a curious value in New York—"If I had my way I'd cut off your hair and send you to Vietnam"—"Bless you then" I replied to a hatted thin citizen hurrying to the barroom door upon wet dark Amsterdam Avenue decades later—"And if I couldn't do that I'd cut your throat" he snarled farewell, and "Bless you sir" I added as he went to his fate in the rain, dapper Irishman 1966.”

[96] The poem reflects Ginsberg’s Buddhist beliefs, which are beyond the scope of this reading. See Tony Trigilio *Allen Ginsberg's Buddhist Poetics.*

The dress expresses the repetition and sameness of the poem's internal blessing by doubling the image on the front and back of the dress. The image of the hand, posed in the meditative peace posture that accompanies repetitive songs or chants, makes visual the spoken blessing in the poem. In that way, the dress recreates the action of the poem itself, as people rushing past the wearer are also met with the blessing twice. In this way, selecting to wear the dress becomes a kind of material meditative practice that is both visual and literary—and very provocative.[97] The dress's inclusion of Ginsberg's hand suggests a claim to authorship or originality of the work itself. The poem inscribed down the palm of the writer's hand links the artist's physical labor with the creative product and the woman's body underneath. The image of the hand makes Gordon's dress part of the physical contact of bodies and materials. The poem is pressed from the palm of the artist to the surface of the paper, the point of intimate material contact where ideas and bodies join together. Although the photograph of the hand references the role paper has in bearing witness to the originality of creativity, the dresses also signaled disposability. The dresses reproduced to present an accessible visual symbol of one's ideological position, cultural capital, and trendiness at stake in the original pieces of art themselves. Marketed

[97] The poem reflects tensions felt during the Democratic convention in August 1968, when Anti-Vietnam protesters held rallies and faced aggression from the police. The event, later called a police riot U.S. National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, was subject to a grand jury investigation the following year that included Ginsberg. During his testimony, Ginsberg explained he attempted to calm demonstrators by chanting "om." Later, Ginsberg started the chant in court during a heated moment which was met with strong objections upheld by the court (Lukas).

for their inevitable role as trash, paper dresses also suggest the disposability of art reproduction generally.

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan's bestselling book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* presented the now famous thesis: "the medium is the message," that any meaning to be taken from a piece of media is linked to the form that media takes. McLuhan argued the content on any one medium is linked to the use of another medium. The 1960s paper dress drew both on the historical uses of print media and the emerging print technologies that offered wearers a way to physically carry these messages and images. In the early 1960s, technological advancements in silk-screen printing made the process cheaper and faster than ever, ushering in a wave of commercially branded attire (Sewell 691). Dress historian Kathleen Paton noted "some images made the dresses akin to walking billboards, showcasing ads for *Time* magazine, Campbell's Soup cans, political candidates, and poster-sizes photographs" (Paton 551).

Paton attributed the rapid success of paper dresses to "their eye-catching patterns- daisies, zigzags, animal prints, stripes- that suggested Pop Art" (Paton 551). The printing elevated the dresses to fashion, joining "the expanding palette of everyday surfaces appropriated as carriers of images and patterns … [in] bold complementary colours with their destabilising effects and the distortion of scale in ornamentation … [T]hey produced confusing shifts in perspective, emulating and becoming a catalyst for the effects of hallucinogenic agents" (Grunenberg 190). The prints had a physical effect on the body. Op-Art prints were especially effective on textiles "as the illusion of movement created by the eye's optic nerve was exaggerated when applied to a moving garment" (Palmer,

"'The Sixties Paper Caper Fashions'" 158). The way such prints could physically confront viewers was examined in McLuhan's 1967 book with Quintin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage.* The book, a visual exploration of the thesis laid out in his earlier text, posited all media produces physical sensations of grounding or disorientation: "a medium is not something neutral—it does something to people. It takes hold of them. It rubs them off, it massages them and bumps them around, chiropractically, as it were, and the general roughing up that any new society gets from a medium, especially a new medium, is what is intended in that title" (Pix D23).[98]

1960s paper dresses offered another sense of media massaging the body through the way contact with the body changed the way printed images were viewed. In a review of a paper dress printed with the news, columnist Mary Good found herself printed with an ink tattoo of Irv Kupcinet receiving the "Man of the Year" award on her arm and the headline "Ann Landers plans 'Vietnam Trip'" streaked across her chest (qtd. in Callahan 18). As Landers found, paper dresses were not passive media forms rather they were produced through contact with bodies. Like the news, paper dresses could respond to the rapidly changing social and technological landscape. McLuhan saw seemingly straightforward forms of media created a dissonance with the changing world, resulting

[98] In his 1977 interview with Glen O'Brien, Warhol responded to a question about violence on TV with a quip about McLuhan's daughter having to look away from the screen during portions of *Marathon Man* but that during her work at a TV network she "saw the baby that was eaten by the dog, and it didn't bother her. She had the crew set up and photograph it right. She said it was work, and she really didn't have time to think about it, but in the movie it's something else" (O'Brien 260).

in a dislocated sense of anxiety (McLuhan and Fiore 25). The effect of the media, he wrote, "are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences, they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered" (*The Medium Is the Massage* 26).

The influx of branded paper dresses expressed this link between media and the body. Branded paper dresses reflected the production of bodies as commodities by using popular forms of media. Some brands designed dresses intended to look like the labels of their products. MARS Manufacturing Company produced a Baby Ruth and Butterfinger dress that reproduced the candy labels (fine print and all) down the front of the dress. The dresses invited scrutiny of the wearer's body to read the "packaging" and thus inviting wearers to unwrap what is inside and in so doing called attention to the sexualization that the candy bars' names encoded. The material's suggestive fragility reflected the disposability, instant gratification, and the ephemeral nature of the products they advertised. Given that many branded dresses were part of promotional campaigns that required women to mail in labels, the dresses presented a fluidity between consumer and consumable.

Fig. 9. Advertisement "Curtiss Fashion Wrappers," Curtiss Candy Company

As the paper dress fad grew, companies drew more explicitly on the influence of Pop Art designs to market promotional dresses. The most interesting example is Campbell's "Souper Dress" (see image below). Printed with row upon row of Campbell's

soup cans, as if taken from the grocery shelf, the dress had "eye popping Campbell's Cans coming and going!"[99] The dresses were a direct nod to Warhol's famous paintings, making Pop available for only two soup labels plus a dollar shipping with your selection of six different vegetable soups. As with the Mars dresses, Campbell's conflated the soup with the wearer's body. The advertisement promised "on you, it'll look … M'm M'm Good" (Campbells).

[99] Warhol was a natural influence for many paper dresses including an NBC dress that borrowed Warhol's portrait style to depict a collage of headlines.

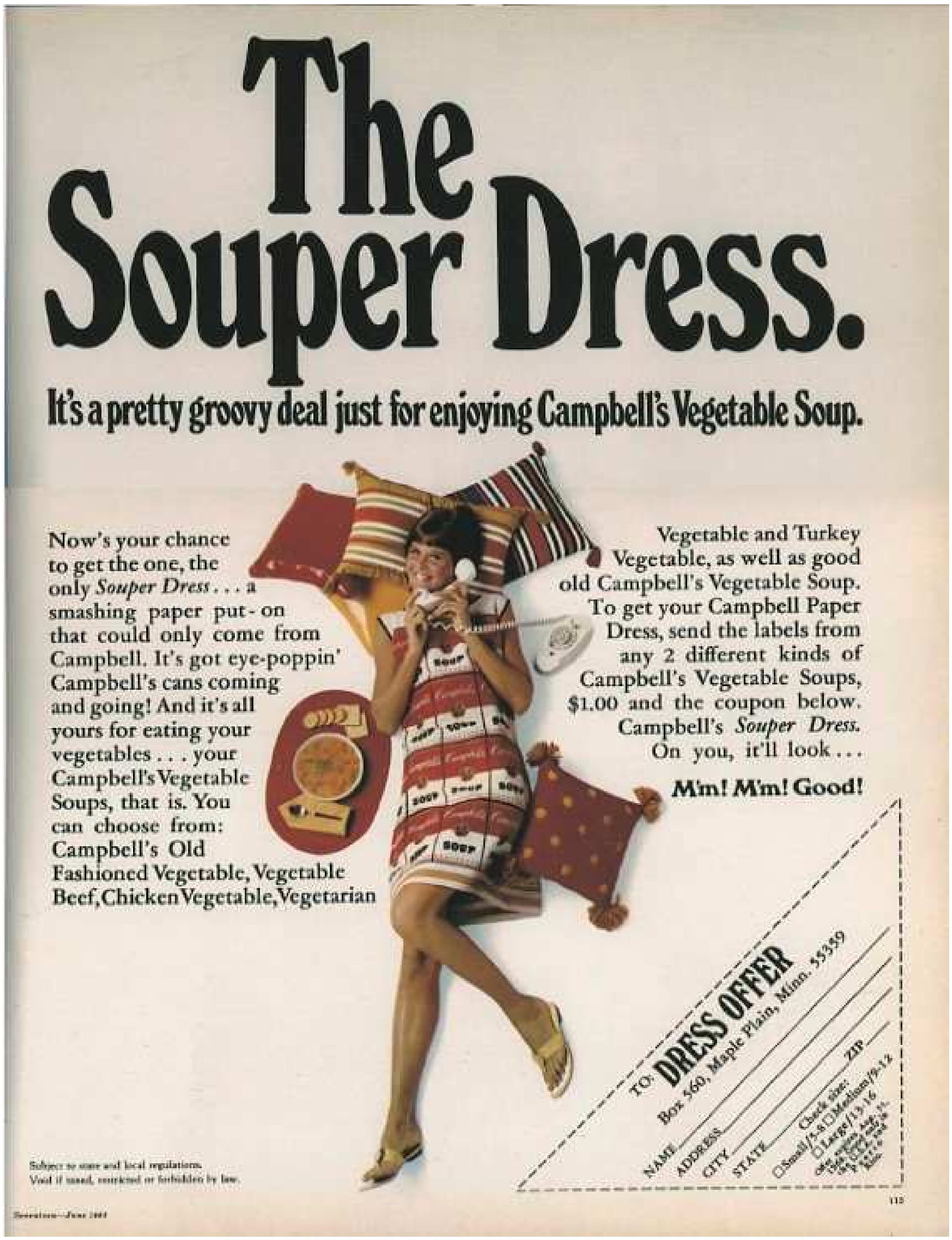
The Souper Dress.
It's a pretty groovy deal just for enjoying Campbell's Vegetable Soup.
Now's your chance to get the one, the only *Souper Dress* . . . a smashing paper put-on that could only come from Campbell. It's got eye-poppin' Campbell's cans coming and going! And it's all yours for eating your vegetables . . . your Campbell's Vegetable Soups, that is. You can choose from: Campbell's Old Fashioned Vegetable, Vegetable Beef, Chicken Vegetable, Vegetarian Vegetable and Turkey Vegetable, as well as good old Campbell's Vegetable Soup. To get your Campbell Paper Dress, send the labels from any 2 different kinds of Campbell's Vegetable Soups, $1.00 and the coupon below. Campbell's *Souper Dress*. On you, it'll look . . .
M'm! M'm! Good!
TO: DRESS OFFER
Box 560, Maple Plain, Minn. 55359
NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
STATE
ZIP
Check size:
☐Small/5-8 ☐Medium/9-12
☐Large/13-16

Fig. 15 Advertisement for the "Souper Dress," *Seventeen*, June 1968.

The popularity of the dresses affirmed the marketability of Pop Art in fashion and in turn, the company joined in the art reproduction market.[100] These stylistic reproductions drew on Warhol's cultural cachet and in turn marketed both their product, their stylized dress, *and* Warhol's original work. If Warhol's soup cans were intended to wear down viewer recognition to the brand itself and highlight the conformity of the mass market, the Campbell's Souper dress undid the work of "pop" by absorbing it back into the market to drive consumption of the product it displays. In a move that closes the gap between art, reproduction, and product—gaps exploited by Warhol's original—the Souper dress navigated away from critical consciousness, or even the arbitrariness of pop art itself, and affirmed and encouraged consumption.

While some critics have viewed the Souper dress as a merging of art, design, and pop culture, branded attire co-opted contemporary art by selling it back to people and sanitized it for greater consumption. When Mellow warned Warhol's performance was a perfunctory representation of the "corruptibility of contemporary art" he missed the point. There is no pure contemporary art not already subject to the commodity market. Even when contemporary art presents a product already scrubbed clean by the company, it can revert to the market in ways perfunctory and lacking showmanship without criticism.

[100] I use the term reproduction liberally to mean a produced adaptation, rather than a replication.

Despite boutiques and artists' endorsements, paper garments fell out of fashion by the early 1970s (Walford 43). Warhol loved the paper dresses and bemoaned the passing trend in his diaries: "I could never understand why paper dresses didn't catch on—they were such a modern idea, so logical" (Warhol and Hackett 191).[101] He blamed poor marketing tactics, criticizing Abraham & Straus for selling the dresses in the notions department, hinting the garment's modernity was shadowed by links to traditional home sewing (Warhol and Hackett 191). Warhol's comment hinted the object was subject to material confusion that could be challenged by the objects it was placed next to. As part of the notions department, the dresses became supplements to fabric clothing made from the paper dress patterns that lined the aisles. Distinct from trendy boutiques that stocked paper dresses alongside other novelty and psychedelic partyware, paper dresses in the department store emphasized the object as paper.

Ultimately, consumers were increasingly aware of the garment's material which made them ill-fitting and flammable (Paton 551). Additionally, concerns about the environment raised by critics such as Alvin Toffler made paper less desirable. Paper dresses were seen as part of a throwaway mentality and no longer signaled the optimism

[101] Later that month Warhol painted another white paper dress with ketchup while a woman was wearing it at a promotional wedding in Michigan called "The Mod Wedding." He explained, "I thought they were so great that I couldn't help doing something with one at the wedding" (Warhol and Hackett 191). One lucky couple won their ceremony through a radio contest in promotion of The Velvet Underground. Warhol gifted the couple a giant inflatable copy of a Baby Ruth candy bar (Warhol and Hackett 191).

of the future, but instead were a symptom of a distorted view of property that valued obsolescence (Pavitt 34).

Conclusion: Surface & Skin (redux)

In 1974, Andy Warhol cameoed as a corrupt diplomat in Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's film adaptation of Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat (1974),* starring Elizabeth Taylor as Lise, a woman searching for a man to murder her. The film opens with Lise meandering through a maze of nude mannequins donning silver foil headwraps, shopping for an upcoming vacation. She marvels at herself in the mirror wearing a garish blue and orange dress, calling the dress "a pure blend of natural colours." When the shop clerk tells her the dress is stain resistant, Lise quickly tears at the bow at her neck, ripping at the now offensive garment screaming "Who asked for a stain resistant dress?" As we find, Lise wants to ensure the dress will be stained with her blood. In the novella, she settles on a garish blue and orange dress she calls, "a pure blend of natural colors" but which makes most people who look at it physically sick (Sparks 9). Like Stein's pointing finger, Lise's dress is a beacon pointing toward her body. Though, unlike Stein, Lise is sexless and her fashion serious, despite its zaniness it is a vehicle for destructive desires.

It is fitting Andy Warhol should be involved in such a bizarre project that merges violence with style. Warhol was interested in the physical limits of the body, even illustrating his famous quote with medical sketches of human anatomy: "Pop is just taking the outside and putting it on the inside or taking the inside and putting it on the outside" (Berg 90). Warhol himself was keenly aware of how the materials he used to

adorn his body figured as performative markers of labels such as celebrity and artist. As art critic Benjamin Buchloh argued,

> Warhol literally 'embodied' the paradox of Modernist art: to be suspended between high art's haughty isolation (in transcendence, in resistance, in critical negativity) and the pervasive debris of corporate domination; or, as Theodor Adorno put it, 'to have a history at all while under the spell of the eternal repetition of mass production.' … Warhol has unified within his constructs the views of both the victors and the victims of the late twentieth century. (39)

Indeed, Warhol's work is both the style and the stain.

Warhol was interested in the abjection of the body and how the skin and other surfaces of the body could externalize what is inside. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, he looked into the mirror finding something new on the surface of his skin—a pimple. The blemishes travel across his skin, one day found on his right cheek the next near his ear, the next between his eyes. He wrote, "I think it's the same pimple, moving from place to place. I was telling the truth. If someone asked me, 'What's your problem?' I'd have to say, 'Skin.'" (Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 8). What is telling is that Warhol's biggest worry is about that which is inside making its way out. Thus the surface of the skin must be treated but, as he noted, attempts to cover the skin is always uncanny: "I'm ready to apply the flesh-colored acne-pimple medication that doesn't resemble any human flesh I've ever seen, though it does come pretty close to mine" (Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 9). He painted his face with flesh-colored cream, then painted his face. It is only in

paintings that the layers of the skin can be managed. “When I did my self-portrait," Warhol told us, "I left all the pimples out because you always should. Pimples are a temporary condition and they don't have anything to do with what you really look like. Always omit the blemishes—they're not part of the good picture you want” (Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 21). Still, another way to manage the skin is to embrace putting what is inside out. He told Bruno, “‘Haven't you heard about these ladies who take young guys to the theater and jerk them off so they can put it all over their face?’ ‘They rub it in like face cream?’ ‘Yes. It sort of pulls it tighter and makes them younger for the evening’” (Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* 11).

Just as the surface of the garments we wear on our bodies constructs the image of our bodies, the matter our garments collect also demonstrate the constructive possibilities of our daily *inhabitus*. Stains, either accidental or intentionally placed, offer a presumed material evidence of our embodiment, our loves, our decay, and our death. Further, these stains seem to offer a visible entry point into the garment itself. Even as a garment is reconstructing the image of the body, the collection of matter, in particular stains, on clothing demonstrates another unruly and often distressing, relationship unwillingly forged against our clothing. Reflected in the advertising obsession with stains and the array of products intended to exercise stains from any number of surfaces and textile. These stains, largely, are to be managed privately and the labor bears the marker of morality and mortality. Stains hold a suggestive power to make visible the past and provide a literal spot for examining the when and how the hidden story of the stain enters

the narrative and makes visible the story. It is the accidental/unruly visibility on the fabric itself that makes the stain so convincing for the story and an image to speculate from.

Chapter 3: A Suit

A widow in a wise veil and more garments shows that shadows are even. It addresses no more, it shadows the stage and learning

-Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons,* 1913

Death is the dress she wears, her hat and collar

-Plath, "Widow," 1962

Exactly when the dress box, neatly wrapped in brown paper, arrived at the National Archive headquarters is not known. There is one minor clue: its postal code has only one-digit. This narrows the window of its arrival from between November 1963, when its contents became significant, and July 1964, when the post office switched to the five-digit zip code system (Faye Fiore). The box includes unsigned note written on Janet Lee Auchincloss's stationery. The description is brief: "Jackie's suit and bag — worn November 22, 1963" (National Archive.gov).).

The box had been inscribed on its top as if as it were addressed to the owner of its contents, "Mrs. John F. Kennedy, The White House" (Fiore). Inside was the famous pink suit that the First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy wore on November 22, 1963, the very day that her husband, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in Texas while sitting beside her in a convertible, waving to a crowd. Included in the box along with the bright pink suit, its cardigan-style jacket and matching knee-length skirt splattered with blood,

were the blouse, navy shoes, and neatly-folded bloodied stockings that she had worn that day as well as the purse she had carried (Horyn, "Kennedy's Smart Pink Suit"). The set had two pieces; The jacket is double-breasted, its A-line silhouette and cropped sleeves tailored out of lightweight bouclé wool, the patch pocket and large stiff, quilted lapels were in navy blue silk (Horyn). Now all these objects are held in a secret windowless vault at the National Archives and Records Administration's complex in College Park, Maryland. Invisible to the public, they have been unfolded to prevent creasing and preserved in a custom-made acid-free container (Fiore). The iconic pillbox hat and white kid leather gloves she had worn that day are missing, presumed to be lost (Horyn).[102]

Perhaps one of the most well-known garments of the 20th century, "Jackie's suit" quickly became figure, "universally recognizable, the quintessential, blood-spattered relic of the assassination" (Bruzzi 234). She had worn the stained suit for 17 hours straight, though she had been encouraged to change into a fresh one. Reportedly she said, "No, I want them to see what they have done" (Manchester 385) .[7] The image of the bloodied first lady deboard Air Force One sent a powerful message that "bore the horror and brutality of the president's murder for a shattered nation to see" (Delia M. Rios Newhouse News Service 1). Justine Picardie writes, "Whatever else died with Kennedy's assassination, the Chanel suit survived, a shred of visible evidence from a split second when history was made, even as it appeared to fall apart" (Picardie 306). Its

[102] The hat was said to be handed to Mary Gallagher, Kennedy's secretary but has since gone missing (Fiore).

stained surface is closely tracked by biographers and filmmakers, who "remark[...] upon [the suit] with a fevered intensity and is uncannily personified: it begs to speak" (Kaite, "The Pink Suit" 175). Forever linked to death, it is an enduring symbol of Jackie Kennedy's private trauma and the American people's public tragedy. Justine Picardie calls the suit an emblem "of the ending of innocence" (Picardie 304). Similarly, Delia M. Rios argues that Kennedy's decision to remain in the bloodied garment was a powerful message that "bore the horror and brutality of the president's murder for a shattered nation to see" (Rios 1).

Because the suit and accessories are subject to is now subject to strict restrictions made instituted when her daughter Caroline officially donated the garments to the archive in 2003. Few have ever seen the garment since the assassination (Horyn; Fiore). This merely increases what Walter Benjamin would call the objects' aura and cult-value. In fact, the posthumous deed first hand as the deed of gift prohibits even for academic research any public viewing of the garment or it being and photographs, photographed for research purposes, until 2103[103] (Horyn; Fiore).[104] Access is limited to certain

[103] Though the National Archive has overseen preserving the suit and other accessories since 1963, the objects legally belonged to Caroline Kennedy as her mother's surviving heir. In 2003, Kennedy granted ownership to the National Archives limiting any "public display, research, or any other use that would in any way dishonor the memory of Mrs. Kennedy or President Kennedy, or cause any grief or suffering to members of their family" (National Archives and Records Administration).

[104] Though the National Archive has overseen preserving the suit and other accessories since 1963, the objects legally belonged to Caroline Kennedy as her mother's surviving heir. In 2003, Kennedy granted

government personnel who are doing approved forensic analysis directly related to conservation or for investigation into the death of President John F. Kennedy; permission must be secured through an authorized committee (National Archives).

Despite this protection, due the First Lady as a private citizen rather than a paid employee of the state, those objects associated with the assassination that have been declared "public." Other objects are available for study, including Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle, the suit John F. Kennedy not subject to similar restrictions. The suit the president was wearing, its contents, even the floor of the Parkland Hospital in which the President was declared dead (Horyn). Even the tapes for William Manchester's book *The Death of the President,* which Jackie Kennedy sued to prevent from going to print, are sealed only until 2067 (National Archives "JFK Assassination Records"). Only the pink suit. Yet, it is subject to a viewing restriction that will expire 140 years from the day that they were worn (Horyn).

Stella Bruzzi argues that the "authenticity, re-enactment and the afterlife of [the suit], even as it has been endlessly copied and reproduced, exists more as a fantasy object, a nostalgic trigger to memories of trauma and collective loss" (Bruzzi 235). This is perhaps why, more than 25 years after her death, Kennedy and her suit continue to fascinate. At the time of her death in 1994, there were already 20 biographies of her life. Since then, there has been a feature film, *Jackie* (2016) directed by Pabolo Larrin starring

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Natalie Portman, and a mini-series *The Kennedys: After Camelot* (2017). Even after the buzz around these films died down, headlines continue to revive Kennedy as a mysterious and timeless icon. Take, the following headlines, for example: "Why Jackie Kennedy Choose Money and Power Over Love" (McNeil), "Jackie Kennedy's Signature Style Through the Years" (Huber), "How Jackie Kennedy Supplemented her 30,000 a month 'Allowance'" (Jones), "10 Beauty Lessons We Learned From Jackie Kennedy" (Almanza). Jeremy Scott's fall 2018 Moschino collection was based on conspiracy theories that contend that Kennedy was an alien and caused the death of both JFK and Marilyn Monroe (Phelps). Countless books, and two coloring books, have been written about Kennedy's life, including children's titles such as *When Jackie Saved Grand Central Station* (*2017), Just Being Jackie* (2018), and *One Special Summer* (2006).

With such an abiding presence in national memory and popular culture, the suit is a public secret, both highly visible in media yet inaccessible. Michael Taussig argues public secrets are "reconfiguration[s] of repression in which depth becomes surface so as to remain depth" (Taussig 5). As it emerges over and over, even when out of view, it suggests a cultural impulse to put the suit into a coherent narrative. In the absence of material evidence, we turn to images, performance, and narrative. The suit is a "particularly noisy slip of the collective tongue" and "visual quotation of all we know and don't know about the assassination" (Kaite, "The Pink Suit" 178). Elizabeth Wilson observed, "clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister,

threatening; the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life" (Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams* 1).

The original deed of gift, signed by Caroline Kennedy, includes a list of items donated. Clothing and personal effects of Jacqueline B. Kennedy worn on November 22, 1963:

1. Pink Chanel Suit - Jacket
2. Pink Chanel Suit - Skirt
3. Blue Blouse
4. Pair of Stockings, wrapped in a white towel
5. Pair of Blue Shoes
6. Blue Purse
7. Portion of Cardboard Box in which materials were delivered to the National Archives; shows address to Mrs. John F. Kennedy, The White House
8. Stationery of "Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss, 3044 0 Street, N.W., Washington 7, D.C.," with handwritten note: 'Jackie's suit and bag- worn November 22, 1963'" (National Archives and Records Administration)

As the primary historical documentation of the garment's preservation and display, the provided descriptions are of particular importance. Of immediate note, only the suit jacket and skirt list a designer. The list seems to authenticate what had already widely

assumed publicly: the suit was Chanel.[105] Carine Roitfeld, former editor-in-chief of *Vogue Paris*, recalled, "The first Chanel jacket that I saw—that I knew was Chanel—was on TV. It was on Mrs. Kennedy--the pink one" (Milligan). Yet, the object is more complicated.

Materially, the suit is a bundle of contradictions: high-fashion, delicate, and feminine, while it also referenced the rectangular tailoring of menswear, the fabric and ease of sportswear. The suit's militaristic cut and bulky fabric belied the exceptionally fragile silk shantung lining and the tendency of the knotty wool to shed. Reflecting on the tension between the sturdy look of the garment and its delicate nature, novelist Nicole Kelby notes, "[i] t was an impossible suit but breathtaking" (qtd. in Aasen). Suggestive of a uniform, unfussy and "tactically tailored for walking, sitting or anything" the suit "more than anything she might have said that day, it was her Chanel suit [that] said she was dressed to do her duty" (Barry sm30).

Indeed, the suit would have become familiar to American audiences. Due to her affiliation with the Nazi occupiers during World War II, Chanel's return to couture in 1954 was lambasted in the French press. The collection returned to the straight silhouettes for which she was famous, departing from Christian Dior's curvy "New Look". One French critic called the collection outdated; "sad retrospective" full of the "ghosts of 1930 things" (Picardie 284). American magazine editors were far more

[105] The suit need not have a visual label (it is unclear if it does indeed), but the garment offers its own visual authenticity (though, it has been misidentified as well).

generous, seeing the line as charmingly easy to wear, bolstering Chanel's sleek straight shapes of the mid 1950s in the United States (Picardie 287). Editor Bettina Ballard said in 1960 that the clothes took on "an uncanny timelessness Chanel personality that defied the scoffers" (Picardie 288).

Despite the apparent iconicity of the design, there remains some confusion about where the suit came from. In 2014, Karl Lagerfeld claimed the Chanel archive held paperwork that showed Oleg Cassini, Kennedy's official designer, copied the design (Milligan; Picardie 287). Other accounts, including by photographer Bill Cunningham, claimed the suit was recreated for Kennedy by Chez Ninon, a Midtown Manhattan boutique specializing in copies of European couture (Cunningham 11). The suit may not have been purchased through Chanel but was instead an authorized "line for line" copy. The fabric, buttons, trim, and the toile, and the muslin mock-up of a garment were purchased directly from Chanel in Paris but assembled and fitted in the U.S. (Picardie 287; Barry).[106] Through Chez Ninon, Kennedy could acquire garments "legitimately

[106] While Kennedy solicited the high-end boutique to replicate Parisian fashions, authorized copies gained popularity over the 1950s as design houses were pressed to find ways to compete with the off the rack shopping in department stores (Bowles 124). The quality of materials and craftsmanship varied considerably depending on where it was purchased. The 2018 exhibition "Faking It: Originals, Copies, and Counterfeits" at the Fashion Institute of Technology opened with two seemingly identical Chanel suits, one a 1966 original and the other a 1967 licensed copy from a department store. The original features handsewn finishing, finer quality of silk lining, and meticulous attention to detail that are absent on the copy (Elia). An original Chanel jacket can take well over 100 hours of labor to finish and is fitted perfectly to the wearer through at least 30 measurements (Teo).

made in America, although designed in Paris" including the red suit she wore during her 1961 televised White House tour (Mellon et al. 31; Lewine). This allowed her to circumvent political critiques of her spending on foreign goods even if her garments still appeared to be purchased from French designers (Mellon et al. 16).

The practice was not uncommon for Kennedy especially after her wardrobe became a point of ongoing contention during the 1960 presidential election, prompting a heated exchange with Pat Nixon (Picardie 300). In an August 1960 *Life* profile, Kennedy was introduced as "stylishly dressed in clothes mostly of her own design" (Wilson 80). She was in effect the editor of her image through dress and understood that she was writing a new chapter in American ideas of womanhood through her visibility as First Lady. The following month, *Women's Wear Daily* and the *Associated Press* reported Kennedy and her mother-in-law spent over 30,000 dollars a year in the Paris fashion houses (Robertson "Mrs. Kennedy Defends Clothes" 1). Hurt by "slurs on her avant-garde dressing habits" Kennedy refuted the claims, protesting, "I couldn't spend that much unless I wore sable underwear." In the same article, Kennedy claimed rival Pat Nixon's wardrobe had to cost more than the designs she had "made by a little dressmaker in Washington."[107] Nixon responded the next day that she had "always worn American

[107] During the interview with Nan Robertson Kennedy shopped for maternity dresses, reportedly even zipping her up. Kennedy purchased two dresses for $40 (Robertson "Mrs. Kennedy Defends Clothes" 1). Though, at the time of her divorce she was getting a hefty 50,000 month allowance (Isabel).

clothes" and, like any other American woman, shopped "mostly in Washington and off the rack" (Sullivan 18 and Robertson "She Shops like Any Woman" 16).[108]

The exchange was of such vehemence that Martha Weinman noted, "even those newsmen present who could not tell shocking pink from Windsor Rose knew they were witnessing something of possibly vast political consequence. The women's vote could be won on aesthetics alone, citing Tom Dewey's loss to Harry Truman after growing a mustache, to the contempt of female voters. If, Weinman wonders, "[the women's vote] can be swayed by such imponderables…[w]hat then, is to keep it from being influenced by a pair of pink Capri pants?" ("First Ladies" sm30).[109]

Appointing French-born but U.S.-based designer, Oleg Cassini, to coordinate her official wardrobe, Kennedy was "determined that my husband's Administration—this is a speech I find myself making in the middle of the night—won't be plagued by fashion stories" (Lehn 668) .[110] Yet, Kennedy's fashion sense was of great political consequence;

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[108] The issue was covered by several outlets including in an article Winzola McLendon and Maria Smith, "Elizabeth Arden or Balenciaga? First-Lady Candidates in Debate Over Who Spends More on Clothes," Washington Post, Times Herald, September 16, 1960, A Times Representative, "Answers Jackie Kennedy; Pat Nixon Shies Off Battle of Wardrobes," Los Angeles Times, September 16, 1960.; Martha Weinman, "First Ladies—in Fashion, Too?; This Fall, the Question of Style For a President's Wife Maybe A Great Issue. Can Too Much Chic—Or Too Little—Mean Votes?," New York Times, September 11, 1960.

[109] Thomas Dewey lost the 1944 election after female pollers expressed contempt for his mustache.

[110] Kennedy wore the pink suit at least six times prior to the assassination wore it at least six times (Horyn, "Hidden Away, a Pink Artifact Of Glamour and Shed Blood" and Koestenbaum).

her "vision of dynamic modern elegance" became a visual signal of administration's "youthful idealism, ardent internationalism, and striving for social change" (Bowles 18).

Ironically, the suit was a copy. As Stella Bruzzi observes, "Kennedy was no stranger to the art of copying" ("Pink Suit" 235). In 1996, Kennedy's children auctioned several personal items, including a strand of simulated pearls purchased for $35 at Bergdorf Goodman and sold for a final price of $211,000.00 (Resnick 66). Lynda Resnick quipped she won "the most expensive strand of fake pearls in the entire world" (Resnick and Wilkinson xi).[111] Resnick used the pearls to create more than "130,000 copies at $200 a strand–for a gross of $26 million. Owning the original pearls gave us the credibility to sell the copies; it certified and rewarded our collectors' faith that they were getting as close to the real deal as anyone could" (Resnick and Wilkinson 66). The copies are now sold through the Franklin Mint and in the gift shops of the Smithsonian Institute. Resnick paradoxically boasts that her reproductions bear an authenticity of Kennedy's fake strands, calling her approximations, "as close to the real fake Jackie pearls that any combination of art and technology could muster" (Resnick and Wilkinson 66). The proximity to the strands is key, as is the visual, photographic evidence of the pearls as part of Kennedy's state wardrobe. Even when the object in question is materially

[111] Resnick had a strongly patriotic reaction to opening the pearls for the first time: "As I opened it, I caught a faint scent of Jackie's perfume. It was a chilling experience. My eyes welled up as I thought about what that divine creature had meant to me and my country" (Resnick and Wilkinson).

different from how it appears. It holds still the aura of something more and something real and that, as Resnick believes, other women "by wearing those iconic pearls, women everywhere could channel a bit of Jackie" (Resnick 66). The A-line suit, itself a simulacrum, becomes a vehicle through which postmodern style announced itself. Strangely, Kennedy's essence is not attached as to specific objects but to specific *forms* which can be, as Warhol's 1964 *Nine Jackies* demonstrated, endlessly copied and sold.

Stain

If the suit holds a disorienting narrative and symbolic importance to late 20th century culture, it is largely because even known forgeries can summon the stain: presidential blood is splattered across it.[112] Body fluid stains are particularly unsettling

[112] Thirty-five years after Kennedy's suit was stained with presidential blood, another woman's garment surfaced with a different kind of presidential body fluid stain. Monica Lewinsky's stained navy blue Gap dress was at the center of another American scandal: The impeachment of President Bill Clinton. Dubbed "Monica's Love Dress" by the New York Post, the garment drew public fascination and revulsion, a material symbol of the nations conflicting attitudes toward sexual freedom and sexual purity, the right to privacy and public access to information.

Both Lewinsky's dress and Kennedy's suit illustrate the powerful figurative association of a stained Presidential (and thus, American) legacy where private exchanges are made public. The public stain serves as an abject reminder of a loss of control, a particularly violent disruption of tightly controlled political performances. Yet, these public/private stains reflect the strange nature of America's highest governmental office. As the name suggests, the White House is a distinct symbol of institutional power as well as a home (See Kate Brower's *The Residence: Inside the Private World of the White House*).

reminder of how clothing collects traces of contact with bodily surfaces, unsettling the borders of inside and outside, public, and private, surface and depth. Cathy Horyn observes there remains something elusive about the garment, even as it "captures both the shame and the violence that erupted [on the day of the assassination], and the glamor and artifice that preceded it." Phyllis Magidson, curator of costume and textiles at the Museum of the City of New York, argues, the suit "has everything encapsulated within it" (qtd. in Horyn). It is "a tantalizing window on fame and fashion, her allure and her steely resolve, the things we know about her and the things we never quite will" (Horyn). Belonging to the space between categories — the "and" — the suit moves between borders.

Dead, defaced objects hold even greater power. As Michael Taussig argues defacement adds to an object's mystery, bringing "insides outside, unearthing knowledge, and revealing mystery" (5). Particularly effective on quotidian objects, defacement

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The garments are inversions of each other. One tainted with life, the other with death, though both offer evidentiary power. It makes sense that Lewinsky's dress would take on special public interest as it comes to light during the birth of DNA testing where bodily stains could suddenly construct with greater certainty the contact between bodies. Kennedy's luxury copy, pieced together in America, a foil to Lewinsky's unlaundered low-end American designer garment pieced together cheaply overseas. Both dresses symbols of what was known and what could never be known about these historical events but that continue to invite public scrutiny. Even Nelson Shanks' 2005 presidential portrait of former President Clinton housed in the National portrait gallery is tinged by the memory of the garment, featured as a slight shadow of the navy A-line dress over the bottom right-hand side (Graham).

"bring[s]out their inherent magic" with a "curious property of magnifying, not destroying, value, drawing out the sacred from the habitual-mundane" (Taussig 2, 26). This is consistent with the suit as an "icon of sadness" holding "iconic power" (Rios 1). Such power both excites and threatens, as one curator has worried the suit "would produce hysteria if it were placed on view" (Horyn). The archival restrictions may have strengthened the mysterious allure, as Rhonda Garelick argues the garment holds "even more talismanic significance like a precious relic in a cathedral, ... It has a ghostly power now" (qtd. in Swann).

The suit offers evidence and symbolic preservation of two presidential bodies. Jacqueline Kennedy's body preserved in fabric, her husband's in blood. Historian Carl Sferrazza Anthony notes the suit is the "single symbol of that event and of her as a persona" bearing immediate recognition of what occurred (qtd. in Fiore). Stains are turned into "liquid relics" that capture traces of the lost body "enable[ing] a synecdochic continuation of corporeal worship" (Baert 274). In these cases, stains move away from abjection to become holy replacements for venerated bodies.

Clothing stains document uncontrolled contact between and among bodies and the world around them. Stains are visual and evidentiary, providing tangible and spatial witness to unexpected contact with otherness. Clothing stains represent contact between bodies, surfaces and external materials, signaling the fragile nature of our physical boundaries and the inevitable decay of our bodies. At that margin is not just bodily flesh, but also clothing. As Baert writes, the stain "forms the punctum in the private space between the body and its wrappings, between the skin and the textile that forms its

extension" (Baert 273). Body fluid stains are "an extension of our own physical boundaries and mark our dealings with the world (whether embarrassing, scabrous, or sexualized)" (Baert 285). Stains orient us temporally, creating a visual record of things brought near the body. Jenni Sorkin writes, "Cloth holds the sometimes unbearable gift of memory. And its memory is exacting: it does not forget even the benign scars of accident: red wine on a white tablecloth, water on a silk blouse, dark patches beneath arms on a humid summer day" (Sorkin 77).

Stains are forces that threaten to interrupt, intrude, and disrupt systems of social and symbolic order. Juila Kristeva writes, "[d]efilement is what is jettisoned from the 'symbolic system.' It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure" (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 67). Order is then is shaped always by disorder, sense shaped by nonsense, "classification and social order are defined by what lies threateningly beyond their symbolic margins" (Zakin).[113]

Stains, even more than clothing, hold an unruly ability to construct, disorient, implicate, and abrade their narrative possibilities. Kitty Hauser argues stains hold a power

[113] Kristeva's abjection is directly related to the use of language and linguistic forms. "While Kristeva advocates for 'poetic revolution,' (meaning the ongoing process of reconfiguring language and oneself by exploiting the heterogeneities between semiotic and symbolic elements), she is sometimes read as a conservative thinker because of her commitment to maintaining a symbolic order and social contract" (Zakin).

to "evoke shock, alarm, disgust or dismay–primal things… beckoning for our instinctive response even before we have understood the narrative that they tell" (Hauser 72). Barbara Baert sees the relationship between clothing and stains as materially enmeshed: "Textile is the stain's preferred support. Textile collects the stain and the stain, if it is to be seen, needs the textile" (Baert 273). Sorkin observes stains as "a negation of an area of fabric," something that "destroys the continuity of the cloth, supplanting the original colour and texture of a portion of the garment or textile" (Sorkin 77).

The etymology of "stain" suggests this shifting material relationship, as the word connotes both the addition or removal of some quality or aspect. From the Middle French *descoulorer* to mean "deprive of color" or "to lose color" the word connotes an additive and penetrative loss, where "discoloration [is] produced by absorption of or contact with foreign matter…. below the surface and is not easily removable" ("stain," n. OED).[114] Thus, stains are transformative, holding both destructive and creative possibilities.[115] In figurative use, the word connotes an invisible quality, such as conscience, bloodline, or reputation into legible blemishes or "mark[s] of infamy or disgrace."

Kennedy notoriously refused to take off her blood-soaked suit; still wearing it when photographed standing next to Lyndon Baines Johnson as he was sworn in aboard

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[114] The Middle French "*descoulorer*, *descoulourer* (French *décolorer*) to alter the usual or natural colour of (a person or thing), (specifically) to deprive (a person or thing) of colour (*c*1100 in Old French, originally in past participle *desculurez*), (chiefly reflexive) to become pale, to lose colour (*a*1170)"

[115] The artistic form is now obsolete but was used to simply mean a work depicted in color ("Stain," n OED).

Air Force One even hours later. She rejected urging by staff to change instead remarking, "let them see what they've done" (Gallagher 289). The choice surprised her longtime therapist, Dr. Frank Finnerty who later recalled "the degree of shock she was in... I had heard her say many times how fanatical she was about changing a blouse or skirt with a small spot" (Smith). She would not remove it until the next morning when she was back in at the White House. Lubin puts it bluntly, "Even after it was soiled by her husband's brain matter, when he was assassinated in her arms in the back of the presidential limousine, she refused to change out of the suit for the long flight with his body back to Washington, D.C." (Lubin "Jackie's Blood Stained Suit"). The image was powerful and Kennedy knew it even then. Kitty Hauser wrote "Jackie Kennedy knew in 1963 what, presumably, every other wary celebrity now knows: that stains and photography, stains and film, are in love" (Hauser 69). Both stains and clothing deal in the language of the visible, as an object that touches the surface of another,

> As soon as the stain lands on its support it regenerates as a mutable substance that has the potential to become image. But that is as far as it goes: it does not proceed to a stage of finish and figuration. The stain makes use of the antecedent, the visual-in-potential. The stain is image in its promise of consummation as an image; however, the stain feels no need to actually fulfill that promise" (Baert 272).

Elizabeth J. Natalle writes Kennedy "had the presence of mind to think rhetorically even as she returned to Washington D.C." (Wertheimer 256). The object took on its own political life, a legacy that is recalled incessantly in biographies and

media. Rhonda Garelick notes, “It's a very powerful thing that she was doing, wearing the psychological insides of the slain charismatic leader on her suit until the suit became part of his body, and it was like she was wearing his insides" (qtd. in Hoyt). Richard Klein describes Kennedy in her bloodied pink suit as “a soldier in politics” suddenly “compelled to be First Widow” (Klein 251). Wayne Koestenbaum observes that the terms of the deed governing the stained garments seem to aptly reflect Kennedy’s tense relationship with celebrity. He writes, “[s]he certainly understood invisibility and disappearance very deeply, as well as staged appearance…. the unseen suit is a very poignant and accurate emblem of her contradiction” (qtd. in Hoyrn). Kitty Hauser argues that Kennedy’s choice to wear the suit was not a mere symptom of her traumatic experience but a deliberate action she wanted seen by the public. She writes, “Through the theatricality of dress in this most public of theatres she had turned her public humiliation (as Wayne Koestenbaum called it) into something else; she was visibly anointed by her husband’s blood, she bore witness to his sacrifice, and she was herself made sacred by it” (73). Yet some publications, such as the *Boston Herald American*, airbrushed out the stains when the photographs went to print, “as if to restore the First Lady’s dignity, her much-discussed immaculate-ness (immaculatus, from in – not, and maculare – to spot)” (Hauser 73).

Kim Hewitt argues gestures of violence and pain borne on the surface of the body replace words with a “language of blood and pain” that is viewed and felt on the skin. She writes, “[s]kin deliberately wounded and cut thus speaks violently of the failed promise of language to communicate trauma: it is a rupturing force that tears itself, and

its significance, apart from language" (Kilby 125–6). Trauma is reconciled with language through a narrative practice that is encoded into the sensations of the body and projected on to other objects. Anna Quindlen recalled, "... the memory of the car, the suit. [...] My mother bought a pink boucle suit with navy blue piping for Easter in 1963, and after November she never wore it again" (Quindlen 21).

Coded differently than other bodily fluids, blood is a stand-in for the body and a symbol of the vitality and fragility of life itself. Linked too with femininity, menstrual blood threatens to corrupt from within one's social or sexual identity and the relationship between the sexes along with it, argues (Kristeva *Powers* 71).[116] Kaite writes, "the bloody suit, even though it is stained by JFK's blood, fascinates in its metonymic properties as dangerous, uncontainable, defiled and a feminine wound. It is not lost on anyone that the blood is on the lap of the pink suit" (Kaite "Bloody Jackie" 28). A bloody skirt usually signified one thing: she had begun her period, or her menstrual blood had leaked beyond her pad or tampon, either way—shame.

In his biography, *Just Jackie*, Edward Klein links Kennedy's menstrual period with the events of the assassination. At a breakfast with reporters on November 22, the president joked his wife was busy "organizing herself" though Klein writes,

> the truth was, Jackie was delayed because she had just begun her menstrual period. It was her first normal monthly flow since Patrick Bouvier had been delivered by cesarean section, and she remembered that it filled her with joy. [...]

[116] Freud associated menstruation with castration

> So the day that ended in blood had begun in blood. [...] There was blood everywhere. Not only on Jackie's hair and gloves and skirt and stockings. Her panties were soaked with menstrual blood, too. She was covered in blood from head to foot. [...] She felt that if she let go of Jack, she would collapse in their commingled blood (10).

Attempts to avoid, reject, or escape the social disgust of filth are efforts made to shore up the psychic boundaries of one's identity (Black and Allen 136). In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva calls the abject all the bodily (or social) non-objects that must be rejected and removed to ensure a cohesive identity. It is at these borders finds the abject, writing, "filth is not a quality, but it applies only to what relates to a boundary and, more particularly, its other side, a margin" (69). The abject escapes logical order. Such objects, including blood, pus, sweat, urine, feces and milk, threaten the subject/object divide as they exist as "neither inside nor outside, neither subject nor object, neither self nor other, troubling identity and order with the instability of boundaries, borders, and limits" (Zakin).

In Philip Roth's novel *The Human Stain* (2000), Faunia Farley, the fake illiterate janitor and love interest of the racially passing protagonist Coleman Silk, observes that to be human, particularly in the novel's gritty post-war America, is to leave an inescapable taint:

> We leave a stain, we leave a trail, we leave our imprint. Impurity, cruelty, abuse, error, excrement, semen - there's no other way to be here. Nothing to do with disobedience. Nothing to do with grace or salvation or redemption. It's in

everyone. Indwelling. Inherent. Defining. The stain that is there before its mark. (Roth 242).

The stain comes out of both the physical filth of the body and the pervasiveness of moral and psychic violence that will contaminate and be contaminated by all those leaving their mark, including one's own. Stains persist inside of everybody, an "indwelling" and "defining" stain that is there even before its mark. In this way, stains hold a preeminence, an a priori link to bodies and culture. In this way, the stain becomes an author/artist, inscribing meaning on the surface.

Stains, which originate with the self, are potent reminders of the uncontrollable body that transgresses against an ordered ego to become a source of shame or embarrassment.[117] The sense of abjection is increased when stains originate outside of our control can bear witness to traumatic contact. A stain is "both an enactment and vestige of degradation, violence and coercion" (Sorkin 79). It is the "That which I did not will, choose, nor want. That which is inflicted by another. That which is forced" (Sorkin 79). Stains are etched into the skin's surface temporally as "*sores* of a fabric, raw *wounds* that map an event. Aged, they are *scars* of retrospection" (Sorkin 78; emphasis added).

Lee sees this ambiguous metaphorical function of skin reflected most powerfully through clothing:

[117] Sorkin is referring here to the public spectacle made of Monica Lewinsky's blue dress stained with Bill Clinton's semen.

> "Not only do the cultures of wrapping, shrouding, swaddling, bandaging, veiling and adorning all carry the meanings of this need to create and represent social membranes in the form of clothes, but also garments themselves are constructed through complex conventions of 'right' and 'wrong' ways of bringing skin into contact with cultural surfaces such as clothes. If skin is nature's container for the biological body, then nowhere is the paradoxical nature of a living organ seen as an (im)permeable barrier more ambiguously present than in fashion." (Lee 76)

In *Grace and Power: The Private World of the Kennedy White House,* Sally Bedell Smith recounts the events of November 23rd as follows: [...] The sun was blazing as the motorcade pulled away, the temperature an uncomfortable 76 degrees for Jackie's wool suit. [...] As the car sped to Parkland Hospital, Kennedy slumped in his wife's lap, his blood and brain fragments splattering her Chanel skirt ... This is a suit—a spot—that refuses to go away, a stain which seeks refuge in feminine attire, a suitable host for blood's un-representable properties" (Kaite, "The Pink Suit" 185).

In *The Skin Ego*, *A Skin for Thought* and *Psychic Envelopes* (1989) Didier Anzieu, arguing for his concept of skin ego, finds that in the early stages of infant development, emergent personality is held together through physical experiences between boundaries allowing them to distinguish their skin's surface from other surfaces (Anzieu 61). The child learns that like their skin, they have both an inside and an outside in a "flesh envelope" or "skin ego" that organizes somatic experiences in the psyche. Skin, as a physical and psychic borderline mediates the inward flow of nurturance and the

outward resistance of contact with injurious objects (Anzieu 63–64).[118] Skin oscillates between the interior and external limits of the body (and its coverings) as it paradoxically contains and protects the self from penetration by other, even as we open ourselves to others (Ahmed and Stacey 6). [119]

Anzieu calls the skin ego "the original parchment which preserves, like a palimpsest, the erased, scratched-out, written-over, first outlines of an 'original' pre-verbal writing made up of traces upon the skin" (Anzieu 105). Skin like any surface faces in two directions at once: the interior and exterior, one that acts and one which is acted upon. Gilbert Tarrab observes that there is something unique about tactility that "procures

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[118] The word borderline is of particular importance to Anzieu's concept of the skin as ego boundary. As the border line, the skin secures the fragile inner self, cultivated ideally through strong caregiver attachment, from the harsh outer world. A breach of this psychic envelope can result in Borderline conditions in which there is a repeated migration of the internal to the external: "Affects and feelings migrate from the center toward the periphery, resulting in the same Moebius-strip structure: just as the outside becomes an inside and then an outside again, over and over, so the poorly-contained content becomes a container that contains poorly. Finally, the central place of the Self, deserted by those primary affects that were too violent—distress, terror, hatred—becomes an empty space and the anxiety of this central inner emptiness is what such patients complain most about, unless they have managed to fill it with the imaginary presence of an object or an ideal person (a cause, a master, an impossible passion, an ideology, etc" (136-7).

[119] Anzieu continues,"This common skin ensures direct communication between the two partners, reciprocal empathy and an adhesive identification: it is a unique screen which comes to resonate with the sensations, mental images and vital rhythms of the two" (Anzieu 62–3)

the basic distinction between 'inside' and 'outside', and it is the only one that can provide it; the other senses can only do it by reference to tactile sensation" (Anzieu 63).

Jackie

Perhaps it is fitting that the central figure in Nobel-prize winning playwright Elfriede Jelinek's one-woman play, *Jackie* (2003), released the very year the suit was locked in its airtight vault for 100 years, is an actor-simulacrum of Kennedy herself, delivering a circumlocutory monologue about the relationship between her flesh and her dress-es (for there were many).[120] Jackie's suit in the play is not mere adornment; it forms an imaginary second skin, or a stain, over her body, turning the flesh into an accessory. She becomes an artist, using the lines of seams to her body in an object able to hold her soul "for centuries" unlike her fleshly body which will rot (Jelinek "Jackie" 58). The surface of her garments provide testimony. In *Jackie* stains, skin, and clothing share metaphorical, artistic, and anatomical borders, which are constantly in flux. This brief one-act play, a section of a series entitled *Princess Plays: Death and the Maiden,*

[120] In this section, I will refer to the lead role in Jelinek's Jackie as Jackie and I use Kennedy to refer to the historical person, Jacqueline Lee Kennedy Onassis.

encapsulates my argument for viewing these stained remains of historical tragedy as essential documents of the power of A-line and dress overall.

Jelinek's Jackie is a chaotic roaming ghost who cannot settle on any topic for long and remains haunted by the idea of her own body. Jackie wonders, if she is a public prop cast as an actress in yet another public performance where she plays herself? She is, she says, a "meatless" figure whose flesh disappears into the fabric of her clothing. If the audience wants a glimpse beneath the pink suit, Jelinek will never allow it because, "I mean, how shall I say: There is no flesh underneath" (57)

Jackie proffers the surface as a site of a vital struggle between materiality and visuality. Even material, the play suggests, is little more than visual: "That's also the way it is with clothes: One can't know more than what is shown" (58) Though it offers no entry, clothing is, paradoxically, a tool useful for cover-ups *because* of its blatant visuality. Clothing just "is what it is. And it lets a person disappear in it" (63). Even as the play invites the interrogation of its surface, it is ambivalent about how deep such inquiry can go. The play opens on a macabre scene: Jacqueline Kennedy clad in bloodied Chanel suit enters the stage, pulling a knotted mass of bodies behind her "like a Wolga boatman with his boat" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 53).[121] She pants under the hard work of

[121] Ilya Repin's iconic oil painting "Barge Haulers on the Volga" (1873) depicts eleven Burlaki men, thick leather straps about their shoulders, exhausted and defeated as they pull a boat upriver to shore. All the men except one are old and lean dramatically forward against their straps as if falling rather than pulling, one man limply hangs his head in resignation. The painting suggests a crushing hopelessness that will,

pulling the weight, then remarks, "the embryo and the two dead babies aren't that heavy, but those the dead men Jack, Bobby, Telis (Ari) are quite a load." The directorial notes taunt, "At least the blood on her suit doesn't weigh that much, and there is a chunk missing from Jack's skull" (Jelinek *Jackie* 58).[122] Clothing, Jackie and *Jackie* tells us, has

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eventually, also wither the strong-footed youth who stands, brightly lit in the center of the painting (Valkenier, 42-3). The lead hauler, who looks out to the viewer, was based on a real person Repin met during his travels named Kanin, a defrocked priest. Repin was taken by the man with wide set eyes and "face of a Scyth" who "seemed to me a colossal mystery" with a "rag on his head" and "clothing patched with his own hand and worn through again" he "inspired much respect: he was like a saint undergoing an ordeal" (Valkenier 43). The painting was praised for its realistic depiction of the oppressive labor conditions of the working class (Valkenier 43, Zeisler-Vralsted 64). The scene would have already been known through the popular folk song, "Song of the Wolga Boatman" known by its refrain "Yo, yo, yo, heave, ho" (Zeisler-Vralsted 67).

Just as Kanin's doleful eyes hold the viewer's gaze with dignified resignation, stark against his patched clothes which clearly endeared him to Repin, Jelinek's Jackie suggests herself as a Kanin type after the assassination. With her "eyes far apart" in a suit patchy with blood, she is calm: I am the dress over it; no, the dress is more than myself, it is bigger, it never merges with my shape, it bravely holds its own against me**,** and it will stay forever in people's memory. What's left of me is my white face, the black mass of hair, like an unshakable mountain, who could shake a mountain?" (59).

[122] This directorial note offers a wry and enigmatic apology for the labor the role requires. Like the Volga boatmen in Repin's painting, the actress is bound to the role through physical labor, Jelinek presents as a matter of course rather than directorial decision. Like Repin witness to the "deep-rooted pity for the downtrodden" Jelinek too creates a "picture with a purpose" that presents the toils under narrative powers.

a “special quality” to create ontological confusion between living and dead. She wonders, “am I only alive through my clothes?” (58). Her question resolves by merging with the object declaring, “I am my clothes, and my clothes are me” before she “casts off” her body entirely in favor of the dress. Jackie taunts, “I am not flesh, I am its foil, I am the dress!” (64).[123] Just like Jelinek’s Jackie, “Clothes are absolutely dead” but with a power

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(Kirillina 21). The play requires actors and readers alike to labor under her artistry becoming, “increasingly breathless; panting for breath, ... [and] will have to stop.... at some point because she can’t go on...And then the monologue is done and over” (cite). Fatima Naqvi argues Jelinek's writing presents challenges to performers and readers causing "a repetitive cumulative effect of ... themes and style [that] lead to an unwillingness [on part of her readers] to keep up with her output" (qtd. in Tautz 166).

If Repin’s painting reflected oppressive power structures in 18th-century Russia, Jelinek places herself here as creative observer of contemporary oppressive narrative structures which arrive to us through folktales and myths. Yet, unlike Repin, Jelinek’s apology strikes the same chord as Repin’s painting with a debated and complex relationship with hope. At once Jelinek is bound by the oppressive power structures she is apologizing to, becoming the unwilling employer of the labor, herself driven into her role by unseen forces but setting herself at the task of writing even in the face of utter hopelessness. She acknowledges the limits of her power to control the imaginative force of readers or performers: “But I am sure you’ll come up with something completely different” (Jelinek, “Jackie” 57). More than an offer for directorial creativity, Jelinek’s stage suggestions (clearly not directions) acknowledge the limitations of her own authorial power over readerly imagination while maintaining the primacy of her own images.

[123] Chanel likewise saw the dress as an organizing feature of the shape of a woman. In an 1964 interview, while admonishing a seamstress for her draping technique Chanel convened a workroom demonstration for the workroom explaining the forward slope of a woman’s shoulders advising, “Look for the woman in the dress. If there is no woman, there is no dress” (Barry).

to animate the body. On Jackie dead things "look alive on me" (Jelinek).[124] Transporting her dead, Jackie speaks not of their bodies, but figures them as A-line dresses instead—her "shifts or whatever they are called, those little loose dresses little girls wear" (*Jackie* 57). Those child-like A-lines. Those dresses. That death.

Jackie is just one of five dramatic plays in *Death and the Maiden*, a collection that revitalizes mythologized fictional and historical females as they confront death or speak from beyond the grave. Called her "Princess dramas," a satirical twist on Shakespeare's histories, known as "King's plays," the collection includes Snow White, Rosamunde, Jacqueline Onassis, Silva Plath, and Princess Diana (Jelinek). Each woman "deliver [s] philosophically inflected monologues, not dramatic action" emphasizing the way action as a narrative device drives male heroics making too the telling and retellings of these narratives potent reminders that male artistic power is a similarly historically constructed subjectivity that values production in contrast to how "whereas women are receptacles and excluded from the creative process" (Tautz 166). Jelinek's playful subversion of German tenses and clever wordplay counters narratives that center male power to expose the self-perpetuating forces of mythology, particularly in modernity (Tautz 167).

The narrative in *Death and the Maiden* refuses the expected heroic journey, instead favoring disorienting and circuitous ruminations on beauty and appearance. Over

[124] Jelinek is perhaps toying with Valerie Steele's assertion that "If fashion is a 'living' phenomenon—contemporary, constantly changing, etc.—then a museum of fashion is ipso facto a cemetery for 'dead' clothes" (Steele 334). history refuses to change, it is dead with only the appearance of living.

and over, the heroines are drawn to their own image, intermittently finding it as much controlling and restrictive and as it is protective shield against penetrative glances. The collection winds together binary categories instead of attempting to untangle them, demonstrating how seemingly oppositional forces are linked and constituted through relation with the other. In this way, visual images of the body are inexorably entwined with linguistic expression in historical, representational, performative, and literary traditions.

The collection brings mythic figures back to haunt readers with heady ruminations restlessly insisting on careful attention to subtle wordplay. The characters in the collection figure as "dead celebrities or dolls, magnified images or electronic media express a detached, disembodied voice" (Tautz 165).[125] The play retrieves some of these myths and suggests a looming presence of the many other human undead victims of German history, extended in the plays as the figuration of political and symbolic language. Giving voice to figures of the (un)dead, including those only given life through narrative (as with sleeping beauty and snow white), exposes "the intersection of language, gender relations, and patterns of popularization" (Tautz 166).

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[125] Fifteen years after the assassination in 1978 the public was offended by the name of a punk band, calling themselves the Dead Kennedys. Lincoln Mitchell argues the name was "so uniquely distasteful was that rather than simply use profanities or sexual or violent images, Dead Kennedys went right to the heart of something so many good liberals, as well as Catholics, held sacred."

A fixture of post-dramatic theater or director's theater (Regietheater) is "[t] he emancipation of the performance from the literary text" (Carlson 379). In this form, "language appears not as the speech of characters–if there still are definable characters at all—but as an autonomous theatricality" (Lehmann 18). As Hans-Thies Lehmann explains, Jelinek's text surfaces replace dialogue to expose the perceived depth of speakers as "a mimetic illusion". He writes,

> In this respect, the metaphor of 'language surfaces' corresponds to the turning point of painting in modernity when, instead of the illusion of three-dimensional space, what is being 'staged' is the picture's plane-ness, its two-dimensional reality, and the reality of colour as an autonomous quality. The interpretation that this autonomization of language bears witness to a lack of interest in the human being,4 however, is not a foregone conclusion. Is it not rather a matter of a changed perspective on human subjectivity? What finds articulation here is less intentionality – a characteristic of the subject – than its failure, less conscious will than desire, less the 'I' than the 'subject of the unconscious'. So rather than bemoan the lack of an already defined image of the human being in post dramatically organized texts, it is necessary to explore the new possibilities of thinking and representing the individual human subject sketched in these texts. (18)

Fredric Jameson argued that surface is a feature of postmodernism which is predicated on "literal superficiality reduces everything to a flatness exhibiting a new 'depth-lessness'

(Wegenstein 126). Jelinek's play exposes the thin veneer of objects, that "Like language, clothes are a camouflage, fraught with ambivalence" (Honegger 285).

Jelinek has more than a passing interest in fashion and dress. Translator Greta Hoengger notes Jelinek's love of high fashion has been the subject of much public scrutiny and a dimension of her artistic ventures. Just as Jackie used clothing as a pose, Jelinek had herself photographed in strange locations as "'decked out' self-performances [which] satirize not only cultural perceptions of 'femininity,' but also herself as an aficionado of trendy fashions (Honegger 289). Fashion is a surface that invites a playful reshaping of identity as much as it threatens to subsume or cover the self entirely. In an interview, Jelinek claims clothing is a stand-in for herself:

> There are only few things I know as much about as clothes. I do not know much about me, am not very interested in me either, but I think that my passion for fashion can replace me for myself. I get involved in fashion so that I do not have to get involved in me, for I would drop myself almost the very moment I had a grip on me (qtd. in Schwarzer 51).

Hoengger observes that the playwright's fashion transformations reflect "her linguistic strategies: they are cultural quotations reconstructed as weapons against their sources-that is to say, against the culture at large, against the language that constructs it and, in the process, pollutes and destroys itself together with its speaker" (Honegger 292). As a result, the women in her collections, particularly throughout *Death and the Maiden*, are "all wrapped, as it were, to the point of vanishing in their linguistic garments woven from threads of their culture and contemporary fashions" (Honegger 289).What about these

classic myths, including those self-perpetuating myths performed in daily life, continues to endure? How have these stories, told over and over, endured in our public consciousness? And what does it suggest about the power of narrative to inhabit us and haunt us forever?

For Jelinek, any interventions into such pervasive mythologic traditions can only be cosmetic as they continue loom in collective consciousness. Taking a highly recognizable form of her reconstructions, she says, "vikingize them, bleach them blond or even give them a perm" (Jelinek, "Notes on Secondary Drama" 337). Attending to surface of such narratives exposes more fully how narratives of male power are so deeply woven into our cultural fabric that they become automatic. The title of her collection, *Death and the Maiden,* borrows from a common visual and narrative motif that was common in European Renaissance art, drama, and music, perhaps borrowed even then from Greek mythology and drama (Burke 15).[126] The motif depicts a nude young woman gripped by a personified figure of Death.

[126] Examples include a piano composition by Franz Schubert, Hans Baldung's 1517 painting, an 1894 engraving by Edward Munch, Austrian Egon Schiele's 1915 oil painting, Ariel Dorfman's 1990 play all bearing the of the same name. Maxim Gorky's 1892 symphonic poem "A Maiden and Death" imagines love as victor rather than which is also referenced in Яр-Кравченко А. Н. Oil painting *Maxim Gorky Reading His Tale Death and the Maiden to Joseph Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov and Kliment Voroshilov* (1949).

The German artist Hans Baldung is credited with having produced one of the earliest visual examples of eroticized death in series of "Danse Macabre" and especially his painting, *Death and the Maiden* (1509-1511).[127] Baldung's contemporary, Hans Holbein the Younger, extended the series, adding several noble women and a queen (No XI) and an empress (No X). Jelinek's image-obsessed Jackie is reminiscent of Holbein's "The Countess" (No. XXXIV), which depicts a noble woman standing ready to be helped

[127] German painter Hans Baldung is credited with the earliest visual examples of the theme which join death with the erotic. In one of his iterations titled *Death and the Maiden,* painted between 1509 and 1511, a nude woman arranges her hair in a hand mirror while Death, shown as a decomposing corpse, hoists an hourglass above her head taunting that her time is running out despite her youth (Owens and Koerner). Death holds one end of the gossamer cloth at the woman's hips, poised to remove it. Baldung's paintings are more explicitly erotic references to the Dance of Death or Danse Macabre, an allegorical theme that expressed the inevitable and indiscriminate power of death thought to emerge around the 13th and 14th centuries. The earliest example of the concept from around 1424, found in the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris, illustrated a processional of officials lead to their graves by the skeletal Death figures (Holbein and Rublack). Though these representations were destroyed in the 17th century, a Parisian printer Guy Marchant created woodcuts with the original verses.[127] A series of 14th-century woodcuts and verses about the inevitability of death originally intended to be performed. By the middle of the 15th century, the illustrations were turned into a morality play that was performed as a mime (Gilchrist 37). The images became far more important than the verses, which had already been translated many times over, resulting in wide variance between pairs of images and captions.

into her dress by her waiting-woman; behind her Death adorns her with a necklace of men's bones (Gilchrist 37–8) (See Fig 18).[128]

[128] Incidentally, Arthurian legend, referenced in Kennedy's allusion to Camelot after the assassination, offers another example of the "Death and the Lady" myth in *The Awntyrs off Arthure.* The story finds Gawain and his exquisitely dressed bride, Guinevere out on a hunt when the ghost of Guinevere's mother appears in "shrouds unfathomable" encircled by snakes. The ghost warns that she too had once been a beautiful and wealthy and queen now suffers for her vain and adulterous sins in the afterlife (Hanh 181).

Fig. 16 Hans Holbein, The Countess from Dance of Death (Lyons), 1538, Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

The motif can be found in non-visual and popular texts, such the traditional European folk ballad, “Death and the Lady,” whose lyrics tell the story of a woman unsuccessfully attempts to bribe Death with riches.The theme and moral warning that is recurrent in

early modern English balladry: “Death in its relation to radiant beauty and lusty and careless youth as not immune from its sudden and inexorable summons” (Gilchrist 38).[129]

The ballad’s opening line, spoken by death, sets out a moralistic warning against vanity:

“Fair lady, lay your costly robes aside,

No longer may you glory in your pride.

Take leave of every carnal vain delight

I'm come to summon you away this night.”

The woman’s robes are a symbol of her wealth and vanity but are chief among Death’s concerns because it illustrates her physical transition from living to dead.

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[129] In a December 1963 interview, Kennedy famously offered her own mythology for framing JFK’s presidency referring to it as Camelot and citing a line from the Lerner and Loewe musical, a favorite of the president: “Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot'. . . there'll be great presidents again. . . but there'll never be another Camelot. . .. This was Camelot. . .. Let's not forget” (*Life*). *Life* called the name “a signature for the whole Kennedy Era” (qtd. in Bigance 2).

Yet, another image from Arthurian legend comes to mind more fitting with the poetic descriptions of the assassination found in in recounting the events. In *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* a war hungry Arthur relentlessly seeks to consolidate his power and ultimately sending his most loyal knight Gawain to his death. Gawain dies in battle, “sprawled face down and clutching the grass, / His banners struck down, emblazoned with scarlet, / His blade and his broad shield all bathed in blood” (Krishna). When Arthur arrives, he takes the knight’s body in his arms, letting out a “gruesomely groans through grinding tears” and kisses him until his beard is covered with blood (Krishna).

Moralist ballads of the 16th and 17th century commonly scorned women's interest in fashion as trivial and served as warnings against pride and material pleasures. Many of these ballads were even accompanied by satiric woodcuts of foppishly attired women "wearing elaborate heads of hair, jewels, ruffs, hoops, and flounces, plumed fans with inset mirrors, and such like vanities" (Gilchrist 42). Women thus are reminded not only of their fading youth and beauty but warned that good looks and fine garments will not protect you from death. In each of these examples, the organizing heuristic is to bring attention to surface. But in whatever form, the motif embodies a strange contradiction: it warns women to disavow too much attention to surfaces, but requires them to do so by directing attention to another surface. Moralistic plays and the satires used by clergy were built on an ironic rejection of some aesthetic surfaces as blasphemous over the purity others. In this way, even as these plays mock bodily adornment they strangely engage in a similarly showy aesthetic performance *should* draw viewer attention.

Jelinek's collection of plays brings this artistic tradition into view and can be seen as a comment on its growth and persistence across time. She is aware of the formal irony in that can arise in the motif's adoption—and adaptation. Her original title for the play, *DerTod und das Mädchen I-V: Prinzessinnendramen* (2003), is itself a slight deviation from the established motif, although it, like the final title, *Jackie*, are informed by how modern women, particularly celebrities, are judged. Jelinek's project, in other words, draws our attention to the political implications of the power of these myths—dress among them—and directs our attention to the often invisibility of power that persists in pervading and controlling women's bodies and minds, language and behavior. Lester

Olson argues that in the rhetoric of recirculation encompasses earlier versions and adaptations of those texts. Newly circulating versions allow a "multiplicity of ways in which such audiences may engage the texts as meaningful—such as to reshape, subvert, redefine, reverse, or otherwise modify its range of meanings" (Lehn 670). Jelinek's collection can be read against the lineage of the death-and-the-maiden forms. However, she is not attempting to change the final outcomes for the women, indeed, they all remain unhappy, alone, or dead

Jelinek's *Death and the Maiden* borrows from a form that emerged somewhere *between and amid* image, text, sound and performance—just as all dress, which can be read, seen, even heard as it moves along with the body, can produce a spectacle. Where the content of the earlier forms offered moral lessons warning women about the triviality and ephemeral nature of attending too carefully to their appearance, Jelinek's heroines can see that attention to surfaces is a path toward power. In this way, the collection of one-act plays suggests an intervention on the borders of the visible, the available, the surface, the spoken and the lost, hidden, unvoiced. Indeed, the plays also stand at a strange border between what is read and what is spoken.

Jackie reverses this moralism in the earlier forms, to argue that clothing cannot so easily be cast off for death. Instead, it haunts in other representation, other similar forms, and animates both dead and living bodies. In *Jackie*, clothing, objects, and the bodies are entwined in a complicated dance of visibility and invisibility where the boundaries between object, subject, and signs are fluid.

In *Jackie,* Jelinek challenges binaries including those that appear to be fixed states such as living and dead. Language, clothing, and images, in their materiality, exceed death in their ability to become mythic. As Norman Mailer wrote in 1983, "Jackie Kennedy Onassis is not merely a celebrity, but a legend. Not a legend, but a myth. No, more than a myth. She is now an historic archetype, virtually a demiurge" (*Marilyn* 186). Like the earlier forms of the death-and-the-maiden motif, Jelinek also refers to an "afterlife" exposing how the form relies on the binary concept of liveness to make sense of death. Yet for Jelinek, objects can be more alive than subjects, and subjects can live forever through signs and objects.[130] The relationship between these things is continually muddled.

As I have suggested, Jelinek's resurrection of the is a simulacrum of Kennedy, who had been dead nearly a decade before the play was published yet continues to haunt collective memories. Jelinek's Jackie too is a ghost of the written surface of the play, the performance is an apparition of the disembodied text. The myths themselves here are also exposed as false facades, their permutations just one narrative. If we needed to be sure, Jackie declares, her body is a removable facade she can "cast off, or I mean cast in." She

[130] In the platonic conception of Ideas and Forms are immaterial essences or patterns that are retained within material copies.

is both subject and object, the artist, and the work of art (Jelinek, "Jackie" 53).[131] Playing up the irony of the form itself, Jelinek draws attention to Kennedy's public appearances as a cultivated pose as a performance of that pose by an actor. These references toy with the notion that audiences should trust this Jackie as an assumed narrative authority.

Jelinek is interested in the way that real historical figures are made to myths then cemented through aesthetic practice, sometimes literally made solid through statues. As Jackie notes, her waist will not be "cast" in plaster.[132] *Jackie* presents another example in the examination of JFK's funeral where Jelinek sees Jackie/Kennedy as a figure in her own danse macabre. She stands in a black veil holding the hand of each of her two children beside her, dressed in stately blue coats and red shoes. A riderless horse, boots still in the stirrups, escorts the coffin. Jackie is both artist and figure in her scene. Her reflection on her artistic intention offers a close reading of renaissance memento mori

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[131] In 1984, Kennedy won a lawsuit against the house of Christian Dior and model Barbara Reynolds for presenting her likeness in an advertising campaign. In his ruling, Judge Edward J. Greenfield found that trading on a likeness did not fall into artistic protection. He wrote,

> To paint a portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is to create a work of art, to look like Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is not While some imitators may employ artistry in the use of voice, gesture and facial expression, a mere similarity of features is no more artistry than the mimicry of the Monarch butterfly by its lookalike, the Viceroy butterfly…. The problem is dealing with actuality and appearance, where illusion often heightens reality and all is not quite what it seems" (122 Misc.2d 603 (1984) Jacqueline K. Onassis, Plaintiff, v. Christian Dior — New York, Inc., et al., Defendants.).

[132] The original German makes this point clearer through the repeated word, "betonier" meaning "concrete."

iconography: “All my doing, convincing people of this enchanting death in red and powder blue, of this death in the shape of two small children, cute, like a slender patch of heaven, something like that, this death that’s in store for them as well, but it won’t be as awesome, I am afraid” (Jelinek, “Jackie” 56). The entire processional had, as David Lubin illustrates, elements of ancient artistic traditions, particularly the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (13th Century B.C), or Roman Peace Monument, which, he argues, “provides a striking visual template for the images recalled from the Kennedy funeral. The piece displays an elaborate funeral procession for a great ruler where members of the royal’s family are shown “clustered together in a tight grouping, their faces solemn and dignified, their bodies graceful” (97). The scene includes a young, veiled mother with her two children, one who “tugs at the mantle of the adult in front of him” in a “sublime mixture of public formality and private, familial informality, provides a striking visual template for the images recalled from the Kennedy funeral (and suggests continuities of human behavior over the intervening 2,000 years).” (Lubin 97).

Even without direct knowledge of this image, images like it have been so widely circulated, reproduced, and referenced that they are now a part of public consciousness that informs how one makes meaning from the Kennedy processional.[133] Kennedy,

[133] Similarly, recurrent images of the Virgin Mary figure in Kennedy’s orchestrated photographs (Giles282; D. M. Lubin 40). Inside the halo of light, a light that killed Marilyn Monroe, there is “No blessed virgin here to help” women. Jackie, like Marilyn and Plath, is “after men” (Jelinek). In the scenes with Warhol in the department store and the scene with Jackie are resonances with Pietá and the Holy

"shown on television throughout the world as a majestic widow grieving at her husband's funeral, cemented her place in history as a first lady who understood the importance of ceremony and the consolations of ritual" (Beasley 72). Lubin argues that these artistic lineages are inescapable, and Jelinek's Jackie knows it. Jelinek's *Jackie* reproduces both the historical event and the artistic legacies it is based upon to interrogate the mythic. She knows her audience cannot help but keep looking at it. We could watch it "five thousand times and you still won't have enough of it" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 56). She endures because viewers refuse to let her go: "And if I want to flee, they won't let me." She too is sealed in these images, endlessly paraded out for public consumption.

Jelinek's Jackie is obsessed with dress, but steps out of her skin when in public. She says, "I politely take off myself when I am talking to somebody, and yet I also stay, though far above. I prefer to be suspended in all those pictures of myself and dragged along. That way I don't have to do anything" (56). Like myth, or language, or clothing, Jackie is at once mobile and fixed in place. She has little use for her body, which has already been captured and solidified by cultural narrative. Public perception is linked not to her body but to images of her body. She hangs "suspended in all those pictures of myself and dragged along. That way I don't have to do anything." She surrenders and takes her live gestures, resigned she "bundle them in a photo, tie them up

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Family. Both were Catholics and drew strongly on religious iconography. For more on Warhol's religious iconography see Jane Dillenberger's *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol.* During this time in the 1960s, the Catholic church went from tainted or suspected religion to entering the mainstream (Massa).

and make a hostage of yourself". Yet still she scoffs, "it is a miracle that a picture like me can speak at all!" (54).

Jelinek's Jackie knows that images create images, reproducing spontaneously through imagination. Take, for example, the opening lines where Jackie begins, "I suggest myself like my waist, which I don't stress. I wear understated clothes." The opening offers an ironic contrast when a ghostly Jackie appears on stage, well-dressed and encircled by a heap of men's bodies. Nothing in this image is subtle or suggestive. The contrast sets up a tension between what the play is saying and what the play is doing. Jackie warns, "better not imagine" the dated Louis Seize drapes that have fallen out of fashion, adding "one never knows which pot feeds the imagination in the soup kitchen of the poor" (53). Like the staging, any decorative visual surface should be approached suspiciously and with a keen eye toward how aesthetics evolve. Thus, images create psychic connection which could threaten one's sensibilities.

As Renee Baert writes, "clothing is a second skin, a membrane which separates in joints that surrounds and divides. Clothing is a border" (Baert 274). Jackie's bodily "boundary consists of duchess and wool," a fabric of "pure wool. … sewn by hand, stitch by stitch." Jackie's fabric border stands apart from her flesh, creating a wall of protection from penetrating gazes. Stella Bruzzi explains Kennedy's "clothes become barriers shielding her from onlookers, particularly the stiffly structured, sculpted designs of her Oleg Cassini gown. Rather than follow the contours of her body, her formal clothes (for all her love of couture) sit seemingly in conflict with them: the official clothes wear her,

not vice versa" (235). Jelinek reflects this tension in *Jackie*, as Jackie is "completely at home" in her body "because it is surrounded by clothes" (59).

Jackie's iconicity is forever linked to the public replay of her husband's death and in the play, she declares that the public "has a right to every detail, a right to the sight of the smashed head with the brain oozing into my lap" (55). Jelinek's Jackie knows she is bound to incessant public interest in JFK's death, acknowledging it bitterly a perverse avenue to eternal life. Reflecting in one moment on her husband's public death, then to his public infidelities, she notes that like the mistresses he paid to keep quiet, she too was paid, except he paid her to be married. Her rumination on the economics of marriage spur another strange turn as Jackie suddenly contrasts herself with Sylvia Plath. The rumination makes clear that in *Jackie* money, love, and art are always linked through exchange. Plath, Jackie muses, could afford to take intellectual opportunities that Jackie's mother forced her to abandon in the interest of marrying for money. Though marriage may belie her intellectual acumen, it secured her influence, something that Jackie finds Plath forfeits when she ends her own life. Jackie blusters, "Someone like Plath never becomes an icon, except for stupid women, who think they have gotten a brain of their own. Ridiculous!" (56).

Like Kennedy, Plath has become a 1960s icon of femininity and death, and Jelinek is aware of that relation. Heather Clark argues in her aptly titled article "Sylvia Plath: An Iconic Life," Plath's death cemented narratives about her art as pathologically linked to her depression and suicide in 1964, a "'priestess emptied out by the rites of her cult'" (Heather Clark 1073). Plath's iconicity was indeed forged in death. Clark points

out that Plath had invited supernatural associations as an ironic twist on the trope of male poet as prophet including "in poems like 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Daddy,' whose speakers believe that they possess the power to kill men" ("Sylvia Plath" 1073). Jelinek's Jackie is skeptical of any feminine legacy where the lead woman must die, and men take over the work of interpreting, organizing, and, in the case of Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, censoring her life. In contrast, Jelinek shows a Jackie who is the author of her own story, who need not flaunt her power to destroy men, she kills them without even trying.[134] Both, however, continue to haunt us from beyond the grave. As Al Averez just a year after Plath's death in 1965, "In a curious way… [Plath's] poems read as though they were written posthumously" (qtd. in Van Duyne).

If Plath's "blood jet is poetry," both Jelinek's Jackie, and arguably, the biographical Kennedy performed a poesis in dress ("Kindness" Sylvia Plath 69). In the play, Jackie's incredulity of Plath is thrown into rich contrast when, just moments later, she assumes the role of author: "Time for a poem — absolutely — but make sure your dress works like a poem! That's right! You must adapt! Only when you have gotten everyone's attention have you truly adapted" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 56). The materiality of dress secures the materiality of body, both the fleshy body under fabric and one's body of

[134] Jelinek places herself among these figures as well, suggesting that her public persona has been subject to scrutiny of the surfaces she presents but draws a different way to manage the patriarchal powers which pervade. She creates surfaces to be scrutinized and withdraws from view, literally refusing to leave her house. In this way, she is walled off from public view but also highly visible, even figuring as a mechanical sex doll in one adaptation of her "Sports Play" (Honegger 292).

work. Without "richly garnished" clothing over the body, there is no adaptation, nothing to cover the inevitable bodily decay (56). Though Plath's work emphasizes the importance of clothing, garments expose rather than conceal what it underneath. For example, in *The Bell Jar* of a $40 black shantung sheath dress "cut so queerly I couldn't wear any sort of a bra under it, but that didn't matter much as I was skinny as a boy and barely rippled, and I liked feeling almost naked on the hot summer nights" (Plath, *The Bell Jar* 165). Plath's little black dress "becomes a uniform of feminine that facilitates movement between the boundaries of private and public spaces, and the public and private self" (Heaton 167).

In *Jackie*, dress is a poetic armor Jackie wields deftly, producing her body as poetic speaker and artistic surface who is both her and not her. The artistic pose is necessary because the stakes of fleshly vulnerability is death. Jackie scoffs, "I don't need a fellowship for dying. I know how it goes" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 56). Plath's freedom came at a cost. Though Jackie insists her mother's demand spared her Plath's fate both women suffered. They choose different ways of navigating the risks of public life as creative women, but all options are deadly. One is slow and the other fast. In "Edge," likely the last poem Plath wrote, dated February 5, 1963, Plath offers a bleak image of a dead mother surrounded by her dead children while an indifferent moon looks on . Elizabeth Hardwick, Robert Lowell's second wife, strangely saw the poem as a kind of performance writing "when the curtain goes down… it is her own dead body there on the stage, sacrificed to her own plot" (Hardwick). Jackie seems to agree seeing in Plath's end, a lonely personal and artistic surrender "without someone there to support your arm"

(56). Jackie's artistic hand too is articulated through the men in her life, a quality she both relishes as protective and rejects as patronizing.

In this way, the poetic possibilities of dress lie in the many lines it generates. Cynthia Sugar's reading of Plath could easily apply to Jackie:

> While on the one hand accentuating interpretative uncertainty Plath also functions as Other for the reader, whose identifications with her provide an imaginary sense of oneness and control. Readers, attracted by the ambiguities and 'perversions' exhibited by Plath, by her own incessant struggle with the abject, are compelled to contain these contradictory elements by constructing a knowable Sylvia Plath and assigning blame or responsibility in their narrations of her life story as a means of safe-guarding their own implication in the attraction (Sugars 2)[135]

Plath's biography troubles readings of her work but also lends her work a shape of experience. In this way, Plath needs to use the biographical details of her life to show readers something new about their own experiences. As Virginia Woolf observed, "A biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many as one thousand" (Woolf 172) .

While Plath's poetic surfaces have been edited to replicate or distort her life, Jackie's clothes are similarly distorted in the mirror of public life, forever stained. Critical attention to Kennedy's pink suit tends toward pathological or biographical readings to unravel the garment's meaning. In contrast, critical attention to Plath's work

[135] See also Victoria Andersen's Death is the Dress She Wears: Plath's Grand Narrative.

tends toward pathological interpretations of her biography. Readings interrogate viewers' pleasure or pain, finding the suit as a source of cultural Schadenfreude (Rose), as an expression of public loss (Oates), or as a symbol of the displacement of voice (Malcolm). Though these subjects capture the disparate ways that objects and discourse operate visually, culturally, and materially, such readings perpetuate a symbolic interpretation to decode some unseen or unknowable aspect of the garment.

Pink

Critical and biographical attention to the suit appears as a prescient symbol of the assassination, an organizing narrative force. Kaite makes a convincing case for how biographers repeatedly figure the suit as an eerie precursor to the events of the assassination. "In retrospective accounts of the assassination, [the suit] is highlighted as an instigator to the assassination narrative, elected as a sort of uncanny premonition that fuels what is constructed as the inevitable (even if mysterious) unfolding of events" (Kaite "The Pink Suit" 185). In biographies and memoirs, the selection of the suit prior to the event is given intense scrutiny and "takes the form of a history in which the suit is imagined as a forewarning of the assassination. . . The literal and symbolic plotting of the pink suit before the events in Dallas allows it to chart the narrative, even to imagine it in advance." (Kaite 185). For example, Lady Bird Johnson recalled,

> I looked at her. Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood . . . and her right glove was caked, it was caked with blood — her husband's blood. Somehow that

> was one of the most poignant sights — that immaculate woman, exquisitely dressed, and caked in blood (Lubin, *Shooting* 196).

Kaite argues that emphasis on the suit's color is a sign of the events to follow. Marian Fowler calls the color, "hot pink is pinkissimo, pink at the very peak of ripeness, a sustained siren notes demanding attention and appreciation, pink's highest trumpet blast before it modulates to crimson" (qtd in Kaite "The Pink Suit" 253).

Kennedy too emphasized the visual scene in her testimony to the Warren Commission.

> "Every time we got off the plane that day, three times they gave me the yellow roses of Texas. But in Dallas, they gave me red roses. I thought how funny, red roses — so all the seat was full of blood and red roses" (W. Brown et al.).

William Hill testified she was more visible "because of the color of that suit. . .. It was like the sun just illuminated it" (Horyn). Lady Bird Johnson also noted the visual: "I cast one last look over my shoulder and saw in the President's car a bundle of pink, just like a drift of blossoms, lying in the back seat. It was Mrs. Kennedy lying over the President's body" (Lubin *Shooting* 198).

Derek Jarman observed, "Colour seems to have a Queer bent!" (Jarman 58). For Jarman, color is queer because the perception and experience of it varies from person to person, in part because of the difference contexts involved looking. Such varied experiences create a space outside of the mainstream perspectives that can be challenged and enjoyed in new ways. Jacqueline Lichtenstein argues "Colour is a pleasure that exceeds discursiveness" (Lichtenstein 195). In this way, color is deviant, even dangerous,

a force that can provoke or seduce an emotional response that will always escape language. Kristeva saw color as an unconscious and pre-linguistic state that exists before the self can be formed through language (*Powers of Horror* 43). It is unlike language because it "always exists as a disruption in the symbolic order" and "escapes censorship; and the unconscious irrupts into a culturally coded pictorial distribution" (Johnston 221). Kristeva *Desire in Language* 220). She argues "Colour is the shattering of unity" a "menace to the self" (Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 37). Merleau-Ponty calls color an "opening upon things," with an ability to "create—from itself to itself—identities, differences, a texture, a materiality, a something…. (Merleau-Ponty "Eye and Mind" 294).

David Bachelor observes that the resulting silence, the gap left by the color, expressed through bodily gestures: "The silence that colour may provoke is a mark of its power and autonomy" (83). In this way, the color is "allied with the body in its resistance to verbalization" (83). The application of color makes "not only makes our bodies more visible and vivid, but we also make them more expressive and articulate" (Batchelor 83).

Etymologically, the word "pink" is directly connected to clothing and the body. Rarely, the word has been used to mean "A very small person or creature; a brat; an elf" ("pink, n. 2" OED *"Pink, n.2"*). The word connotes vitality, or "The most excellent example *of* something; the embodiment or model *of* a particular quality" including

clothing, health, or spirits ("pink, n.6"OED, *"Pink, n.6"*).[136] The word marks a visual change on the body as it suggests blood rising to the surface of the skin "to become pink, to blush" ("'Pink, n.4'").

The most interesting definition finds the word to mean a puncture or hole, in clothing or the skin: "A very small thing, as a tiny spot or hole, or speck of light; a fragment. senses related to cutting or piercing." The hole can be decorative addition to cloth or leather made "by cutting or punching eyelet holes, slits, etc., esp. to display a contrasting lining or undergarment." More recent use "to cut a scalloped or zigzag edge on (a piece of fabric)" as with pinking shears. Pink can also relate to a puncture of the skin for adornment, as with a tattoo. It also has more dangerous bodily associations. For example, it can also mean, "A stab made by a dagger or other pointed weapon" or the rarer "A slight gunshot wound." As with an 1885 example in the Pall Mall Gazette "He is spotted with marks of stabs and revolver 'pinks', and he takes all his wounds quite as matter of course" ("Pink, n. 4" OED").[137] Pink bears a special status linguistically as it is "the only color term in English that also denotes a specific part of another basic colour

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[136]As with Jelinek's play, where the pink suit is the embodiment of a special quality of clothing that merges blood, books, and body

[137] The relationship to skin/adornment "To cut or puncture (the skin) by way of personal adornment, to tattoo" also "To shear (a sheep) closely so that the colour of the animal's skin shows through. Frequently in to pink 'em." ("pink, n.5 and adj.2"). The color is also political as communist sympathizers were called "pinkos" ("pinko, adj. and n.").

term, one end of red" but which does not hold a different optical experience of the color than simply "light red" (Batchelor 90)[138] Its status is figured throughout art history—in the Virgin Mary's robes—and as the designator of gender difference It may be fine for babies gendered female to wear blue, but pink is not for those gendered as males (Paoletti 61–3).

Seams/Seeming: Edits and Other Women

In her poems, Plath drew on religious and magical imagery as a counter to the well-worn gendered poetic tropes of the male poet as prophet, positioning herself as accessing hidden knowledge which threatens male power. After her death, the allusions she made in poems such as "Lady Lazarus" were interpreted as signs of her eventual death. Plath is imagined after her death as a witchy high priestess, a "snake woman of misery" (qtd. in Clark, "Sylvia Plath" 1072). Jackie too "cast spells. On television. In movies. And whatnot" (Jelinek).[139] Jackie turns seams into seeming. She publishes her work publicly, as "contentless content, in countless magazines" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 57). Like Plath, Jackie uses the material of her life to shape, edit, and convey something hidden or obscured. Both art and irony, Jackie observes, "In the barrage of flashbulbs,

[138] William Benson's 1868 *Principles of the Science of Colour: Concisely Stated to Aid and Promote Their Useful Application in the Decorative Arts* provides an early examination of color mixing and sensation.

[139] Heather Clark argues that Plath used prophetic or magical imagery prior to her to evoke and challenge the trope of the male poet as prophet ("Sylvia Plath" 1073).

without any privacy, I am completely private by being completely public and one doesn't diminish the other" (64). In *Jackie*, everything is subject to be copied, the body turned into a performance of flesh. Artists are "the chosen ones" who must "play in" the material of their own lives because there are few alternatives left to exist. In this way, the poetic adaptation of one's lived experience is essential and threatens death ("When the play begins it's getting deadly serious") (Jelinek, "Jackie" 63). Yet the connection to art surfaces is critical, "the artificial must not hide its artificiality, it can be the way it is." Jackie never "shuts herself in" or off "from victory of artificiality." Jackie's artifice hides the natural form of things such that "nature itself disappears and with it…Life — as if those two had ever been natural! You see, the effect is the same, whether it's the birth of Art or Nature…. Always keep your distance! Both nature and art rise from their seats with astonishing speed and since we got them out of balance, there, on their VIP seesaw, one up, one down and then the other way around, on this seesaw it's always you who hits the ground rather roughly" (63).

Unlike staged images of power in magazines, true power controls the imagination. Power is becoming "the footsteps people hear in front of the door, which make them instantly freeze in fear" (54). No body is needed to create the footsteps to exert power over the imagination. The power is self-generating, as it "dispenses its limbs delicately like clothes, and invisible hands take hold of elbows, hands, which drop to their knees in front of themselves, so to speak. You see and don't see power" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 54).

Dressing requires attention to both the seen and unseen. In this way, the dress is a poetic armor Jackie wields with deft, producing her body as poetic speaker and artistic

surface who is both her and not her. She turns "expensive clothes, heaps and heaps of fabric, consisting of clean lines . . . all those rags, sometimes flat, sometimes billowing voluminously, I want to pretend I have no body," she declaims on stage (Jelinek, "Jackie" 58). Ann Hamlyn observes, "The textile always, it seems, a surrogate skin; a body at one remove, placed at a comfortable distance, even given without a corpse" (42)

As Jelinek's Jackie observes, "Spelling it all out doesn't necessarily heighten the effect, it can also be heightened by withdrawal." She notes, "something can be missed so distinctly that its existence is no longer a given, even though a remnant remains." Judith Butler argues that style is, "a complicated terrain, and not one that we unilaterally choose or control with the purposes we consciously intend…Certainly one can practice styles, but the styles that become available to you are not entirely a matter of choice. Moreover, neither grammar nor style are politically neutral" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* xix) .

Jackie, unable to pursue a life of the mind, becomes instead an editor. As the borders of her body merge with her clothes, her creation of self and outfit aids the creation of other forms spontaneously. A dress "must be described, otherwise it doesn't exist. A dress comes into being through description, the emphasis is mine" (*Jackie* 59) Jackie's claim that dresses must be described to exist presents language as material; it makes a garment. The description of a dress is also a printed text that demands an editor's hand to guide the reader through text and paratexts, including footnotes. "This footnote says that the spots in the suit are blood and bits of brain. All else around it are accessories, but it is

the suit that counts. We know about the blood and the brain" (59).[140] Kaite argues the suit is a "footnote to the assassination which hovers at the edge of the text, threatening entry yet suppressed as a ghostly presence at the same time" ("The Pink Suit1" 174). Jelinek's Jackie observes, "Books present the states of things, and the state is always muddled and gets more muddled all the time. Whatever one believes in has to be dropped again right away. Otherwise, others start to believe in it too" (59).

To the audience, she continues, "There are no clothes without seams. Well, there you go. No seams — no clothes" (60). Seams hold together garments, shaping how the line of the body is seen. Thus, Jackie recognizes the strangeness of her medium as clothing both stands apart from the body and relies on the body for support. Bringing seams together to create a shape is work, after all. "Things that go together don't just simply grow together" (60). Jackie's artistry changes the seams of clothing, the artificial, into the illusion of her body ("I am not thin, but I can look it because I dress smartly"). The body she creates is "athletic, taut, muscular" a distinctly fashionable form "you could get everywhere during the sixties" (57). In this way, Jackie uses the materiality of the seams of her garments to make her body seem equally solid. The result is convincing

[140] Kennedy wrote an essay encouraging young people to read great writers. She wrote that great writing can "touch your imagination and your deepest yearnings, and when your imagination is stirred it can lead you down paths you never dreamed you would travel." Great writing, she argued, must be undertaken just as painter leaner "by copying old master's in museums." She continues, "All the changes in the world, for good or evil, were first brought about by words" (qtd. in Flaherty 134).

enough that Jackie too may fall into her own illusion: "I am the seams, but the fabric between them is missing — oops, now I turned the whole thing around" (60).

Boundary objects such as stains, clothing, or skin are not delimited by discrete borders but are constructed through their instability and the continual traversing between boundary lines (Grosz 131) Drawing on Brian Massumi, Elizabeth Grosz writes, "[t]hese boundaries, consequently, are more porous and less fixed and rigid than is commonly understood, for there is already an infection by one side of the border of the other; there is a becoming otherwise of each of the terms thus bounded" (131).

Dressing is akin to editing. It requires careful attention to the lines and details through addition and subtraction that, if successful, will hide the labor from view. This connection between the generation of beauty in a poem or in a body is succinctly detailed as fundamentally gendered invisible labor in William Butler Yeats's poem, "Adam's Curse."[141] Ahmed argues that the repetition of bodily patterns obscures the objects and labor which shape these patterns. Ahmed writes, "the labor of such repetition disappears through labor: if we work hard at something, then it seems "effortless"...The repetition of the work is what makes the work disappear" (56). Barbara Vinken argues, "You can read a particularly well-designed dress like a poem; both are able to stimulate our

[141] I said: 'A line will take us hours maybe;/Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,/Our stitching and unstitching has been naught….//That beautiful mild woman for whose sake/ There's many a one shall fin out all heartache/On finding that her voice is sweet and low/Replied: 'To be born woman is to know--/Although they do not talk of it at school--/That we must labour to be beautiful.'…(Finneran and Yeats 78)

interpretation curiosity" (Prinz). Her clothing is so striking that it not just shapes or casts her visual surface but in doing so covers her embodied voice. Jackie's speech is continually interrupted by pundits who, "talked about my clothes even more than about myself, and that's saying something!"[142] As interpretations of her clothing cover her testimony, spanning countless versions of herself, she becomes "the foam on the dreams of others." Jackie notes, "they talk more about my white duchesse gown to benefit the election; about my Vichy checkered shirt plus shorts at the beach to benefit the children; about my pink Chanel suit to accommodate death; and about my red wool suit at the announcement of the landslide election results." Clothing is her "pre-lingual stage, which you could call the clothes-stage, that is to say form precedes speech" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 57).

In *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years,* European editor-at-large of *Vogue*, Hamish Bowles argues Kennedy demonstrated a "keen understanding of the semantics of dress and of the ways in which she could use her public image to help communicate the more abstract ideals that were important to her" (17). Clothing serves as an articulate surface that can express her experiences and in mastering her craft becomes who she is, not just what she represents. Using the grammar of dress encodes her

[142] Langdon Hammer's observations about Plath's poetry could easily translate to Jelinek's Jackie. He writes, "no other writer of her era has been the subject of so much biographical scrutiny. But far from settling the facts, the competition to tell the truth of Plath's life has merely multiplied the 'lives' that anyone interested in her must get to know." (qtd. in Anderson 68).

"existence has meaning only when I change stresses" which is to say when she changes dresses.

Her clothing is "more individual than my language, you know, even though they were only lines, which are the basic form, with all that decoration just stuck on, simple, essential. Circle, square, ball, cube." These forms cover her body and her voice, as they emerge even before her speech as unique inscriptions. As Jackie explains,

> My clothes were my signature. My clothes were more individual than my language, you know, even though they were only lines, which are the basic form, with all that decoration just stuck on, simple, essential (58).

The shape of her clothes, like the curves of her signature, is the visual expression of her personal speech. Jackie crafts her outfits as a literal and figurative surface, a text that produces a body of texts. Jackie's waist then is mere subtext: "the fitted shape receded from me, because I just let things flow around my waist like the waves around Venus, born from foam." More abstractly, Jackie's clothes double her body. She creates an enigmatic collage through which she extends herself as she stands atop her own shoulders "to make [herself] look taller" (65).

Jelinek's Jackie insists on her artistic similarity to Plath in the play, her formal address using the poet's last name suggests distanced respect. Jackie gives an oddly impassioned criticism of Plath's material poetics through biting comments about her suicide. Where the audience might expect Jackie to offer a similarly harsh criticism of Monroe, Jackie delivers a reversal. Here Jackie distances herself from Monroe, calling her the light to her own darkness. Her approach is far more tender, addressing her,

sometimes directly, by first name. She is "fleeting, something that's already gone while it's still there" vulnerable to "[o]ne sweep of the hand and it's gone" (59). Marilyn is a captivating but transient illusion of presence. Marilyn uses her body to access power, but that power is simultaneously contingent on the illusion that her flesh can be taken ("Saving oneself by pretending to give oneself freely"). Without material lines, she "can't hold her shape" exposed "always fighting, as she had to, against her always willing flesh." Marilyn's "boundary was her flesh. Poor thing." As such, her body became public property leaving her few options but sex and death, as "[t]he flesh succumbs." Locked into a body that belongs no longer to herself, Marilyn is "a person who desperately needs clothes" to prevent merging with others (63). Jackie however merges with her clothing as a necessity, "…I, who AM the clothes!" (59). In short, female icons cannot have it all—either body or dress. These are border materials; like neighboring nations, they need each other to be different in order to maintain identity.

In Jelinek's fantasia, Marilyn also becomes for Jackie an object for display. The blonde siren is a picture to be viewed at a distance like an inanimate object, "a piece of furniture" (61). Of course, Jelinek's Jackie realizes knows that she is mere-furniture as well, but she furniture that is self-made and self-possessed. After all, she famously redecorated the Nation's house (61, 65). Kennedy's role in her husband's administration was similarly described in a 1961 *Times* profile as visual rather than strategic: Jelinek's Jackie, the queen of the copy, distances herself from Marilyn's image, dismissing Marilyn as only a projection made by "nasty light…in all its fakeness, dots on the screen, for eternity." Such images are also fleeting because they lack a structure, having "no

beginning and no end." Thus, they are bound to previous and future iterations.[143] The public views celebrities "as if they were seeing themselves in the mirror." Mailer saw Marilyn as "the magnified mirror of ourselves" (*Marilyn* 37). Mailer describes Monroe's troubled life living in an orphanage when the directress allowed her to powder her face in front of a mirror (39). The experience "appears to have been her way of coping with, and perhaps transcending, the painful leveling experience of the orphanage. In the mirror she was something special; in the mirror she could prepare herself for "the alteration of reality" (39).

Dress too is reflective of "one's charms" but should "appear in the mirror only" (Jelinek, "Jackie" 56). Steven Connor argues the surface of skin is

> "like the modernist building faced in glass, the shining skin is able to hide in plain sight [. . .] The shine of the skin deflects and diffuses the performative, punctual line of sight across the horizontality of the planar body. The skin thus becomes a sort of mirror, borrowing the mirror's depthlessness and invisibility (the mirror offers everything to the eye but itself, for you can only ever look in a mirror, never at it). [. . .] The skin mirror effaces itself in its visibility, but also retains a certain opacity. (45)

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[143] Just as Jackie placed herself at the head of Camelot, Monroe is also royalty. In his 1962 profile for *Esquire,* Norman Mailer called Monroe "one of the last of cinema's aristocrats" recalling that the sixties "began with Hemingway as the monarch of American arts, ended with Andy Warhol as its regent" ("An Evening with Jackie Kennedy" 5).

Under “all those rags, sometimes flat, sometimes billowing voluminously” Jackie can pretend to not have a body. Her clothing also mummifies her, “I am not flesh, I am its foil, I am the dress!” (*Jackie* 59). As her body decays, her clothing covers even death, “as long as it is richly garnished.” She has merged with her clothes, as she declares “I am my clothes and my clothes are me.” She is “made of this and that dress, this coat, that casual look, mostly slacks. I am clothing” (65).

Indeed, Jackie wears a costume that Marilyn can inhabit. Friend and White House Usher J.B. West said that he came to think of Mrs. Kennedy as an actress, gracefully performing like an actress, the role of First Lady (Bowles 18). Her state clothes were, fittingly, a uniform or costume she used “as a shield and style an effective weapon” vital to her role-playing (Bowles 18).

Repetition and more

In her June 1962 “Last Sitting” photoshoot with photographer Bert Stern, Marilyn donned a black wig and several strands of pearls as a parody of Jackie. The shoot took place days before Monroe’s death. Marilyn Monroe dressed in black quaffed wig and layers of pearl necklaces. In these photos, Monroe playfully dons Kennedy’s persona as costume. Jelinek’s *Jackie* suggests Monroe’s play acting at being Kennedy needs the costuming to prop her up because her own is tied to her inevitably fleeting body. Jelinek’s Jackie references the photos as a sign that Monroe was already a transitory figure who could bear neither the weight of garments or the exposure of flesh.

Jelinek's Jackie resists the mirror image of herself in Marilyn. Her clothed, dark double serves as a foil to Marilyn, who also "existed in only two versions, as light and as shadow." Although Jackie comments that she is all darkness behind her black mourning veil, she also needs light. Not only does she need light to see out, but she also needs others to "see me in my clothes and appreciate the details." The display of her artistry is critical and indeed she says, "I am at my best, when I show myself." Jackie is "most appreciated when absent" but continues to "be seen everywhere" as images refuse to die. Indeed, a residue of this encounter in the play suggests that images of Marilyn haunt Jackie.

In "The Ecstasy of Communication," Jean Baudrillard claims the rise of digital media, especially television images, reduces the psychological projection of one's body to a universe of networked connections that suffuse the public space with the private space, the landscape of the body with the landscape of the world (54–6). In the era of postmodern media, the opposition between public space and the private space "is effaced in a sort of *obscenity* where the most intimate processes of life become a virtual feeding ground of the media …. the entire universe comes to unfold arbitrarily on your domestic screen" (56; original emphasis). Televisual technologies then enabled the promiscuous traversing of the public into the private and the private into the public.

For Baudrillard the problem is not simply the extension of bodies, which now must suffer the "forced extroversion of all interiority, this forced injection of all exteriority that the categorical imperative of communication literally signifies" (58). Even the interiority of subjects has been subverted by objective forces, as even linguistic symbols fail to adequately convey the material reality of the interiorized subject. Without

true communication, the subject suffers "a new form of schizophrenia" that, though without hysteria or paranoia, is felt through a "state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of protection, not even his own body, to protect him" (58). The continual extension of bodies into and between spaces is an obscene visibility which effaces bodily boundaries through penetration. In turn the body becomes an image and the real merges with representation.

Citing Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Bernadette Wegenstein argues "the actionism movement of the 1960s followed a double logic of remediation, consisting of the following paradox: Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them" (38). In *Book of Skin* Steven Connor argues,

> "The projected images of cinema are shadowed by the techniques of reproduction and enlargement that have made the living environments of the twentieth century a phantasmagoria of signifying surfaces. If anything and everything can become a screen, then everything has the capacity to bear faces and exposed bodies. The harsh banality of brick and metal, the sides of buildings, cars and buses, are capable of being made the vehicle for visible flesh. Anything can wear a face; anything can become a front (Connor 15)..

These surfaces can be felt. Laura Marks argues that looking over the cinematic surface is a felt sense. In haptic perception, the "combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside

our bodies" (Marks 332). In haptic looking, viewer and image join in a mutually erotic co-constitution of viewer and image (332). The eyes "function like organs of touch" and "distinguish form so much as to discern texture" (332). Baert writes, "every stain has its own particular texture. Texture denotes the consistency of a surface and the sensory, often tactile imprint that is left on it" (272). Marks finds "the erotic capacities of haptic visuality are twofold. It puts into question cinema's illusion of representing reality by pushing the viewer's look back to the surface of the image. And it enables an embodied perception: the viewer responding to the video as to another body, and to the screen as another skin" (342). Looking becomes a form of touch and the visceral experience of wearing clothing—say a bloodied knock-off Chanel suit of pink wool—is transferred from Jackie's body to all who see her in it.

French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas observed that in contact with the world around us, images and objects we experience never fully absorb into bodily surfaces or gestures. As such, "the way he holds them, his gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin, which escape from under the identity of his substance, which like a torn sack is unable to contain them. Thus, a person bears on his face, alongside of its being with which he coincides, its own character, its picturesqueness" (Hand 123). The attributes of objects such as form or color cannot be fully brought into view in images but retain some inaccessible qualities "behind its being, like the 'old garments' of a soul… like a 'still life" (135). Images are mirrors of the world, reflecting something "somehow to the hither side of it. It is a symbol in reverse" (136). Confronting images is a bodily act that occurs between two surfaces. Some aspects of the image cannot be taken in by interpretive

approaches and thus reflect back the limits of our sense of bodily harm. He writes, 'The visible caresses the eye. One sees and hears like one touches…. The proximity of things is poetry.'" (89)

Despite recounting the details of her husband's murder in gruesome detail, Jackie is most troubled by a detail, a vestige of Marilyn's appearance. Jackie is horrified by a twist of blond hair "sticking out of the coffin like the twirling pom-pom of some tacky cheerleader" as if in one final act of escape. Jackie exclaims four times in succession, "I can't get it out of my head." Jackie can "survive differently" because she is "flesh and blood, but at the same time I am not." She is "made of this and that dress, this coat, that casual look, mostly slacks" (64). The details of her physical body become embellishment, her "eyes and lips are accessories." Crafting a line between the public view and the private, Jackie sees her clothing as larger than herself creating a barrier which "Never merges with my shape, it bravely holds its own against me". The lines her clothing creates are enduring and "will stay forever in people's memory." Lines of clothing also endure, simple shapes returning over and over to fashion reviving her alongside. The material offers permanence, "because I am not just light. I am not that fleeting…I am my clothes, and my clothes are me; therefore they are more than light" (59). They are substances.

Epilogue: Esse Purse Museum & Store

The Esse Purse Museum and Store in Little Rock Arkansas, is one of only three dedicated purse museums in the world. It is also perhaps one of the only collections in which the permanent exhibit frames the purse as an object legible only in relation to women's bodies. The name Esse comes from the Latin phrase *in esse* to mean "in actual existence; opposed to *in posse*, in potentiality" ("Esse," OED). The museum boasts visitors will find "that a purse is not just a utilitarian bag in which a woman carries her necessities, but an extension of her personal space, her essence, and of the things that make her 'her'" (Esse Museum, "About"). Handbags, in this context, are not merely incidental or decorative additions, but must be seen as prosthetic *extensions* of the body. Part-body, part-thing, part-interior, part-surface, their preeminent function as accessory is to allow one to manage private matters while in public. A purse is not frivolous, in other words; it bears a complex relationship to the person who carries it. It visually and materially represents her, and it is presumed to be a "her;" it contains her parts and extends–even as it may literally limit–her reach into the world.

One installation, designed by the African-American architect Kwendeche, features a set of nude, all black mannequins perched upon stools. The mannequins lean forward in a familiar knock-kneed high fashion pose, feet splayed, arms folded across the thighs (Esse Purse Museum). In place of human-shaped heads, however, Kwendeche tops the mannequins with bulky, clear Lucite display boxes, sometimes suspended well above where a head might be; a handbag seems to float weightless in each box. The exhibition performs a series of visual and material puns: The mannequins are quite literally

"airheads," but that air-headedness is mere guise, each bag is suspended by a wire suggesting some force which holds it in place for the viewer to take a closer look. The boxes and purses are secured by nearly-invisible wires. The exhibit performs the weight of being *in esse.* If the displays suggests a superficial surface, the permanent exhibit's titular question, "What's inside?" invites a haptic exploration of the object's depths. Both display and exhibit prompt a direct consideration of the sensual qualities of holding, clutching, clasping the bags on display as it insists upon the object as body part.

What does it mean for the handbag to *be* a woman? What does it mean for the whole of a woman to be bound so closely into the fabric of a bag, contained by its zippers and clasps and to in turn be seemingly able to read these very materials which are intended to keep items inside and concealed? These questions point toward the strange space between other and not-other that handbags occupy. The strangeness is in part due to the way that "Our bags are sophisticated transformations (and replications) everybody or if parts of our bodies[PR27] ... In the most literal and suggestive- and perhaps most fundamental- sense, handbags are imaginative elaboration of physical function. we are what we carry around with us-- and what we used to carry things around" (Phillips 25). In turn, "...bags are at once alien and integral, disturbing in familiar, mine and not mine" (Philips 26).

Yet, if this type of collective debris manifests provocative and productive critical attention, then in turning toward the item of the handbag might locate, in the literal handle, a place for theorizing the transactional, shifting nature of human (as object)-object relationships. Like so many of the terms for the bag itself which suggest a haptic

sensibility of the bag that is within reach-- but be grasped, clasped, snapped, snatched, or clutched-- the bag itself turns away from us even as we hold on to it. Even in our language, we think of the bag as linked to the embodied practices of exchange. To carry a bag means to surrender some physical mobility to ease the burden of material and psychic mobility. Julie Schulte critic writing about the online trend for bloggers to empty their handbags and display what is certainly a curated set of objects (no half eaten snacks or used tissues), finds "the obvious truth of the handbag: From chatelaine to reticule to designer bag, the handbag has always offered both freedom and yoke. It encapsulates a fact about its owner, and reveals that fact as much as, or more than, it conceals her belongings."

The museum thus stages a burlesque scene where Freud's interpretation of Dora is made literal, though to different ends. As the addendum of "and store" to the museum's original name suggests, the collection prompts consideration of the object as a historical artifact and as a site of consumable desire. Owner Anita Davis reflected, as the "museum's vision became clear, I also began to value the importance of not only of sharing stories of women past, but of supporting contemporary women whose lives intersect with the purse. The ESSE store was born…" (9). Where Freud read subconscious expression of repressed sexuality, the museum's play with the purse as genital turns the archive to storeroom to bedroom where the one can "act out" or externalize expressions desire through what Freud saw as a compulsive masturbatory practice desire through handling objects for purchase. The metaphor for touching and filling the folds of the human body are then played out on the bags on the sales floor.

This point undergirds the museum's history as part of one woman's collection, drawing a curious line between the repetitive practices of the archival (curated) and the commercial (consuming).

A Coda: The Underline

It makes sense that metaphors of textiles are used often in discussion of texts. Analysis of book histories and the impact of book and paper production technologies are innately linked to the development of literary forms and disciplinary approaches to textual analysis. The word fiction derives from the Latin fictionem to mean fashioning or feigning originally meaning "build or mold out of clay" and Old French ficcion, meaning dissimulation, invention, fabrication (fiction, n. OED, *"Fiction, N."*). The origin of the word reflects how fiction metaphorizes the crafting of an object which becomes image/imagined. To weave a story, spin a tale, tell a yarn, join strands of thought, seam.

"Literary scholars have particular insight into the affairs of things," writes Sarah Wasserman,

> in large part because they have long negotiated the tension between the material and the immaterial: they investigate imaginative forms, questions of representation *and* understand the book as an object, a material artifact that circulates in multiple economies.

Moreover, argues Babette B. Tischleder, "literary texts convey the condition of their own embodiedness, their creative power of worlding through words. Rather than just representing the material world, literature can register the 'materiality effect' of thingness as it impresses itself on the mind, touches the senses, stirs our emotions, and resonates in our imagination" (Tischleder)

The rise in mass produced fashionable dress is tied directly to mediation in modernity where fashion was acknowledged as a social "entity to be glorified, described,

exhibited, and dealt with philosophically; like sex, if not more so, it became a prolific machine for the production of texts and images" (Lipovetsky 69). Clothing is "a generative point to think about inherited memory, biological and metaphorical transference, personal recall and repression, our sense of self and the ability of cloth and clothes to hold and translate human experience" (Goldsmith 320). That material culture consequently moves—from one discipline to another, from one object to another, from one body to another, from one place and time to another is critical to understanding how clothing has an extraordinary ability to travel around our thinking and ourselves. In literature, film, and art, clothing is a powerful symbol of the social, economic, political, and historical forces that shape the physical and psychic elements of the wearer. Often figured as a superficial element of adornment for the body, imagined as a mask (either representing or concealing) the true self, clothing is made to be both a figuration of the true self and a mask of the true self demonstrates the object's power to fluctuate along the internal and external limits of the human body. "It decentres the human subject, expanding fashion beyond the frame of the human body and human identity to the non-human world of technology and ecology" (Smelik 37). Clothing is a potent tool for exploring the biologic, ontological, or phenomenological possibilities of objects. Clothing helps us to "think through" matters of the body as it also stands in opposition to *seeing through* the lines which shape representations of the body, as Anne Hollander identifies.

Old & New Materialism

Critical attention to material culture examines how objects inform, enable, and/or inhibit forms of social or linguistic expression. Early Material Culture studies, as

summarized by Dan Hicks, were marked by the study of used objects to understand the social and cultural milieus of daily life (Hicks 35). This turn is motivated to examine objects as offering insight into the motivations and experiences of psychological mechanizations. As Ernest Dichter writes in *The Strategy of Desire* (1960)*, the* "knowledge of the soul of things is possibly a very direct and new and revolutionary way of discovering the soul of man" (Berger 14). As a result, the bulk of critical interventions in material culture studies have used interdisciplinary methods to attend to Dichter's call for the study of how humans consume, produce, value and use objects, drawing interest from visual, social, psychological, literary, biological, historical, archaeological, and anthropological scholars.[144] The field was legitimized with the 1996 launch of UCLA's

[144] In *The Handbook of Material Culture*, Christopher Tilley traces the history of material culture studies from its early roots as a subset of Anthropology, Archaeology, to the rise of the public museum during the late nineteenth century. As museums shifted from privately owned, mostly un-systematized collections toward carefully cataloged, state-funded institutions, curators took greater interest in the study of artifacts alongside anthropologists. By the late 1920s, the introduction of fieldwork and ethnographic studies in Anthropology ushered in greater interest in the social figuration of artifacts, uniting the field more closely with Archaeology. Both fields studied objects less as cultural markers and more as technologies that provided evidence of social relationships and evolution, and ethnic identities. This continued until the 1960s and the emergence of structuralism (Tilley 2). Influenced by the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, scholars took up material culture not just as dry technology, but also as a kind of communication that could be explored through style and form with semiotic meaning. By the 1980s, critics used objects to bridge structuralism and semiotic theories by contextualizing them as part of our social fabric or, as cultural forms marking what Dan Hicks calls the start of the "Material-Cultural Turn." In 1983, Daniel Miller proposed a

Journal of Material Culture, which brought together methods across disciplines for approaches to the study of material culture, particularly those that center around social and cultural analysis.[145]

In the last thirty years, critical attention has shifted from the so-called Material-Cultural toward theorizing how to study objects as distinct from cultural forces, containing an agential power of their own, distinct from human perception (Miller 15). Drawing on speculative realist practices, the New Material Turn rejects the treatment of materials as secondary texts that rely on human interpretation (Bogost; Bryant, Harman). Instead, materials have mysterious aspects that cannot be accounted for through observation of relational connections alone. Thus, the field aims to reevaluate the Cartesian divide between the rational, thinking subject and the mute, inert object.

"material culture studies" as a kind of anthropology of consumption, requiring multiple disciplines to "examine the relationship between objects and people" and shift away from the focus on production and labor in Marxist structuralism (qtd. in Hicks 37).

[145] Many of the studies perpetuated problematic object narratives that ultimately restated the subordination of the material to the cultural and assumed that researchers held a false objectivity that allowed them to view research situations from outside both the material and the culture (Hicks 49). One solution was the engagement of Hermeneutic Phenomenology stemming from the ideas of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Critics then sought to account for the bodily and meaningful encounters between human perception and objects. From this view, the human position is taken as the central focus, the seemingly stable frame of reference for fostering such encounters. Still other critics, including feminist critics, argued that such a methodology flattens the diversity of human experiences and embodiment and is unable to fully capture the diversity of human encounters with materiality (Grotz 12).

Materials are arranged in non-hierarchical networks called assemblages (Puar year), swarms, vibrant/vital material (Bennett), machines (Haraway), and queer becomings (Ahmed). Julian Yates argues New Materialism provides a new vocabulary for describing unstable, evolving ontological boundaries between the two categories and examining the interdependence of objectal interactions. As Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van Der Tuin summarize, New Materialism emphasizes a flexible and shifting affect, movement, and agency over strict disciplinary interpretations of representation and signification: "It searches not for the objectivity of things in themselves but for an objectivity of actualization and realization. It searches for how matter comes into agential realism, how matter is materialized. . . . . New Materialism argues that we know nothing of the (social) body until we know what it can do" (113).

Feminist strands of new materialism center on theorizing biopolitical and bioethical concerns arising from divisions between subject/object when subjects are "already part of the substances, systems and becomings of the world" (Alaimo 14). Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman argue feminist new materialism builds on the foundations of the linguistic turn to underscore the co-constitution of material and discursive realities (15). Social forces, such as gender and sexuality, are taken as critical entanglements that join to form subjects (Alaimo and Hekman 20). Karen Barad argues entanglements of "intra-actions" demonstrates that even for individuals "existence is not an individual affair" as "Individuals do not preexist their interactions" (ix). As such, the emergence of entities, such as "time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to

differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future" (Barad ix).

Likewise, "matter and meaning are mutually articulated" (Barad 152). Discursive meaning is inseparable from material because language renders matter as stable, articulable, and classifiable phenomenology. Thus, language gives solidity to matter through the production of surfaces and boundaries. This relational ontology must also include the critic or observer, as there is no position that can exist wholly outside of the material-discursive entanglements in which they have emerged within. The goal then is not to identify and classify distinct entities or characteristics, but to view how these objects behave, change, and react. "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism," Barad explains, "shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions" (802).

Feminist new materialism allows for "multiplicity and indeterminacy of outcomes, which requires paying particular attention to what is taken-for-granted and to how boundaries are redrawn by shifting what is included and excluded" (Orlikowski and Scott 5). New materialism can challenge some closely held beliefs about embodiment and identity in favor of models that see the body as not exclusively human or as "inhabited by an identity or sexuality this is unique to or even contained fully within its flesh" (Giffney and Hird 6). Ironically, taking the material seriously, Barbara Johnson argues, "might reveal all the ways we already treat persons as things, and how humanness is mired in an

inability to do otherwise." The "impossible dream" is not to help objects become human but "to learn to live in a world where persons treat persons as persons" (2).

Elizabeth Wilson observes that fashion is difficult to theorize "because it pertains to more than one set of practices, and cannot, therefore, be quite encompassed within a single discourse of academic 'discipline'" (Wilson, "These New Components of the Spectacle: Fashion and Postmodernism" 210). Similarly, Steven O'Connor calls clothing an "analytic black hole" (O'Connor 43). Although New Materialism and Fashion Studies both theorize materiality, few studies have taken the two together, suggestive of a strange elision. As Anneke Smelik identifies, "the cultural significance of clothes has largely been framed around non-material meanings (38). This is perhaps due in part to long standing methodological divisions that pitted object-based and archival approaches against theoretical and interdisciplinary readings. In the late 1990s, empirical researchers, curators, and conservators were critical of academic approaches without grounding in formal object analysis. In this view, clothing becomes a "ghostly presence" appearing "immaterial by the very lack of engagement with the physicality of clothing" (Woodward 21). Academics, in contrast, found empirical methods as lacking important conceptual grounding needed to fully account for social aspects of clothing such as aesthetics,

semiotics, identity, and embodiment (Smelik 37).[146] Much critical attention has been paid to the embodied qualities of clothing and dress, including gender, class, and race.

Clothing is not just a physical covering or reference to the human body but a mediating force which alters the way nude bodies are viewed (xii). Hollander writes,

> [A]rt proves that nakedness is not universally experienced and perceived any more than clothes are. At any time, the unadorned self has more kinship with its own usual dressed aspect than it has with any undressed human selves in other times and other places (xii).

In his essay "Thing Theory," Brown sets out to distinguish things from objects. His analysis is indebted to Martin Heidegger's "The Thing," in which Heidegger evaluates the representation of "thingness." A thing is not understood for Heidegger through its making or in physical traits, but it is in the experience of using the thing itself that "thingness" is realized (Candlin and Guins 116). Representations of objects are not the same as things themselves, as these are only understood through direct experience with specific phenomena. In this way, Heidegger argues that knowledge is not predetermined but is gained through experiences with phenomena. Brown moves away from the ontological categorization of phenomenological imperatives to instead explicate the difference between thing and object. His primary argument is that things can exist

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[146] See Belk 1998. *The Habits of Being* series bridged many of these gaps (Giorcelli and Rabinowitz, *Accessorizing the Body I*; Giorcelli and Rabinowitz, *Fashioning the Nineteenth Century*; Giorcelli and Rabinowitz, *Extravagances*; Giorcelli and Rabinowitz, *Exchanging Clothes*).

independently of subjects, whereas objects are always acted upon. Things are not reducible to objects because they exert themselves in ways that extend beyond the codes of the object (40). Things are "what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects" (Brown "Thing Theory" 5). That is to say that objects might fit into discrete categories of genre, recognizable and namable based on their traits while things exist outside of these limits. Things act against our notion of ourselves as subjects.

Things upset the subject-object relation when they "assert their presence and power" and force us "…to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the window gets filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily" (Brown "Thing Theory" 10). Things are objects that fail; they fail in use or in language, they fail to cohere to our expectations of them as objects.

However, Rosy Aindow warns against seeing or reading clothing as the sole means of establishing identity, cites its mutability: "Clothing by its very nature is ambiguous. It can be taken off, removed, or used as a form of disguise. Ultimately, it can be employed as a means of subverting identity" (8). Strangely, however, clothing is not just a tool of misdirection or disguise as it may also shield the physical body from unwanted attention or to enhance or diminish the effect of some features. At the same time, as clothing may be taken as a barrier to seeing one's true self, strangely then, clothing is an artifice, thought to represent some truth of the internalized self. This is true

even if the outward presentation is a disguise, the self is constructed against the externally visual. In this way, clothing holds an uncanny power to differentiate one from a sense of self, even as it outwardly presents some a coherence of the body. While discussions of clothing as mask or veil to the "real self" exists alongside a competing ideology that clothing speaks to the assumed truth of who you are. At the same time, fashion is an artifice on a real body.

Anne Hollander argues literary treatments of clothing are always self-limiting because they require the reader and author to share and create a joint image of "how people 'really' appear" which will always lack keen detail in favor of metaphoric or symbolic meaning (Hollander 421). Hollander argues that the literary gloss given to clothing takes its visual character for granted, figuring it as "perceived inwardly by its wearer and outwardly by observers as part of their identity and normal aspect; and indeed it is something so large in life as to be omitted in writing as unnecessary, like the sense of having a head and two hands" (Hollander 422). As a mirror to the embodied reader, literature relies on a common sense of embodiment and physical practices which includes dress. The sense of having a body and dressing that body is often left unexplored in literature, rendered in the coarsest specificities which are themselves only distinct in their most overt forms to serve the narrative drives of the literature.

For Hollander, the failure of fiction to represent the total look indicates the supremacy of the mental image of the self, a self-reflected poorly in literature in part because writers have a luxury of vagueness that painters do not (426). She suggests that writers who are most successful in fully representing the self so when clothing is

described in full detail, including the feel and movement of the garments, as based on their work of known pictures of past times (430). To evoke an accurate or full mirror to the dressed self, literature requires the aid of image; without narrative it is wholly ineffectual. If the primacy of image is to be followed, her perception of literature requires that images presuppose the textual, that the images exist for both reader and author before a narrative is crafted and understood. In terms of clothing, literature is not able to bring into focus the clothed subject because the mental image presupposes clothing as part of the human body and thus need not be explored.

Mitchell acknowledges that the slippage between word and text is inevitable. In a supplemental coda to "What Do Pictures Want?" a commenter points out that Mitchell "slide[s] back and forth between verbal and visual notions of the image, between graphic, pictorial symbols on the one hand and metaphors, analogies, and figurative language on the other." He directly acknowledges that the slippage occurs because, "all the tropes of visuality and desire we apply to visual works of art are transferred and transferable to the domain of textuality" (Mitchell 55). Interpretation is always bound up in both the pictorial and the figurative. In his article "Word and Image," he acknowledges that even the phrase "word and image" connotes a contested space of "intellectual struggle, historical investigation, and artistic/critical practice that can not be negotiated by a method alone, but must be explored as a space to explore, reinvent, and navigate in new ways (56).

The metaphor of clothing as fiction becomes useless when analyzed through the systems of visual and verbal representations. For the audience, their understanding of

genre is made only in reference to the incomplete and vague terms delineated by their social positioning. That is to say, the imagining of a representation. The metaphor acts against its discursive limits in ways that render it inarticulate. A turn toward the material allows for a new way to consider the way that clothing objects function in relationship to the fiction. To say that clothing is fiction, is to take seriously its transcendent properties and to suppose that in their arrangement in proximity to other objects, narrative can be discovered. Critic Allan Hepburn argues of art objects in fiction, objects hold an enchanting power to initiate and propel narratives even when outside a viewer's consciousness: "In fiction characters drop, steal, abrade, restore, unearth hoard hide arrange, cut smash, trade, buy, pawn, give, hang, donate, ship, insure, burn, photograph, appraise, classify, caress, and covet artworks. Characters take satisfaction in objects through interested exploitation. As objects move from hand or lie hidden in a closet they generate stories" (15). So too are the images generated by clothing, which can exist beyond the subject themselves. Fiction, then, can provide many moments of enchanted, magical, or otherwise autonomous garments that can help to make sense of the way that subject and object become complicated— even more than say with an art object which is always external and viewed fully apart from the body (even when viewed in memory).

But of course, Gertrude Stein had already told us so.

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