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Construcción y comunicación de identidades sociales diversas: del vestido medieval al estilo *dark*.

Sesión 2 Dialéctica cuerpo vestido-cuerpo desnudo

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CAPÍTULO
2

Teorías sobre la moda y el vestir

El capítulo anterior aboga por un estudio de la moda y el vestir que reconozca el modo en que éstos influyen en el cuerpo, crean discursos sobre el mismo, así como prácticas del vestir que actúan sobre el cuerpo vivo y fenoménico. Mientras la literatura sobre el cuerpo ha descuidado casi por completo la moda hasta la fecha, lo mismo ha sucedido a la inversa. Lo que se necesita es una explicación de la moda y el vestir que observe el modo en que están interrelacionados. La idea de la moda y el vestir como práctica corporal contextuada reconoce una tensión sociológica muy básica entre estructura y agente: las estructuras como el sistema de la moda pueden imponer parámetros en torno al vestir; sin embargo, dentro de estas restricciones, las personas pueden ser creativas en sus interpretaciones de la moda y en sus prácticas del vestir.

En la literatura se emplean varios términos: «moda» y «vestido», «indumentaria», «traje», «adorno», «decoración» y «estilo» se encuentran entre los más utilizados; establecer la diferencia entre ellos será el punto de partida esencial de este capítulo. Cada disciplina tiene predilección por uno de ellos y, por consiguiente, una forma de comprender la terminología es localizar estas palabras dentro de las tradiciones disciplinarias. Por ejemplo, los términos «vestido» y «ador-

no» se asocian a la literatura antropológica, una de las ramas principales, que implica la búsqueda de universales y, por consiguiente, es un término que lo incluye todo y que denota todas las cosas que la gente hace a sus cuerpos para modificarlos. Se dice que estas palabras describen un tipo de actividad más general que la «moda» o el «traje». El término «moda» conlleva el significado más específico de un sistema de vestir que podemos hallar en la modernidad occidental y como tal se suele usar dentro de la sociología o los estudios culturales y también lo utilizan los historiadores sociales o culturales de la moda, mientras que el término «traje» suele verse en los textos históricos. No obstante, aunque sea posible discernir una rama de literatura antropológica sobre el «vestir» que se distinga de una rama sociológica, histórica y cultural sobre la «moda», en la práctica el cuadro es más completo que todo esto. Lejos de emplear claramente uno u otro término y de definirlo con precisión, existe un considerable grado de confusión en las distintas ramas sobre este tema, dado que los múltiples autores emplean una serie de términos distintos, que a menudo utilizan indistintamente. Un repaso de esta literatura ilustra el hecho de que no existe un consenso sobre la definición y el uso de estas palabras y que no existe acuerdo sobre qué fenómeno concreto describen.

Los objetivos de este capítulo son dos: el primero es abordar la relativa falta de investigación sociológica sobre la moda y el vestir, y el segundo es resumir la literatura que ha surgido de la antropología, la historia del arte, los estudios culturales y la psicología social en relación con la moda y el vestir. Sin embargo, antes de emprender tal discusión, es necesario definir los términos «vestir» y «moda» y aclarar su interrelación. Esto implica considerar sus definiciones dentro de las distintas ramas de la literatura y las discusiones que éstos han suscitado.

Definición de los términos

Sociología y antropología: definición de la diferencia

La antropología y las disciplinas de la modernidad (sociología, estudios culturales, psicología) adoptan distintos criterios en materia del cuerpo y de la forma de adornarlo. Turner (1985) ofrece un claro resumen de las diferencias importantes entre antropología y sociología,

y de su libro podemos recoger los distintos puntos de vistas adoptados por ambas disciplinas en lo que respecta al adorno corporal y a hallar una aclaración en lo que concierne a las diferencias en la terminología. El autor observa que la antropología en sus comienzos en el siglo XIX se centraba en cuestiones ontológicas sobre la naturaleza de la humanidad, sobre todo en la diferencia entre naturaleza y cultura. El resultado de este interés fue el surgimiento de una rama principal preocupada por la búsqueda de universales, es decir, aquello que pertenece a todos los pueblos y culturas. Prosigue observando que, por otra parte, la sociología clásica no está interesada en las distinciones ontológicas ni en los universales, sino en la historicidad y en las formas de la vida social que emerge con la modernidad.

Esta distinción entre antropología y sociología es histórica y ha cambiado en los últimos años: la antropología estudia ahora las sociedades occidentales modernas y no simplemente las comunidades tradicionales, mientras que, tal como se ha dicho en el capítulo 1, desde aproximadamente los años setenta ha surgido una sociología del cuerpo para responder a las preguntas sobre el cuerpo. La diferencia histórica entre ambas disciplinas ha creado tradiciones claramente distintas de escritura: un cuerpo de literatura antropológica preocupada por la explicación del «vestir» o del «adorno», que se evidencia en el trabajo de Barnes y Eicher (1992), Cordwell y Schwarz (1979) y Polhemus y Proctor (1978), y otro sobre la «moda» en las sociedades modernas, producido por teóricos de la sociología, de los estudios culturales y de la psicología (Ash y Wilson, 1992; Bell, 1976; Flügel, 1930; Lurie, 1981; Simmel, 1971; Veblen, 1953; Wilson, 1985). Todavía existe esta diferenciación, aunque también hay una considerable fecundación cruzada entre las distintas disciplinas. La literatura antropológica contemporánea tiende a enfocarse en los significados y prácticas del adorno o del vestido en las culturas no occidentales o, en el caso de algunas colecciones antropológicas como las de Barnes y Eicher (1992), Cordwell y Schwarz (1979) y Polhemus y Proctor (1978), existen interesantes variantes interculturales que podrían incluir considerar el vestido también en el sistema de la moda occidental. Otra característica de esta antropología es una preocupación etnográfica referente a las prácticas que envuelven al vestido, la confección y la tela. Los autores de la literatura sobre la moda, a diferencia de los antropólogos, no están tan interesados en los relatos etnográficos de las prácticas en torno al vestir como en el sistema de la moda, que ellos tratan de un modo histórico o teórico más que etnográfico o empírico.

Definición del vestir

La primera preocupación antropológica con los universales condujo a antropólogos como Benthall (1976) y Polhemus y Proctor (1978) a decir que existía una propensión universal humana al adorno. Este argumento ahora es ampliamente aceptado por escritores sobre la moda y el vestir y la prueba antropológica de que todas las culturas «visten» el cuerpo y que ninguna lo deja sin «adornar» se cita en todos los textos principales de esta área. En realidad, en los textos antropológicos contemporáneos sobre el vestir se da por hecho. La preocupación del siglo XIX por demostrar la universalidad del adorno ha sido desplazada por la de las prácticas y significados reales del adorno humano y los significados y prácticas de algunas prendas en particular (Barnes y Eicher, 1992).

Sin embargo, en las obras recientes sobre antropología todavía existe el deseo de definir un universal apropiado y un término que sirva para describir «todas las cosas que las personas hacen a sus cuerpos o colocan sobre ellos para hacer que la forma humana sea, a sus ojos, más atractiva» (Polhemus y Proctor, 1978, pág. 9), aunque el concepto de ser «atractivo» no es más que una explicación de las múltiples modificaciones corporales realizadas por varias culturas, tal como menciono más adelante. Los trabajos antropológicos como los de Roach y Eicher (1965), Polhemus y Proctor (1978) y Barnes y Eicher (1992) con frecuencia suelen mencionar en sus introducciones la necesidad de, tal como Roach y Eicher lo exponen, «la frase más descriptiva e inclusiva» para describir el acto humano de adornarse. Los términos «adorno» y «vestir» suelen utilizarlos muchos antropólogos como Roach y Eicher. «Vestirse», según ellos, sugiere «un acto» que enfatiza el «proceso de cubrirse», mientras que «el adorno hace hincapié en los aspectos estéticos de alterar el cuerpo» (1965, pág. 1). Dado que la forma de actividad que constituye la mayor parte del adorno en Occidente implica cubrir el cuerpo con prendas, a la inversa que la escarificación o el tatuaje, «vestirse» quizá sea el término más apropiado para usar en este proceso de este libro, puesto que capta la idea del acto (o series de actos) implicado. En realidad, esta actividad está claramente resumida en las palabras cotidianas que usamos para describir nuestras prácticas de preparar el cuerpo, como «estar vistiéndose» o «vestirse de etiqueta». Sin embargo, «vestirse» no excluye la posibilidad de incluir el concepto estético de «adorno»: las opciones realizadas al vestirse pueden ser tanto estéticas como «funcionales». Además, tal como se demuestra más adelante, en Occidente la práctica de «vestirse» se encuentra dentro del sistema de la moda, del cual una de sus dimensiones es la estética. El sistema de la moda no sólo proporciona prendas para llevar, sino que confiere belleza y atractivo a las mismas, a veces poniéndolas en contacto directo con el arte. Al hacerlo, involucra a la estética en la práctica diaria del vestirse. No obstante, antes de entablar discusión alguna sobre la moda, es preciso hallar una definición más concreta.

Definición de la moda

Barnes y Eicher (1992) y Polhemus y Proctor (1978) no están de acuerdo con el significado del término «moda». Polhemus y Proctor arguyen que «moda» hace referencia a un sistema de vestir especial, histórica y geográficamente confinado a la modernidad occidental. Barnes y Eicher, por el contrario, no reconocen la moda como un ejemplo especial del vestir y, de hecho, no hacen referencia a la misma salvo para argüir que es un error por parte de los investigadores considerar la moda como una «característica sólo de sociedades con una tecnología compleja» (1992, pág. 23). Por otra parte, los escritos producidos por las disciplinas de la modernidad —sociología, historia, estudios culturales, psicoanálisis y psicología social— han argumentado persuasivamente que la moda se ha de considerar como un sistema distintivo para la provisión de prendas. La moda es comprendida como un sistema histórico y geográfico específico para la producción y organización del vestir, que surgió en el transcurso del siglo XIV en las cortes europeas, especialmente en la corte francesa de Luis XIV, y que se desarrolló con el auge del capitalismo mercantilista (Bell, 1976; Finkelstein, 1991; Flügel, 1930; Laver, 1969, 1995; McDowell, 1992; Polhemus y Proctor, 1978; Rouse, 1989; Veblen, 1953; Wilson, 1985). La explicación de Wilson, por ejemplo, sitúa la moda como una característica en el surgimiento y el desarrollo de la modernidad occidental.

Todos estos autores están de acuerdo en que la moda emerge dentro de una clase particular de sociedad, en la que es posible la movilidad social. Un tema recurrente propuesto por Bell (1976), Simmel (1971) y Veblen (1953) y más recientemente por McDowell (1992) y Tseëlon (1992a) es que, durante el movimiento hacia la sociedad capitalista y el surgimiento de la clase burguesa, la moda se desarrolló

como un instrumento de la guerra por la posición social. Según ellos, la moda fue uno de los medios adoptados por la nueva clase capitalista para desafiar al poder aristocrático, en primer lugar, burlándose abiertamente de las leyes suntuarias impuestas por la realeza y la aristocracia y, en segundo lugar, adoptando la moda y estando al día en la misma en su intento de conservar su clase y distinción (Simmel, 1971; Veblen, 1953). Estos autores defienden la idea de que la «emulación» es un factor motivador en la moda (esta teoría se verá con más detalle más adelante y en el capítulo 3), de modo que, tal como Bell (1976) y Braudel (1981) arguyen, la moda no se encuentra en la Europa medieval, que no ofrecía muchas oportunidades de movimiento social. Tampoco se encuentra en las culturas contemporáneas en las que existen rígidas jerarquías sociales, aunque ha desarrollado un mayor alcance gracias a la difusión global del capitalismo de consumo. La moda es, pues, un sistema particular de vestir que se encuentra bajo determinadas circunstancias sociales. Tseëlon (1992a) dice que la historia de la moda se puede dividir en tres grandes etapas: clásica, modernista y posmodernista. El período clásico de la moda, desde el siglo XIV al siglo XVIII, vio el cambio del orden de la clase social con la expansión del comercio y el aumento de los «patricios urbanos». No obstante, el vestido todavía marcaba claramente «lo cortesano de lo corriente» a diferencia de lo que sucedería en las etapas moderna y posmoderna, en las que la relación entre la ropa y la jerarquía social fue progresivamente desafiada. J. C. Flügel (1930) en su influyente análisis hizo la distinción entre ropa «fija» y «de moda»: este último tipo predomina en Occidente, «hecho que se ha de considerar como una de las características más notables de la civilización europea moderna» (Flügel, citado por Rouse, 1989, pág. 73). A diferencia del traje de «moda», el traje «fijo» es otro término para traje tradicional, como el quimono o el sari, que se caracterizan por su continuidad con el pasado en lugar de hacerlo por la lógica del «cambio por el cambio». Tal como observa Rouse (1989), este tipo de prenda también se puede hallar en Occidente en las comunidades tradicionales como la comunidad hasídica judía de Gran Bretaña. Asimismo, Polhemus y Proctor (1978) indican que la vestimenta oficial de la reina Isabel II es en gran medida inmune a la moda; su traje de coronación en 1953, por ejemplo, implica continuidad más que cambio.

Existe, sin embargo, un consenso entre una serie de teóricos en lo que respecta a la definición de la moda como sistema de vestir caracterizado por una lógica interna de cambio sistemático y regular. Tal

como expone Wilson, «la moda es el vestir cuya característica principal es la rapidez y el continuo cambio de estilos: la moda en cierto sentido es cambio» (1985, pág. 3). Igualmente, Davis añade que «es evidente que cualquier definición de *moda* que intente captar lo que la distingue del estilo, de la costumbre, del traje convencional o aceptable, de las modas más generalizadas ha de hacer hincapié en el elemento del *cambio* que con frecuencia asociamos al término» (1992, pág. 14).

No sólo se puede decir que la moda haya emergido bajo circunstancias sociales e históricas específicas y que haya desarrollado su propio ímpetu, a diferencia de los trajes asociados a la sociedad feudal en Europa o a las comunidades tradicionales que existen hoy en día, sino que al definirla también se ha de tener en cuenta la dinámica económica, industrial y tecnológica actual de la confección bajo la influencia de la moda. «Moda» es un término general que se puede usar para referirse a una serie concreta de arreglos para la producción y distribución de la confección. La mayor parte de los historiadores como Bell (1976) y teóricos culturales como Wilson (1985) aceptan que el sistema de la moda se refiere a una industria en particular, a un sistema único y especial para la producción y el consumo de ropa que nació de los desarrollos históricos y tecnológicos en Europa. De hecho, dado el ímpetu del cambio sistémico inherente en el concepto de moda, se han desarrollado relaciones de producción muy particulares. La frase «sistema de la moda» tal como se emplea en muchos libros se refiere a la relación entre la fabricación, la comercialización y la distribución de la confección a los vendedores minoristas. Leopold (1992) en su explicación del sistema de la moda dice que ésta es un «sujeto híbrido» que requiere el estudio de la interconexión entre la producción y el consumo. Los análisis materialistas de Fine y de Leopold (1993) señalan la necesidad de la especificidad histórica en el análisis del sistema de la moda y arguyen que el sistema de la moda bajo el capitalismo incluye relaciones muy particulares de producción y distribución. Tal como se trata en el capítulo 7, hay diferentes modos *dentro* del sistema de la moda, puesto que la moda femenina está organizada de forma bastante distinta a la de los hombres y la infantil. Leopold (1992) afirma que la moda se ha de considerar un sistema complejo, de modo que pueda ser entendida no sólo como un fenómeno cultural, sino como un aspecto de fabricación y de tecnología, así como de comercialización y de venta al detalle. El mismo reconocimiento de la moda como «híbrido» comparten Ash y Wright (1988) y también Willis y Midgley (1973), que sugieren que el estudio de la moda requiere un criterio integrado

que combine el estudio de la tecnología, la política, la economía, el contexto social, las comunidades y los individuos. No obstante, tal como sugiere Leopold (1992), dicho criterio todavía ha de surgir, ya que la mayor parte de la literatura sobre la moda centra su atención en el suministro o en el consumo.

Este consenso sobre la naturaleza de la moda como un aspecto de la modernidad occidental ha sido explícitamente desafiado por Craik (1993) y Barnes y Eicher (1992). Estos últimos no ofrecen una definición concreta de lo que quieren decir por dicho término, pero alegan que no hay razón para diferenciar la moda como un sistema especial de vestir que se encuentra sólo en algunas culturas. De hecho, van tan lejos como para hablar de modas en escarificación, dando a entender que «las viejas modas en el diseño y la textura de la escarificación dan pie a otras nuevas» (1992, págs. 22-23). Este uso de la palabra «moda» es totalmente opuesto al de los autores arriba mencionados, que hablan de una definición específica estructural e histórica de la misma. Hay dos problemas con el argumento de Barnes y Eicher: no llegan a definir lo que quieren decir por moda (aunque parecen usar el término para referirse a cualquier traje que cambie) y critican a esos autores que la identifican con el estilo que cambia, basándose en que asumen que el traje tradicional no cambia. Sin embargo, esto es una representación equívoca de la idea de la moda utilizada por muchos autores como Polhemus y Proctor (1978) y Bell (1976) que desmienten que no se produzcan cambios en el traje tradicional. Aquí el uso que hace Flügel (1930) de la palabra «fija» es engañoso, puesto que implica que no se produce ningún cambio en la ropa tradicional, cuando lo más probable es que haya modificaciones, pero no con la misma rapidez y regularidad que en la moda de las sociedades modernas. Con esta idea en mente, Polhemus y Proctor (1978) distinguen la «moda» y la «antimoda», en lugar de la prenda «de moda» y la «fija». Por consiguiente, añaden que la «antimoda» (por ejemplo, el traje popular) no es fijo e inmutable, sino que cambia lentamente, a menudo tan despacio que los cambios son casi imperceptibles para las propias personas (Polhemus y Proctor, 1978). Bell (1976), asimismo, contrasta el traje moderno y tradicional cuando compara la vestimenta europea desde el siglo XIV con la ropa tradicional china. Comenta que debe haber habido variaciones en el vestir de una dinastía a otra, pero que éstas no son tan espectaculares como las que encontramos en Europa, donde el vestido de moda se caracteriza por la «lógica del cambio por el cambio». Volviendo al argumento de la escarificación (Barnes y Eicher,

1992): aunque ciertos estilos estén abiertos al cambio, éstos no están regidos por la lógica del cambio regular y sistemático de la moda en Occidente; su aplicación del término «moda» en este contexto es, por lo tanto, inapropiada.

Craik (1993) también ha atacado lo que ella considera etnocentrismo por parte de los autores que aplican el término «moda» sólo a las comunidades occidentales. Al igual que Barnes y Eicher (1992), ella tampoco define a lo que se refiere por moda y éste es el punto más débil de su argumento. Lo más cerca que llega de una definición es a sugerir que «en resumen, el sistema de la moda occidental va a la par con el ejercicio del poder», lo cual, continúa diciendo, también sucede en otros sistemas de la moda de otras culturas no occidentales: «El ejercicio del poder no se puede asociar simplemente con el creciente desarrollo del capitalismo de consumo moderno» (Craik, 1993, pág. x). De este modo, está empleando una concepción bastante idiosincrásica y limitada de la moda que se centra en el poder y rechaza las otras características de la misma definidas por un gran número de historiadores y teóricos culturales. Prosigue rechazando la visión comúnmente aceptada de la moda como un sistema occidental del vestir alegando que se basa en privilegiar a la élite de las modas de la *alta costura* que poco o nada tienen que ver con la ropa de la calle que llevan la mayor parte de las personas en Occidente. Sin embargo, no depara en que la mayor parte de la literatura contemporánea sobre la moda ya no se ciñe sólo a la *alta costura*, sino que también incluye la ropa de todos los días o el «estilo de la calle» (Polhemus, 1994; Ash y Wilson, 1992). Resumiendo, la afirmación de Craik de que «los sistemas de la moda no deben ser confinados a conjuntos de arreglos particulares económicos o culturales» (1993, pág. x) no está cualificada y carece de fundamento, mientras que su propia concepción de la moda es vaga. Además, también se podría argüir que, al no deparar en las condiciones sociales e históricas específicas —incluyendo las condiciones de producción y consumo de la moda— que apuntalan el sistema de la moda, la que peca de etnocentrismo es ella, al universalizar la moda como un sistema de vestir que se encuentra en todas las culturas.

En resumen, las razones para considerar la moda como un sistema específico del vestir histórico y geográfico son rotundas y convincentes. Hay varias características que forman la definición comúnmente aceptada de la moda, tal como he dicho antes: es un sistema de vestir que se encuentra en sociedades donde la movilidad social es posible; cuenta con sus propias relaciones de producción y consumo, que una

vez más, se encuentran en todo tipo de sociedades; se caracteriza por una lógica de cambio regular y sistemático.

La ropa cotidiana y la moda

Tras haber señalado los términos principales que se utilizan —«vestirse» como una actividad de ataviar al cuerpo con un elemento estético (como en el «adorno») y la «moda» como un sistema específico de sistema de vestir—, ahora es posible hablar de la relación entre ambos. Una serie de autores, como Wilson (1985), ha dicho que el sistema de la moda proporciona la materia prima para la mayor parte de la ropa que se usa a diario, no sólo produciendo las prendas en sí, sino también los discursos y las ideas estéticas en torno a las mismas. Estos discursos de la moda sirven para presentar los trajes como algo con sentido, de hecho, como algo hermoso y deseable; según expone Rouse (1989), la moda es algo más que una mercancía, es un «atributo con el que algunos estilos están dotados. Para que un estilo particular de confección se convierta en moda ha de ser llevado por algunas personas y ser reconocido como tal» (1989, pág. 69).

La moda, por lo tanto, no sólo se refiere a la producción de algunos estilos de élite o populares, sino también a la producción de ideas estéticas que sirven para estructurar la recepción y el consumo de estilos. El «sistema de la moda», definido por Leopold (1992), no sólo comprende la fabricación y la provisión de ciertos estilos de confección, sino también la comercialización, venta al detalle y procesos culturales; todo esto sirve para producir «moda» y al hacerlo estructura casi todas las experiencias del vestir cotidiano, a excepción de algunas formas de prácticas del vestir que se encuentran en las comunidades tradicionales y algunas veces religiosas de Occidente. Esta influencia estructural es tan fuerte que, como arguye Wilson (1985), incluso el vestido etiquetado como «anticuado» y el que es conscientemente opuesto a la moda tienen un sentido sólo debido a su relación con la estética dominante propagada por la moda. La ropa «alternativa» es alternativa en relación a los estilos que prevalecen y también, como en algunos casos, en relación al estilo de vida. De hecho, la concepción de un «uniforme» alternativo fue una de las características importantes en muchos de los movimientos utópicos del siglo XIX cuyo fin, según Luck, era dar a sus miembros un «aire familiar» que «marcara la diferencia con los forasteros, actuando así como un poderoso indicador de los valores compartidos y de las fronteras de la comunidad» (1992, pág. 202). Las distintas reformas en el vestir del siglo XIX adoptaron estilos opuestos a la estética de la moda del momento: las campañas contra el corsé plantearon una alternativa, cintura «natural» para las mujeres, mientras que el traje bifurcado fue propuesto por algunos pensadores utópicos y feministas como una alternativa a las faldas de crinolina de su tiempo (Luck, 1992; Newton, 1974; Ribeiro, 1992; Steele, 1985).

Sin embargo, la moda no es el único determinante en el vestir cotidiano. Una de las tendencias en la literatura de la moda es poner demasiado énfasis en la misma como la principal fuerza determinante de la vestimenta en cualquier circunstancia. Aunque la moda sea importante para definir los estilos en un momento dado, éstos siempre están mediatizados por otros factores sociales como la clase, el género, la etnia, la edad, la ocupación, los ingresos y la forma del cuerpo, por nombrar unos pocos. No todas las modas son adoptadas por todos los públicos: en algunas ocasiones algunos aspectos de la moda pueden ser aceptados, mientras que otros son rechazados. Otros factores sociales importantes que influyen en las decisiones para la confección son los vínculos históricos con el traje tradicional nacional (por ejemplo, las faldas escocesas con sus típicos cuadros) y, en la vida cotidiana, con la situación o contexto social que uno tenga que frecuentar. Las distintas situaciones imponen diferentes formas de vestir, unas veces imponiendo «reglas» o códigos de vestir, otras simplemente mediante convenciones que aceptan la mayoría de las personas. Las bodas, los funerales, las entrevistas de trabajo, las compras, el senderismo, los deportes, las salidas nocturnas, etc., todas estas situaciones establecen formas concretas de vestirse y sirven para restringir las elecciones de indumentaria. Incluso cuando las personas eligen no tener en cuenta estos códigos del vestir, es probable que al menos sean conscientes de la presión a la que tendrán que hacer frente y que su decisión de no seguir las normas puede ser interpretada como una rebelión. Los factores que hemos enumerado no pretenden ser exhaustivos, sino que la intención es que sugieran algunos tipos de factores sociales que influyen en nuestra forma de vestir todos los días dentro del sistema de la moda. A continuación analizo con más detalle estos factores para demostrar cómo la moda es sólo un factor determinante más en el vestir.

Polhemus y Proctor (1978) han considerado las influencias sociales que inciden en el vestir tanto en la cultura occidental como en las no occidentales. Sugieren, por ejemplo, que la clase queda claramente definida por la indumentaria y que estas asociaciones clasistas no proceden ne-

cesariamente de la moda. Observan que las personas que pertenecen a las clases altas llevan prendas que señalan su identidad, adoptando su «propio traje antimoda tradicional» (1978, pág. 68). Ponen el ejemplo del traje para ir a la ópera en Glyndebourne, al que nunca se le puede asignar una fecha precisa. El simbolismo de la cualidad y del estilo clásico adoptado por la clase bien contradice la visión de que «la moda es la prerrogativa de la clase alta» (1978, pág. 68). También citan el Burberry, un ligero chubasquero, generalmente de tela de gabardina, cuyo estilo poco ha cambiado con el paso de los años, como un ejemplo de la predilección de esta clase por la «antimoda». A veces se dice que las clases medias una vez utilizaron la moda como arma para su ascenso social y que ahora cuentan con sus propios estilos de vestir que resisten la moda: por ejemplo, aunque ha cambiado un poco con los años, el estilo general de los hombres de negocios ha seguido siendo bastante coherente; igualmente, el estilo de clase media de Laura Ashley cambia poco cada temporada y no responde precisamente a las oscilaciones de la moda. Podría parecer que la clase es una característica del vestir y que desempeña una función para predisponer a las personas a estilos particulares, de los cuales no todos muestran el impulso de cambio de la moda, sino a veces todo lo contrario, el impulso de la continuidad de la antimoda. No obstante, el concepto de antimoda propuesto por Polhemus y Proctor, y su adopción por parte de una agrupación de clase social, sólo tiene sentido en relación con la moda. Dadas las arbitrarias oscilaciones de la moda, siempre es posible que un tema antimoda como el del Burberry pueda perder temporalmente parte de su asociación a una clase y se convierta en una moda más.

Es evidente que la clase tiene una relación material con la elección de la ropa. Concretamente, la clase tiende a determinar los ingresos y esto se ha de considerar como un factor en las elecciones de compra, de modo que, por ejemplo, sólo una minoría de las mujeres del mundo tienen los ingresos que se necesitan para comprar la alta costura (Colderidge, 1989) e incluso mucha ropa de confección sigue estando fuera del alcance de la mayoría de las personas. Sin embargo, la clase también estructura las decisiones en el vestir mediante el gusto. El gusto por las prendas de alta calidad tendrá una relación con la cantidad de dinero que se gaste: el concepto de la clase alta de «calidad y no cantidad» se reflejará no sólo en las decisiones sobre la cantidad gastada en artículos individuales, sino también en los tejidos elegidos (por ejemplo, seda, lino y cachemir, como opuestos a los sustitutos sintéticos). La predisposición a ciertos tipos de tejidos y el concepto de «calidad» puede venir explicada por la idea de «capital cultural» (Bourdieu, 1984). Saber lo que cuenta como calidad y reconocerla en las prendas de los demás requiere un conocimiento en la forma de «capital cultural». De hecho, en una época en la que todo el mundo lleva tejanos y ropa informal, lo que hace que la clase sea más difícil de discernir en el vestir, se podría alegar que existen graduaciones más sutiles de diferencias que exigen un grado aún mayor de capital cultural. Los que están «enterados» es fácil que distingan un traje de Savile Row de uno de un minorista, un traje de un diseñador de su imitación barata en la calle. El gusto está estrechamente vinculado al cuerpo, en realidad, es una experiencia corporal, puesto que hablar de tener ganas de comer algo en particular o de comprar una prenda es referirse a las cualidades sensoriales del objeto en sí. Los orientadores del gusto de las clases son, en parte, orientadores corporales. Estos orientadores corporales están incluidos en el concepto de *habitus* de Bourdieu que hace referencia a las disposiciones corporales de clases. Este concepto, tratado con más detenimiento en los capítulos 1 y 4, es empleado por Bourdieu para transmitir la idea de que la clase social es reproducida mediante las disposiciones corporales. Todas las clases tienen sus propias formas de habitar el cuerpo, andando, hablando, con los gestos y posturas, etc., que transmiten información sutil sobre su condición. Aunque él no lo mencione, esto se puede aplicar de igual modo a la indumentaria: un gusto por el lino, la seda o el cachemir finos conllevan indicaciones sutiles de la clase que se pueden usar para considerarse a uno mismo como «distinguido» o persona de «buen gusto».

Los grupos de compañeros y en particular las subculturas juveniles también desempeñan su función al predisponer a sus miembros a estilos concretos de vestirse e implican el despliegue del «capital subcultural» en la interpretación y comprensión del estilo (Thornton, 1995). Tal como observa Brake (1985), el estilo es importante para destacar la identidad subcultural de un grupo, no sólo para los que se encuentran dentro de la subcultura, sino también para los de fuera. En su ya clásico estudio de las subculturas juveniles, Hebdige (1979) considera el importante papel desempeñado por el estilo en la subcultura. Observa que la subcultura saquea la cultura de consumo, adoptando ciertas mercancías como propias, con frecuencia hasta el punto en que éstas se convierten en algo simbólico para el grupo: el *scooter* para los *mods*, los imperdibles o las ropas rasgadas de los *punks*. Este saqueo o «apropiación» muestra cómo la subcultura «infunde» sus propios significados en estos elementos, a menudo corrompiendo su significado origi-

nal en la cultura principal. La adopción por parte de los *teddy boys* del traje pantalón de Savile Row es un ejemplo de un estilo de vestir «infundido» con un significado bastante distinto al de su asociación original como prenda de la clase social alta. El *zoot suit* en el cuerpo del *teddy boy*, se convirtió en una amenazadora agresión de la clase trabajadora (Cosgrove, 1989).

Otro aspecto en la elección de vestimenta es el que procede de la ocupación. Aunque puede que esto no afecte a todas las decisiones tomadas sobre la prenda, sólo las que pertenecen a las de uso diario, esta experiencia de vestirse puede suponer una significativa cantidad de tiempo, energía y gasto. Muchas ocupaciones dentro de las clases trabajadoras o bajas prescriben un uniforme o dictan claras normas sobre el vestir, restringiendo los tipos de prendas y colores aptos para el trabajo. Por otra parte, las profesiones, suelen operar con códigos de vestir menos rígidos que se dejan en manos del individuo para que éste los interprete. Tal como se muestra en mi análisis de las opciones de vestir de las mujeres profesionales (Entwistle, 2000), los distintos entornos ocupacionales proponen distintos códigos de vestir: en la jurisprudencia y en la banca tenderán a no conceder demasiada importancia a la moda, como sucede en las profesiones creativas y de los medios de comunicación. Dentro de estas restricciones, las mujeres profesionales interpretan lo que es o no es apropiado llevar en el trabajo.

Por último, aunque los factores sociales de los que hemos hablado hasta el momento mediaticen las prendas cotidianas, no producen un único y uniforme método de vestir para una clase en particular o grupo ocupacional o paritario. La mayoría de las personas no llevan la misma ropa en todas las ocasiones, sino que adaptan su forma de vestir al contexto social en el que se encuentran. Éste es el caso de algunas subculturas, como los *mods*, quienes, como sugiere Hebdige (1979), adaptaron su ropa a las exigencias de su trabajo (generalmente administrativo) y a las del «fin de semana» cuando podían dedicar mayor atención a actividades subculturales como el vestir. Por consiguiente, la situación social desempeña un importante papel en estructurar las opciones del vestir.

Ahora pasaré a hablar del género, que quizá sea el único factor más importante en las prácticas del vestir en casi todas las situaciones donde encontramos cuerpos vestidos. La moda está «obsesionada con el género [...], está siempre trabajando y rehaciendo las barrera del género» (Wilson, 1985, pág. 117) y por ende cualquier consideración del vestir no puede dejar a un lado el reconocimiento de género. Esto se

tratará con más detalle en el capítulo 5, pero es importante que aquí observemos que es difícil considerar el género como una categoría separada de la clase, del grupo paritario y de la ocupación, puesto que el concepto de género es constituido de modo distinto por cada uno de ellos y también según los contextos sociales. Los códigos de género varían enormemente, según todo el tipo de factores que operen en un contexto. La falda, por ejemplo, es la prenda con más carga genérica, que llevada casi exclusivamente por mujeres, al menos en Occidente, con frecuencia es explícitamente obligada en ciertos códigos de vestir, por ejemplo, en la de algunos restaurantes exclusivos y clubes nocturnos donde se supone que las mujeres han de estar «femeninas», o impuesta de una forma más sutil por la convención social como en el caso de ciertas profesiones, por ejemplo, en los negocios, en la política o en la jurisprudencia, donde se «prefiere» la falda. Sin embargo, también es posible para algunas mujeres no llevar nunca falda si su profesión y estilo de vida no lo exige, mientras que en una serie de distintos continentes las faldas las llevan los hombres (en una ceremonia oficial en Escocia, en una «noche *drag*» en un club, en un acontecimiento de moda de vanguardia, etc.). Si la moda está «obsesionada con el género» y juega constantemente con la frontera del sexo, justamente el hecho de *cómo* lo hace y cómo el género se codifica en el vestir es algo muy variable y que depende de los factores que operan en el contexto social. El género se refracta a través de estos múltiples factores y se produce de modo distinto en situaciones distintas.

La discusión anterior indica la complejidad de la moda y la necesidad de emplear un análisis de la misma que examine las interacciones entre la moda y toda una serie de factores sociales. Para comprender el vestir en la vida cotidiana es necesario reconocer una amplia gama de factores sociales que enmarcan las decisiones individuales sobre las prendas, entre los cuales la moda es importante, pero en modo alguno el único factor.

Visiones sobre la moda y el vestir

Sociología y moda

> El descuido sociológico de la moda refleja la ubicación histórica de la misma dentro de las artes más que dentro de las ciencias sociales, aunque la consideración más superficial de la moda demuestra su importancia so-

ciológica como fenómeno individual y social, activo aunque estructurado, creativo pero controlado: en resumen, un perfecto ejemplo de estructura y acción (Edwards, 1997, pág. 1).

Tal como señala la cita de Edwards, la moda ha sido durante mucho tiempo descuidada por la sociología, hecho que él explica en términos de su ubicación histórica en las artes. Este olvido es sorprendente cuando se considera que la moda ha sido importante en el desarrollo y en el carácter de la modernidad occidental y que hoy en día sigue siendo una industria de considerable valor económico y cultural. Además, cuando consideramos lo importante que es la moda al delimitar nuestras elecciones diarias de qué ropa ponernos, hasta qué grado es una influencia estructural primordial en la presentación del cuerpo todos los días, es bastante evidente que la sociología la ha desatendido mucho.

Las razones por las que la sociología no ha abordado la moda y las formas de vestir cotidianas que pueden verse en Occidente no están claras. Sin embargo, una explicación posible quizá sea que desde sus comienzos en el siglo XIX, la sociología ha tendido a enfocarse en la acción y en la racionalidad, hecho que supuso la subsiguiente represión del cuerpo como un objeto de investigación sociológica y por ende el rechazo de las prácticas, tales como el vestirse, que lo rodean (Benthall, 1976; Berthelot, 1991; Turner, 1985). Por otra parte, tal como sugiere Polhemus (1988), la sociedad occidental ha considerado que la decoración y el adorno del cuerpo no era importante, que era algo efímero sin sentido, que no merecía un análisis serio. La moda también ha estado sujeta a los prejuicios que evitan que se la tome en serio; ha sido vista como algo trivial, frívolo, irracional, un despilfarro y algo feo. Bell arguye: «La aparente trivialidad de tales asuntos, la imposibilidad virtual de vincular nuestras decisiones sartoriales con las grandes pasiones espirituales de la humanidad, hacen que la ropa no sea sino más importante para aquellos que intentan comprender a sus compañeros humanos» (1976, págs. 16-17).

Incluso varios de los estudios clásicos que han intentado tratar la moda de una forma seria han sido presa de algunos de estos prejuicios (Baudrillard, 1981; Flügel, 1930; Veblen, 1953; véase también Wilson, 1985 para una explicación al respecto). Un ingrediente adicional que hace que la moda sea más propensa a la condena es su conexión con la «vanidad». Éste es un ejemplo de cómo la moda suele ser el tema de la discusión moral y de la censura. Sin embargo, tal como Bell (1976) y McDowell (1992) especialmente señalan, este componente moral es

un testimonio en sí mismo del poder y la importancia del vestir en el mundo social: «El hecho de que la moda sufra la carga de tantos condicionantes morales es una prueba de su poder e importancia dentro de la sociedad». Y, sin embargo: «En clara contradicción con este hecho, muchos autores han persistido en denigrar el interés en la moda como prueba de vanidad, o de algo peor, y critican a quienes demuestran algo más que un interés pasajero en el aspecto físico» (1992, pág. 15). A pesar de la influencia del posmodernismo, que ha servido para volver a evaluar las antiguas jerarquías de valores culturales, estos prejuicios todavía persisten y la moda sigue siendo el tema de la condena moral y estética (Baudrillard, 1981; Veblen, 1953).

Otra explicación para la baja posición que ocupa la moda frente al análisis sociológico, según Polhemus (1988) y Tseëlon (1997), es su asociación con lo «femenino». El sujeto (¿u objeto?) de la moda se suele considerar que es la mujer que cae presa de las «terribles» delicias de la moda. Por otra parte, Polhemus (1988) arguye que las metas consideradas «frívolas» o «estúpidas» suelen asociarse con las mujeres. Hasta aproximadamente los ochenta, las prácticas de consumo relacionadas con las mujeres fueron omitidas o tratadas con sorna. Una serie de feministas, concretamente las asociadas con los estudios culturales, ha señalado que, dentro de la Academia, la conducta de la consumidora femenina, como la lectura de las novelas románticas o el gusto por los culebrones, ha sido tradicionalmente degradada a absurda y trivial (por ej.: Ang, 1985; Radway, 1987). Por inferencia, condenar la moda como algo trivial, absurdo y banal ha supuesto la condena implícita de las mujeres y de la cultura de la mujer (Tseëlon, 1997). Parte de esta condena de la moda procede de las feministas que no han pretendido criticar a las mujeres que llevan la moda, sino calificar la relación de la mujer con la moda como una explotación. Este tipo de crítica ha sido dirigida a ciertas prendas, como el corsé, que algunas feministas consideran opresivo (Roberts, 1977). Además de las críticas médicas y estéticas del corsé proclamadas por el Movimiento de Reforma en la Vestimenta, las voces feministas se han alzado contra él (véanse Kunzle, 1982; Newton, 1974; Steele, 1985, para un resumen de estas argumentaciones). La teoría feminista se ha vuelto bastante más confusa en el tema de la relación de la mujer con la moda, pero al menos ha empezado a reconocer el placer que aporta a las mujeres (Evans y Thornton, 1989; Wilson, 1985).

La moda, tal como arguye Edwards (1997), trata del individuo y de la sociedad, es una fuerza creativa por una parte y un fenómeno es-

tructurado (y estructurador) por la otra, y tiene razón al señalar que sólo estos hechos hacen de ella una perfecta candidata para la sociología, que tradicionalmente se ha centrado en los temas de la estructura y de la acción. Sin embargo, estas cuestiones no han sido el centro de los estudios sobre la moda en las disciplinas que la han estudiado, puesto que los escritos sobre moda, desde la historia del arte, el psicoanálisis y la psicología social hasta los estudios culturales tienden a enfocarse en otros temas. Las investigaciones sobre la moda y el vestir en estas áreas se han preocupado de varias cuestiones, por ejemplo: ¿cómo y por qué cambia la moda como lo hace? (asunto de interés común en la historia de la indumentaria) o ¿qué significa la moda y de qué forma de comunicación se trata? (asunto de interés común en la psicología social y también en los estudios culturales). Existe, sin embargo, una tendencia en la literatura sobre la moda a buscar una teoría general o una explicación que se extralimite para justificar su presencia en la sociedad occidental. Esto con frecuencia conduce a explicaciones reduccionistas que niegan la complejidad de la moda. A mi entender, el estudio de la moda tiene que analizar el modo en que las fuerzas sociales que delimitan la vestimenta —como el sistema de la moda, la ubicación social, la clase, los ingresos, el género, la etnia, la región y la ocupación— estructuran la ropa que llevamos a diario. Es decir, abogo por un estudio de la moda *y* del vestir que analice cómo se relacionan ambos: cómo la moda estructura la ropa y cómo la ropa siempre supone la interpretación creativa de la moda por parte de las personas. Dicho estudio da por hecho el argumento de Edwards de que la moda es un fenómeno que abarca al agente y a la estructura y contrarrestaría la tendencia hacia la generalización y la simplificación característica de la literatura actual.

Sobre la literatura de la moda

Hablar sobre la literatura de la moda implica atravesar muchas barreras disciplinarias. La diversidad de disciplinas y criterios dentro de la literatura son un testimonio más de la reivindicación de Leopold de que la moda es un «sujeto híbrido» (1992, pág. 101). La moda es tratada como un aspecto de la industria, de la fabricación, de la comercialización, del diseño y la estética, del consumo del estilo de vida. Ha llamado la atención de teóricos de distintos campos que actúan bajo puntos de vistas muy distintos. El grado de interés que ha despertado

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la moda entre las múltiples disciplinas hace que el relativo silencio de la sociología sea aún más inquietante. Tal como he dicho anteriormente, la antropología ha tratado la indumentaria con más seriedad, como una característica universal de la cultura humana, aunque centre más su atención en la vestimenta no occidental. El análisis de la ropa occidental, concretamente el desarrollo de la moda, ha sido desarrollado por una serie de disciplinas, algunas estrechamente relacionadas con la sociología. Una rama principal es la historia de la indumentaria, que se desarrolló a raíz de la historia del arte como medio para datar las pinturas. Esta rama de la literatura investiga el desarrollo de los estilos y las técnicas del vestir, por lo general de la alta costura y de las modas de élite, y es muy descriptiva (por ej.: Gorsline, 1991; Kohler, 1963; Ribeiro, 1983; Tarrant, 1994). De esta literatura han surgido los estudios culturales y sociales como los de Breward (1994), De la Haye (1988) y Hollander (1993, 1994), que intentan realizar un análisis del contexto cultural de la moda, y los de Taylor y Wilson (1989), que examinan los estilos de vestir desde la era victoriana hasta la actualidad, centrándose en lo que ha llevado la gente «ordinaria». Otra rama de la literatura de la moda incluye historias y relatos contemporáneos sobre los aspectos económicos y tecnológicos del sistema de la moda (por ej.: Leopold, 1992; Fine y Leopold, 1993) y esos relatos (por ej.: Chapkis y Enloe, 1984; Coyle, 1982; Elson, 1984; Phizacklea, 1990; Ross, 1997) que examinan la explotación de los trabajadores dentro del sistema de la moda. Los estudios culturales ahora también indagan en el sistema de la moda contemporáneo (Ash y Wright, 1988; Ash y Wilson, 1992; Davis, 1992; Craik, 1993) así como en la naturaleza de las representaciones de la moda (Brooks, 1989; Evans y Thornton, 1989, Lewis, 1996, Nixon, 1996). Este trabajo ha sido enmarcado en una serie de perspectivas teóricas: el análisis materialista marxista (Leopold, 1992), el estructuralismo (Barthes, 1985), la semiótica (Hebdige, 1979), el psicoanálisis (Flügel, 1930; Lewis y Rolley, 1997; Nixon, 1996; Silverman, 1986), la psicología social (Soloman, 1985; Tseëlon, 1997) y el postestructuralismo (Entwistle, 1997a, 1997b; Nixon, 1996; Wilson, 1992).

Me gustaría investigar las distintas perspectivas que existen en relación con la moda. En la literatura podemos observar tres visiones, definidas no por la disciplina sino por los tipos de preguntas que formulan y por el enfoque teórico y metodológico que han seguido. La primera comienza con preguntas como: ¿por qué se lleva ropa?, interrogantes que suelen conducir a respuestas simplistas. Un segundo criterio dentro de la literatura aborda un análisis más sofisticado al explorar la re-

ción de la moda con la «modernidad». Estas perspectivas teóricas, nque amplias de miras, no ofrecen una explicación sobre cómo se *exrimenta* y *practica* la moda en el vestir cotidiano. Proporcionan una plicación teórica de la *moda* cuya consecuencia es el descuido del *stir* como práctica. En general, también suelen fracasar en abordar el odo en que la moda está íntimamente conectada con el cuerpo; tratan moda como un fenómeno social y comunicativo, pero no corporal. El rcer criterio no se preocupa tanto de las explicaciones teóricas como examinar las prácticas específicas del vestirse en una cultura. Este terés en la práctica se puede hallar en algunas de las recientes obras tropológicas (Barnes y Eicher, 1992; Freeman, 1993; Hoodfar, 1991; einer y Schneider, 1991), donde se examina la importancia cultural, s significados y prácticas relacionadas con el adorno, así como en la icología social (Cash, 1985; Ericksen y Joseph, 1985; Tseëlon, 1992a, 97), que observa lo que hace la gente y lo que quiere transmitir con forma de vestir en la vida cotidiana. Sin embargo, son de valor limilo para una explicación de la moda en Occidente.

ITERIOS TEÓRICOS I: LOS «POR QUÉ» Y SUS RESPUESTAS

Las primeras explicaciones sobre la moda y el vestir, y de hecho mbién muchas contemporáneas, solían empezar con preguntas mo: ¿por qué llevamos ropa? También planteaban preguntas sobre naturaleza de la moda: ¿por qué el sistema de la moda se basa en el mbio continuo?, ¿por qué cambian las modas de esta forma?, ¿por é hay esa diferencia entre hombres y mujeres? El análisis de estas eguntas es bastante revelador respecto al modo en que se ha teorizasobre la moda y también pueden demostrar que el pensamiento so- la misma ha tenido una tendencia limitadora, lo que ha dado como ultado una teoría simplista sobre el vestir o la moda en su pretenn de querer abarcarlo todo. El resultado neto de este tipo de prentas es la reducción de la moda a simples causas y efectos y a excaciones exageradamente deterministas y reductoras.

plicaciones teóricas del vestir y del adorno

Como respuesta a por qué nos adornamos, la antropología ha prosto varias explicaciones distintas: protección, modestia, exhibicio-

nismo y comunicación, cada una de ellas más inclusiva que la anterior. Barnard (1996), Polhemus y Proctor (1978) y también Rouse (1989) ofrecen buenos resúmenes de estos distintos criterios y empiezan por observar las primeras influencias del antropólogo de finales del siglo XIX, Malinowski, que planteó la pregunta más limitada: ¿por qué llevamos ropa? Una respuesta es que los seres humanos tienen necesidades básicas, de las cuales una de las más fundamentales es la de proteger el cuerpo de los elementos. Sin embargo, esta teoría es problemática: en algunas culturas las personas no llevan ropa y, de hecho, tal como observa Rouse (1989), muchas de ellas pueden sobrevivir en temperaturas extremas sin la protección de la ropa. Esto se puede aplicar tanto a la ropa en Occidente como a las culturas no occidentales: las prendas reducidas se llevan por moda, con frecuencia independientemente de que haya temperaturas gélidas. Polhemus y Proctor (1978) y Rouse (1989) observan, pues, que esta explicación no tiene en cuenta el hecho de que muchos estilos de vestir, tanto en Occidente como en culturas tradicionales y no occidentales, no son prácticos y con frecuencia son incómodos.

La segunda explicación que se ha expuesto es la de la modestia: la ropa se lleva para cubrir los órganos sexuales. Sin embargo, las pruebas antropológicas muestran que no existe un concepto universal de modestia, sino un alto grado de variabilidad cultural, lo cual hace que este principio resulte problemático para basarse en él. Tal como observa Rouse (1989), la modestia y la vergüenza son relativas según el contexto social. La literatura psicológica también se ha preguntado la razón por la que llevamos ropa y ha intentado explicar el hecho en términos de procesos psicológicos. El trabajo de Flügel (1930) en esta área constituye el texto clásico. No rechaza las dos teorías de la protección y de la modestia, pero propone una tercera que puede ser más significativa, el propósito de adornarse y exhibirse. La ropa no se lleva para esconder los mensajes sexuales, sino para hacernos sexualmente más atractivos. El autor adapta la visión psicoanalítica de Freud y prosigue sugiriendo que la ropa expresa dos tendencias contradictorias, la de la modestia y la de la ostentación, y también arguye que la ropa en sí misma (como la corbata masculina) puede simbolizar el órgano sexual. De este modo, los vestidos expresan una ambivalencia y esto le conduce a insinuar que «la utilización de indumentaria parece, en sus aspectos psicológicos, reflejar el proceso por el que se desarrolla un síntoma neurótico» (Flügel, 1930, pág. 20). La ropa, para Flügel, constituye «un sonrojo perpetuo en la apariencia de la humanidad

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Lurie, Alison (2000), The Language of Clothes, New York: Henry Holt & Co., pp. 230-261.

IX

FASHION AND SEX

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness.

—ROBERT HERRICK

As well as telling us whether people are male or female, clothes can tell us whether or not they are interested in sex, and if so what sort of sex they are interested in. This information, of course, may be more or less disguised. Clothes worn on the job, for instance, are supposed to downplay rather than flaunt sexuality, and to conceal any specialized erotic tastes completely. In reality even the most sedate costume may contain erotic clues, but anyone who dresses for work as if he or she were about to go out on the town is likely to arouse unfriendly gossip or worse.

On social occasions, on the other hand, any relatively young person who is not dressed to attract will lose face. As a result, bright, "sexy" clothes are sometimes worn by people who want to be admired and even loved, but have little interest in getting it on with anyone. Occasionally certain details of costume suggest their true feelings: the cuffs of the raincoat are tightly buckled and the ends of the straps fastidiously tucked in; the crimson shirt open nearly to the waist reveals not only a gold chain but a plain, discouraging-looking white cotton undershirt or bra; the strings of the semitransparent gauze blouse or the laces of the fashionable soft suede shoes are tied in a hard double knot.

Antisexual clothes may also be imposed by an external

Nineteenth-century English missionaries, horrified by the nakedness and free eroticism of the South Sea Islanders, hastened to provide them with "decent"—i.e., antisexual—clothing.

authority. The Mother Hubbards supplied by missionaries to cover the nakedness of South Sea islanders are a classic example, and school uniforms even today—especially those of girls—often seem designed to discourage erotic interest. Prison dress may serve the same purpose. Frequently, as Rachel Kemper notes, the "elegantly turned-out prostitute, thrown in the slammer, is issued black oxfords with Cuban heels, ankle socks, plain cotton dresses, and underwear with bras laundered flat and useless." Other prisoners, both male and female, may undergo the same sort of humiliation.

As Herrick points out, looseness and disorder in dress are erotically appealing. Soft, flowing, warm-hued clothes traditionally suggest a warm, informal, affectionate personality, and the garment that is partially unfastened not only reveals more flesh but implies that total nakedness will be easily achieved. Excessive neatness, on the other hand, suggests an excessively well-controlled, possibly repressed personality. Tight, bundled-up or buttoned-up clothes (if not figure-revealing) are felt to contain a tight, erotically held-in person. Hard, crisp fabrics—gabardines, starched cottons and stiff synthetics—also seem to deny sensuality, and so do grayed, dull colors. When drab-colored clothes are both unusually tight and unusually neat, observers will suspect not only sexual disinterest but impotence or frigidity.

A positive attitude toward sex can also be obvious or subtle. The young and naïve may appear in skintight jeans and T-shirts bearing the message HAPPINESS IS A WARM PUSSY; older and more sophisticated persons will convey the same sort of message in less blatant ways. And those whose erotic interests are unusual or even forbidden will send out sartorial signals that are invisible except to those who know the code.

FABRIC, FUR AND SKIN

The most sensual aspect of a garment is the material of which it is made. To some extent, fabric always stands for the skin of the person beneath it: if it is strikingly slick or woolly, rough or smooth, thick or thin, we unconsciously attribute these characteristics to its wearer. The man in the heavy, coarse wool pants and shirt, for instance, is assumed to be "thick-skinned" in the colloquial sense of the term: emotionally tough and perhaps callous. The man in the light-weight shantung suit is assumed to be "thin-skinned": sensitive, possibly touchy.

One of the oldest sartorial messages is the wearing of animal skins. Primitive hunters dressed in the hides of the beasts they had killed in order to take on the magical nature of the bear, the wolf or the tiger. Even today men and women in animal pelts are not only conspicuously consuming, they are also presenting themselves as animals. How seriously this claim is to be taken depends on the species of skin. To wear leather is not usually to assert that one is a cow, a calf or a bull, though occasionally the latter meaning may cling to a pair of chaps or a fringed jacket. More often, cowhide merely suggests the idea of sensual contact with the skin of the wearer; depending on the way the hide has been treated, it may present this skin as slick and tough like a motorcyclist's black leather jacket, or as soft and fuzzy like a suede dress. Less common hides may have more complex meanings. A deerskin jacket or vest, for instance, might suggest a wilderness romance, while one of alligator, snake or lizard might

Pornographic magazines for masochists are full of good-looking women in black leather clothing and boots, and any outfit of this material, even when well covered up and stylishly cut, has these overtones. Honor Blackman, judo expert and one of the stars of the British TV series The Avengers.

During the twenties and thirties stylish women appeared even on very warm days wearing the skins of foxes, complete with head, legs and tail. They might be wound round the neck, or draped casually over the shoulder like a hunter's trophy. Appropriately enough, one of the most fashionable female names of the time was Diana. London, 1934.

predict an expensive, somewhat cold-blooded and muddy encounter. Reptilian shoes and handbags, however, may convey nothing more chilling than excess wealth.

VENUS IN FURS

Fur is more likely than leather to turn its wearer into an animal symbolically. Sometimes the message is simple: the Russian in his bearskin hat and overcoat is a Russian bear; the girl going to her first dance in a new mouton coat is a lamb going to market. At other times it is unlikely that the fur-clad one wants to be credited with the characteristics of a particular beast. The self-centered viciousness of the mink, the obsessive industriousness of the beaver, the noisy maternal ardor of the seal are not necessarily to be expected from women (or men) clothed in their hides—though cases of such mimicry certainly exist. For one thing, most purchasers of fur coats are unfamiliar with the behavior of the beasts from which they come: all they want to say is "I am a very expensive animal."

The personality of some fur-bearing animals, however, is so well established in popular tradition that it cannot help but form part of the sartorial message. The timidity and philoprogenitiveness of the rabbit tends to transfer itself to those who wear coats made of rabbit fur, even when it is dyed brown or black and called "coney." Women who wear such coats are often expected to be bunnies in something like the *Playboy* sense: to be slightly (though charmingly) silly, sexually eager and apt to have a great many children (or, given current medical advances, a great many pregnancies).

The fox, on the other hand, is in popular tradition wily, courageous and independent, and the woman who wears its pelt is assumed to share some of these qualities—to be a "foxy lady." This fur became popular during the 1920s, when foxlike qualities were beginning to seem attractive in a female; it was in 1925, for instance, that David Garnett's witty novel *Lady into Fox* became an international best seller. The current use of the term "fox" for an attractive woman

also dates from this era. A few years later there was a vogue for cloth coats topped with huge fox collars that concealed most of the face: in them the Depression woman looked out on a dog-eat-dog world from a mask of fur like a hunted but clever and resourceful animal.

Two particular uses of fur in women's costume deserve special mention: One is the practice, common in the 1930s and 1940s, of wearing round the neck one or more animal skins (usually fox, sometimes mink) complete with legs, tail and head—with the sharp little teeth bared, the glass eyes beady. It is not clear whether the fox or mink represented the animal nature of the woman who wore it, or whether it was a kind of trophy representing the man or men she had captured, hung round her neck in the primitive manner, as in some portraits of Diana the Huntress.

Another very symbolic fur piece was the muff, which became fashionable in the early nineteenth century and remained popular until World War II. At first muffs were made of swansdown or of expensive furs such as sable, bearskin and chinchilla. After swans had become a protected species, and all furs were expensive, the muff was more likely to be of lamb, sealskin or mink. As is clear from the ancient vulgar meaning of the word "muff," the woman who carried one was carrying a visible symbol of her private parts, which she represented as furry, soft, delicate and warm. On a cold day a favored man might be invited to place his hand in his companion's muff, encouraging him to hope for a similar but less symbolic opportunity in the future.

To wear fur may imply that beneath your civilized exterior you are a wild animal. As the ancient vulgar meaning of the word suggests, the fur muff, *or boa, is a particularly pointed symbol.* Portrait of Sonia, *1890, by Henri Fantin-Latour.*

THE DECORATED BODY: TANNING AND TATTOOING

In addition to wearing the skins of animals, men and women can alter their own hides to increase (or decrease) their sexual charm. First, they may change the color of their skin, bleaching or darkening it to suit current standards of beauty. For many centuries a tan was the sign of someone who worked out of doors; it therefore indicated lower-class status. Ladies and gentlemen had pale complexions; indeed, the whiter a lady's skin was, the more beautiful she was consid-

ered to be. As a result women and even men took pains to avoid exposure to sunshine: the Victorian bonnet and parasol, for example, were not only decorative and symbolic, they also served as sunshades.

By the early twentieth century, however, many low-status jobs involved working long hours indoors, with only two weeks' vacation each year. A deep overall tan implied that you had the time and money to lie in the sun. If you lived in the northern United States, Canada or Britain, it was especially prestigious during the winter months, since it suggested expensive southern travel. A tan was also considered erotic, partly because it suggested healthy outdoor exercise, which in this century has usually been a turn-on, and partly because of the British and North American folk belief that people with darker skins (Latins, Arabs, Blacks) are more highly sexed.

The sun tan as a fashion, according to social historians, was invented by Gabrielle Chanel in 1920, and the first fashionable tans were acquired on the French Riviera. Within a few years almost no romantic hero was without one. Heroines remained divinely fair for a while longer, but by the 1930s many of them, too, had a golden or even darker skin, like Nicole Diver in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* (1934), of whom it is reported that "her back, a ruddy, orange brown, set off by a string of creamy pearls, shone in the sun." In the southern United States and the British Colonies, however, sun tans never really caught on. When you have a hot climate, a large dark-skinned laboring population and a rural economy in which most physical work takes place out of doors, there is no status advantage to a browner skin.

When the Beautiful People of the twenties and thirties oiled themselves all over and lay scorching on the sands of Nice, Miami Beach or Santa Monica, they did not realize that in thirty or forty years they would be cracked and wrinkled and aged before their time like old turkeys, or that they were greatly increasing their chances of getting skin cancer. As these turkeys came home to roost in the sixties and seventies, very deep tans became less fashionable, and today a medium beige is the preferred color.

A more painful but potentially less harmful method of

altering the skin is by tattooing. Traditionally, this art is practiced mainly on working-class men, especially sailors; but a surprising number of women—even on occasion aristocratic ones—turn out on close acquaintance to have a rose or butterfly engraved in some private spot. Besides the initial pain, the main disadvantage of tattooing is that it blurs with time, so that the design begins to look like a colored ink drawing held under a faucet. It is also difficult to remove if you enter another stratum of society or break up with the person whose name, surrounded by hearts and flowers, is inscribed upon your body. Small visible tattoos on a middle-class person suggest a wild and adventurous past, and often service in the Navy or Merchant Marine; many men and women, according to my research, find them sexually stimulating. Larger and more elaborate designs, especially those Japanese-style tattoos that cover most of the chest or back and contain many interlocked figures, are less popular: one of my informants remarked that it was like making love to an Oriental rug.

PAINT AND POWDER

The easiest way to decorate your skin is with cosmetics. In previous centuries it was not uncommon for men as well as women to use them discreetly; today only females are supposed to paint themselves, though the late Earl Mountbatten was observed to have used rouge and a blue rinse. More conventional men may smear their skins with greases or astringents, or choose to smell like leopards or old leather; or rather, like an idealized realization of these smells, as anybody will realize who has ever been in a stable or the cat house at the zoo. To counteract the suspicion of effeminacy, male cosmetics are always sold in a very macho manner, as Robert Brain has noted:

> [Manufacturers] tend to appeal to the warrior, the he-man, in selling cosmetics to men; scents and creams and aftershaves are advertised by boxers, footballers and cricketers. Men are told that the products will make them feel bold, brash, rugged, commanding, vigorous, brisk and stimulating.

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This boldness, brashness and so forth is artificial in every sense. As has often been pointed out, cosmetics and perfumes and soaps actually cover up or wash away the natural odors of the human body that once served as sexual signals. We are being conditioned to reject the very smells that once turned us on, and to demand that human beings exude a vegetable or chemical odor.

Female make-up is conventionally thought of as a means of disguising age and imperfections. In fact, it only does this partially; its main effect is to create the appearance of erotic arousal: the wide eyes, the swollen, reddened lips, the flushing of the skin. Make-up has also been used to give the illusion that a face conforms to the current ideal. As a result, a large majority of twenties women appeared to have pouting, bee-stung mouths. When fashions matured during the Depression and World War II women showed their sophisticated skepticism by narrowing their eyes and permanently arching their eyebrows. In the sixties, when the world began to change again, eyes grew unnaturally large and round with surprise, an effect increased by the dark shadows and long sticky lashes that surrounded them. As fashions became more freaky, lips turned pale brown and then pale pink or white, finally disappearing almost entirely; for a while women were simply all eyes, like the pathetic children in sidewalk art shows. Under the influence of the back-to-nature and women's liberation movements of the seventies many women abandoned make-up altogether. Today it seems to be making a comeback, though it is still scorned by some of the young and by almost all serious feminists.

An excess of hair, both on the head and on the body, suggests animality; some women, and a few men, claim to find it highly erotic in the opposite sex. Photograph by Don Snyder.

THE HAIRY APE AND THE PLASTIC DOLL

One of the most common signs of an active sexuality has always been the display of hair. Among men, though the hair style is primarily a political and social indicator (as suggested earlier), it often has a secondary erotic meaning. Monks and priests have traditionally shaved off most of their hair or cropped it short as a sign of celibacy and self-

restraint. Perhaps that is why a shiny bare scalp has seldom been found erotically attractive, even though we are told by scientists that male baldness is associated with a good supply of male hormones. Luxuriantly fuzzy or silky beards, and loose Byronic curls, on the other hand, are often associated in the popular mind with a passionate nature. The deliberate exposure of male body hair (especially on the chest) is also considered a sign of sexual vigor, though not all women (or men) are attracted by the Hairy Ape type.

In most societies the fact that adult females have hair on their bodies is taken for granted and even appreciated. In Britain and North America, however, such growth has traditionally been strongly disapproved, and rigorously disposed of by shaving, waxing and electrolysis. (Even pubic hair has been seen as undesirable: John Ruskin, the Victorian art historian, is said to have been repelled to the point of impotence when, on his wedding night, he discovered that his wife was not as smooth as a marble statue.) To contemporary feminists this attitude is a form of patriarchal oppression, part of the male demand that women transform themselves into painted plastic dolls. Supporters of ecological action, organic gardening and herbal medicine are also very likely to view body hair as a natural crop. Today, therefore, it is not uncommon to see women whose underarms and legs show a flourishing growth. By checking the rest of their getup it is possible to classify them as either (a) foreigners; (b) serious feminists; or (c) supporters of the counterculture. Ladies with stubbly armpits and prickly legs, on the other hand, if not in the process of transformation into one of the above roles, are considered simply careless and untidy.

RAPUNZEL AND CO.

Long hair has always been an important, indeed a legendary attribute of femininity. It is a characteristic of fairy-tale heroines, including Rapunzel, whose locks were so long and so thick that the witch and the prince could climb them like a gym rope. Long, luxuriant hair is the traditional mark of

Long, thick, loose hair is a traditional sign of female sexuality, and it has been celebrated as such by artists of every time and place. In the mid-nineteenth century rippling waves like these were especially admired. Portrait of Jo (La Belle Irlandaise), *1866, by Gustave Courbet.*

the sexual woman in most countries and times. In Christian art, for example, Mary Magdalene is usually shown with hair down to her feet.

In the European tradition long, loose hair has almost always been associated with youth, and often with virginity —real or presumed. As a child a girl wore her hair down, sometimes in braids. When she reached adulthood or was married she would put it up according to local custom. She might braid it into a crown as in many peasant communities; she might cover it with a wimple or a lace cap, erect it into a powdered eighteenth-century fantasy, or puff it out into an Edwardian pompadour. She would seldom, however, cut it off. In the privacy of the marital (or extramarital) bedroom the cap would come off, the rolls be unwound, and what the Victorians called "woman's crowning glory" would be released for the delight of man.

The fashion for short hair in women dates from the 1920s, though there were brief instances of it earlier. In the beginning it meant freedom and independence, often including erotic freedom and independence, and for a while the old rule was reversed: a girl who bobbed her hair was

more rather than less likely to be sexually available. By the 1940s, though, traditional meanings had been reestablished, and the glamour girl had at least shoulder-length hair, while the conservative college student, career woman or housewife wore hers in a close, stiff permanent wave. Only artistic and bohemian women had really long hair, and they tended to twist it into a chignon or tie it back in a ponytail.

In the sixties and early seventies, however, young women began to wear their hair long again, now usually parted in the middle. Fashion demanded that it be straight; if it was not so naturally the curls could be ironed out by a friend or (with more difficulty) by their owner. Such a hairdo was compatible with—even an inducement to—the loss of virginity and marriage, just as it had been in past centuries, but it was not acceptable on the job market. My long-haired students, when it came time for them to graduate and look for jobs, were often in great conflict as a result. To cut their hair (or even to put it up) seemed to them a sign that they had sold out to the Establishment, just as it was for their male contemporaries, and there was often the additional problem that their boyfriends liked their hair long.

Today waist-length manes are uncommon except among the young, but longer-than-average hair, in every age group, has its traditional meaning: romantic ideas, emotional warmth and often sexual readiness. A sudden and drastic haircut implies rejection of these qualities, and contemporary women are therefore often under pressure from their husbands or lovers to stay away from the hairdresser. At the same time they experience pressure in the opposite direction from current or potential employers, setting up the classical conflict between Love and Duty.

BLONDES, BRUNETTES AND REDHEADS

Tradition has always associated hair color and texture with personality, especially in women, without any apparent justification—although the effect of being treated from early childhood according to a stereotype cannot be underestimated. Blondes, we have been told, are preferred by

gentlemen and (perhaps as a result) have more fun; brunettes are more deeply emotional; redheads are fiery and passionate. Definite colors indicate a forceful personality; drab, muted colors (ash blonde, mouse brown) a more retiring one. Straight-haired persons are serious, sometimes solemn; curly-haired persons are lively, possibly frivolous.

For centuries rippling golden hair (neither too straight nor too curly) was thought to be the most desirable for women. Roman ladies in both classical and Renaissance times bleached and dyed and crimped to achieve it, and it was a conventional attribute of the princesses in fairy tales. In the nineteenth century, however, when a deeply emotional nature was highly valued in women, most of the beauties in popular art had long, dark-brown hair. In fiction too there was a preference for brunettes. Blondes were apt to be portrayed as "light-headed"—naïve, frivolous or worse. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* for instance, noble, self-sacrificing, dark-haired Dorothea is contrasted with the shallow, selfish, pale-blonde Rosamond. Red hair, in the popular imagination, indicated passion and a quick temper; it was a disadvantage for a man and a serious misfortune for a woman. The best-known redhead in Victorian literature is "sandy-haired" Becky Sharp, the ambitious, unscrupulous antiheroine of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–48). This prejudice continued into the twentieth century. The eponymous heroine of L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), a tremendously popular children's book that is still widely read today, declares that "nothing could be as bad as red hair." She therefore tries to dye hers black, but succeeds only in turning it green; the implication is that nothing can disguise a redheaded nature.

In this century red or yellow locks are no longer a disadvantage, but the traditional associations remain. Blondes are more often the heroines of comedy or melodrama, brunettes of mystery and tragedy. Curls suggest humor, and a redhead is expected to be tempestuous. What is new is the existence of options. Technical advances in coloring, curling and straightening make it possible for anyone who has the time and the money to change her hair as she would a hat. If she chooses, a woman can be in turn a bubble-headed blonde,

a sleek, sophisticated brunette and a way-out redhead; or she can maintain permanently whatever color and texture suits her personality. As a result, the stereotypes have been reinforced, and even if you do not alter your hair you are likely to be judged by it and dealt with accordingly.

Men have the same freedom of choice, but they exercise it less often. It is no longer necessary to be dark as well as tall and handsome to be a hero, and male personality is not thought to change dramatically with hair color as it does with hair length. Very light blond or red-gold hair (especially if curly) is a handicap for men professionally, however; since these colors occur most often in small children, they suggest immaturity and impulsiveness.

SEXUAL SIGNALS: THE OLD HANDBAG

Today, as in the past, certain details of costume convey a direct sexual message. Bright-red clothing, the exposure of more than the usual amount of flesh and the wearing of revealingly tight garments are universally recognized signs. A simple, sometimes crude statement is made by the shirt unbuttoned to the waist, the extra-short miniskirt, the thin sweater that shows the nipples and the bulge in the trousers which, as Mae West put it, indicates that a man is glad to see you. At times there have been other accepted indications of sexuality. In the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, the woman who wore her bonnet well forward, blocking out her view of the world on both sides, was assumed to be modest and shy; one who wore her bonnet pushed toward the back of her head was assumed to be "fast"—that is, immodest and perhaps wanton. More recently, in the 1950s, a well-bred woman wore gloves—usually short white cotton ones—whenever she might expect to be introduced to strangers. If she forgot or misplaced them and had to touch the hand of a strange man with her own bare hand, she was aware of having made—inadvertently or not—a sexual gesture.

The most universally recognized sexual indicator in women, however, is the purse or handbag. Freudians may have been the first to state the connection directly, but the

use of the term "purse" for the female pudenda dates from the early seventeenth century. The common phrase "old bag" for an unattractive, aging woman is about a hundred years old, and may be subliminally responsible for the female readiness to discard even a slightly worn purse. As a result, secondhand shops are full of old bags, often expensive leather ones, which, though perfectly functional and in good condition, have been rejected by their owners.

Sex is not all that is communicated by the handbag, of course. Its contents, for instance, may represent the contents of the mind, or serve as both a portable identity kit and a repair kit. At the same time, however, the bag conveys erotic information, if only in the eyes of the beholder. According to my male informants, a tightly snapped, zipped and buckled purse suggests a woman who guards her physical and emotional privacy closely, one whom it will be difficult to get to know in either the common or the Biblical sense. An open-topped tote bag suggests an open, trusting nature: someone who is emotionally and sexually more accessible. A handbag may also be small or large (I contain multitudes?), stiff or soft and brightly colored or dark. It may have many compartments, suggesting an organized mind or a woman who plays many roles in life; or it may consist of only one compartment in which everything is jumbled together. The handbag may also be extremely "feminine"—soft, flowered and fragile-looking—or it may resemble a man's brief case. The executive woman who carries both a handbag and a brief case appears to have two contradictory sexual identities; perhaps for this reason, wardrobe consultants strongly advise against the practice.

PHALLIC CLOTHING

Psychologists say that the walking stick or rolled umbrella is a male symbol when it appears in dreams; and in waking life men can often be seen using these symbolic objects to poke and prod or to signal for taxis in a way that bears out this interpretation. Walking sticks or canes are now rare except among men who really need them, but the umbrella

remains popular. As might be expected, the male version tends to be large and heavy, and to gain prestige from a capacity for instant deployment. A shabby, small or—worst of all—ill-functioning umbrella is a source of shame that often seems excessive unless some erotic meaning is presumed. Of course, when the umbrella is actually unfolded it assumes a less phallic shape—which may be why upper-class British males often keep theirs tightly rolled even in a heavy drizzle.

The male hat too has been considered a sexual symbol. As James Laver points out, periods of male dominance have coincided with high hats for men, among them the tall-crowned hat of the Puritans and the top hat of the Victorians. "With the advent of the New Woman in the 1880's," he remarks, "many men adopted the boater, which might be thought of as a very much truncated top hat. And towards the end of the century men began to wear, so to speak, the very symbol of their bashed-in authority: the trilby hat." If this theory is correct, the recent growth tendency of the cowboy hat may be significant.

Other details of male clothing have had a recognized sexual—and social—meaning. In the nineteenth century the amount of shirt front showing indicated a man's position on the scale from virtue to vice: the more linen that was exposed, the more unreliable he was. A discreet, buttoned-up look distinguished the proper gentleman or respectable tradesman or clerk, on whose honor a lady or even a poor working girl could depend. The somewhat undependable sporting chap showed more shirtfront; the downright cad who would take advantage of any erotic opportunity displayed even more, and often wore too much jewelry. Today excess jewelry on either sex is a lower-middle-class or *nouveau-riche* indicator, but it also still has overtones of sensual laxity.

A man's tie may also be sexually symbolic, especially if it is brightly colored or in some way unusual. James Laver remarks that the tieless Catholic priest is "symbolically castrated," while the old-fashioned British Evangelical clergyman always wore a white tie, "as if to indicate that he was potent but pure." Following Laver's lead, it might be pro-

When women put on men's clothes they usually take on considerable dignity, and sometimes great elegance and sophistication. Marlene Dietrich in 1933. Photograph from the Larry Carr Collection.

posed that the narrow woven cord or leather thong ties often favored by elderly American men suggest a withering or drying-up of the passions. Another possible clue is the kerchief worn in the outside breast pocket of the suit by well-dressed men. According to a journalist of my acquaintance, a casually burgeoning paisley scarf, especially if red, announces "I can get it up"; neatly folded white linen implies temporary or permanent disinterest in sex, and should be interpreted by women as a flag of truce.

OUTER AND INNER SELVES

The information or misinformation we want our clothes to convey about status, age, occupation, opinions, mood and sexual tastes may make it hard for us to decide what to wear. What often happens in such cases is that the outer layer represents the external or public person and the inner one his or her private self. When both layers are visible the message, though contradictory, is easy to read. The woman in the sensible gray wool suit and the frilly pink blouse is a serious, hard-working mouse with a frivolous and feminine soul. If, on the other hand, she wears a curvy pink silk dressmaker suit over a plain mouse-gray sweater, we suspect her of being privately preoccupied or depressed no matter how charming and social her manner.

Many combinations of outer and inner message are possible. A costume may be childish without and adult within, like the bright ruffled apron over the severe dark dress which informs guests that a serious career woman is only playing at cooking. It may be casual and countrified without and citified within, like the tan cord suit of the architect which is worn with a business shirt and tie to reassure his clients that their buildings will not run over the cost estimate or fall down. Or it may be high-status without and low-status within—as with the elegant Italian suit of the rock star, beneath which a T-shirt printed with the image of a sweating beer can assures his fans that he is still at heart a tough, oversexed, working-class kid.

Even when the styles of the inner and outer layer are

the same, there may be a significant difference in color. Someone whose visible underlayer of clothing is red, for instance, may be telling us of the heat and passion beneath his or her subdued exterior. When a color combination is already conventional, however, its meaning is conventional rather than personal. The wearing of a white shirt with a dark suit does not mean that you are outwardly serious and inwardly honest and trustworthy, merely that this character type has always been considered desirable in business and the professions. The reverse outfit—the gambler's white suit and dark shirt—suggests someone whose character and motives are somewhat shady, whatever the lightness and charm of his manner.

INTIMATE APPAREL

Sometimes, of course, the inner layer of clothing is covered by the outer one, and only those who are lucky or privileged will ever see it. One of the most interesting moments in any incipient love affair—or in any public dressing room—comes when someone whom we find attractive takes off his or her clothes and reveals a new message written in underwear. Often, indeed, it is not until we see this private costume that we have a real clue as to its wearer's erotic identity.

Asexual underwear, both male and female, is immediately obvious. It is usually white, drab, unadorned and made of nonsensual materials such as broadcloth; often it is somewhat too loose. If clean and fresh, it may indicate virginity, permanent or temporary chastity or a mild embarrassment about physical matters. When such underwear has a grayed or yellow tinge, and an exhausted look about the elastic, it is not merely asexual but antisexual. It actively repels eroticism, and may be intended to do so; it implies dislike of one's own body, possibly of all bodies. Persons who persist in making advances to the owners of such garments are asking for trouble.

Attractive underwear is harder to describe, since it depends so much on personal taste. For example, both sexes

During the years when films were subject to censorship, actresses spent a lot of time in their slips. Though not in fact very revealing, this costume acted as a symbolic equivalent of nudity, and as a result the lacy satin slip became an erotic signal in real life. Elizabeth Taylor in Butterfield 8, *1960.*

are in disagreement about what makes a pair of male underpants erotic or even decent. About all that can be said is that middle- and upper-class men over fifty seem to prefer boxer shorts in white, blue or tan, plain or striped. They consider anything else low-status, even vulgar, and believe that jockey shorts are bad for their sperm count, which they have a horror of diminishing even if not ambitious for fatherhood. Conservative men under fifty prefer standard white jockey shorts. They consider boxer shorts old-fashioned and fuddy-duddy, and think brief or colored shorts vulgar. Less conservative men, if they have reasonably flat stomachs, may wear low-cut jockey shorts, also known as "briefs" or "slips," often white but sometimes brown, red, green or blue. For with-it types such briefs are now available in many brilliant colors and exotic patterns. There are also those who wear no underpants at all—a practice regarded by some women as thrilling, by others as disgusting.

Most women under fifty seem to like colorful—but not way-out—briefs, as long as a man has the figure for them. To others, however, sex is associated with some other sort of underwear (possibly what their fathers or their first or favorite lovers once wore), and anything else is a turn-off.

In the matter of undershirts, too, there is little consensus. Some dislike them on principle, others demand them. The sleeveless white singlet associated with laboring men is admired by those who think of sex as working class, or of the working class as sexy. Conventional white T-shirts have their fans, and so do colored ones. There are even people who heat up at the thought of fishnet or thermal underwear, which to most Britons or North Americans merely suggests Scandinavian origin or determined outdoorsmanship.

LINGERIE: PURE, ROMANTIC OR PASSIONATE?

Anyone who has walked through that section of a department store lately knows that when they buy lingerie, most women prefer white. If they choose another color, it is often for practical reasons: to avoid the appearance of a ghostly bra or slip under a semitransparent blouse or dress. They like

lace and frills, but in moderate amounts: what they want in their private lives is to look innocent, fresh and pretty. Some lady jocks prefer underthings that are white but plain and tailored, free of all decoration. The erotic implication of such underwear (you cannot call it lingerie) is that sex is a body-contact sport, a way of getting a good workout. If their jock underwear is startlingly functional (running bras worn on a date, for instance) they may think of making love as a kind of competitive activity—one in which, as Kinsey and his followers have warned us, the man is apt to come in second.

Since lacy white lingerie is readily available and avoids the problem of matching colors, many women usually wear it, adding a black nightgown or a red bra or a flowered slip from time to time, often because some man has given it to them. If they do not like him very much, they wear it less often. Consciously or unconsciously they know that such gifts may be sexual messages as well as sexual tributes—hints that they might be more experimental or more aggressive or more demure in bed.

Tan, beige or ecru underwear makes both pale and dark skin look rosy, and is therefore flattering. Its meaning is elegant and refined; it is the choice of the woman of any age who feels too old or too experienced to wear white, and too much of a lady to wear black or any definite color. Often she likes to think of herself as cosmopolitan, possibly Parisian, since Frenchwomen are reputed to wear lacy tan or brown lingerie.

Pink and rose, with a good deal of lace, are favored by women who think of love as romance, and of themselves as romantic heroines. The way to their private parts is through their hearts, and the man who neglects to take this road, even long after the wedding night, is apt to be received with hurt looks and half-suppressed sighs—if not rejected with headaches and tears. When the woman who seldom wears a pink nightgown puts one on, she may be silently asking for, or magically invoking, a sentimental experience. Pink or rose-hued lingerie should not be confused with the sort called "peach" or "flesh," although it resembles no known fruit or human skin. Underwear of this color is a bad sign

unless it is worn by a dark-skinned woman, since it makes a fair complexion look yellowish, flawed and grimy. The woman who wears it is either color-blind or visually insensitive. This is not of course a contraindication for making love, but on the other hand it is no recommendation, and should be taken seriously if you are considering setting up housekeeping together, even in a nonsexual relationship.

Black underwear, in the popular imagination, is always erotic. When tailored and discreet in cut, however, it may also indicate a practical nature, since black always looks fresh and does not show dirt easily. Such simple black underthings are often worn by thoughtful, intellectual women who take sex very seriously. Lacy and revealing black lingerie, on the other hand, is sophisticated, daring and occasionally wicked in its implications. Women who prefer it are more likely to become bored with partners, places and sexual positions; they are also less likely to sit up in bed exclaiming tearfully "Oh, this is awful! What am I doing?"

The rare woman who customarily wears red bras and slips and panties will not say this either, but she is apt to be a handful in other ways. Often she will be passionate, but she may also have a temper, and may actually enjoy jealous scenes and prefer the sound of doors slamming and plates crashing to the music of Mozart.

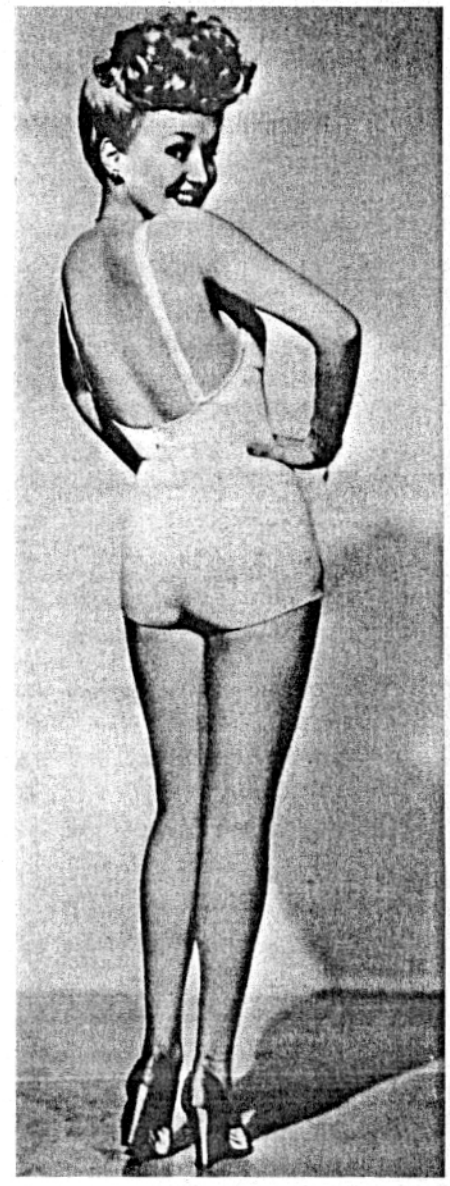
Though white, tan, pink, black and red (and the egregious flesh) are the most common colors for lingerie, others are frequently available. They are usually bought or worn to express a mood, however (receptive blue, dreamy violet, cheerful yellow, jazzy orange), rather than to give erotic information. One can also buy underthings in patterns, usually floral ones which, as in outerwear, represent a delicate or a blowsy feminity according to the size of the blooms. Another favorite design is the jungle print, which imitates the pelt of a leopard or, less often, a tiger. As the name implies, this design announces that its wearer is a carnivorous wild animal. Threatening as this sounds, research suggests that these nylon leopards and tigers are less dangerous than they look, and if properly handled may turn out to be pussy cats.

FASHIONS IN ANATOMY

Though the reproductive process has not altered much over the years, what men find attractive in women seems to change regularly. The psychologist J. C. Flügel was the first to propose a theory of "shifting erogenous zones," according to which first one and then another part of the female body is uncovered and found exciting. The feature chosen need not have any natural connection with sexuality: the mid-Victorians were thrilled by plump, white, sloping shoulders; in the 1900s there was tremendous agitation over a glimpse of a well-turned ankle; and in the 1930s the back was a focus of erotic attention.

Some of these fashions in anatomy seem merely arbitrary, the result, as Flügel suggests, of boredom and over-familiarity with other parts of the body. Others may have a practical explanation. The medieval focus on the rounded belly, for instance, was functional in a period of high mortality, when constant pregnancy was necessary to keep the population stable. In the twenties and thirties excitement over the female leg celebrated the fact that women had become more mobile and independent; and the exposure of the breasts under translucent or clinging tops in the early seventies was accompanied by a renewed interst in breast-feeding. Since fashions, like dreams, are often multiply determined, it may be significant that these see-through or semi-see-through clothes, which were worn occasionally by men as well as women, appeared concurrently with the fashion for intimate self-exposure—or semi-exposure—in encounter groups.

Sometimes the currently thrilling bit of anatomy is only exposed in impolite society. In respectable circumstances it is elaborately wrapped up, and often exaggerated in the process. During the late-Victorian period, for instance, interest centered on the rear end, which was exposed in the final gesture of the cancan and exaggerated by the bustle. After a period of eclipse, the rear came into favor again during World War II, when a back view of the film star Betty Grable in a bathing suit was the favorite pinup of enlisted men. It then vanished again from fashion and was replaced



For fifty years, between about 1910 and 1960, the female behind was largely out of fashion and out of sight, neglected by designers and suppressed by tight girdles. During World War II, however, it reappeared briefly, as can be seen from this famous pinup photograph of the movie star Betty Grable. At the time this picture was considered very suggestive, even vulgar, though by current standards both Miss Grable's pose and her figure seem restrained.

The styles of the late 1950s were bunchy, boxy and often very unbecoming. As Richard Avedon's photograph suggests, these clothes demanded that women fit themselves into a kind of Happy Housewife uniform that suppressed both sexuality and individuality.

by the breasts and suppressed by the girdle for almost twenty years. In the 1970s, however, girdles became a sign of age or prudery; the buttocks reappeared as a focus of erotic interest while the bosom diminished. Today C-cup or larger breasts are regarded as a disadvantage, and Woolworth's sells both "minimizing bras" and "natural-line" elastic panties that allow for or create rear cleavage. Blue jeans for both men and women are cut so as to call attention to a rounded behind rather than compressing it into a flat unirear. What all this may mean is difficult to say. One very interesting writer on fashion, the anthropologist Robert Brain, has however remarked that in animal species the "swelling and coloration of the backside is particularly conspicuous in those species which have the most aggressive and quarrelsome males."

Not only different parts of the body, but different body types, go in and out of fashion. By modern standards the Edwardian beauty was disgustingly pale and fat; Twiggy, the ideal child-woman of the sixties, now looks to us like a victim of anorexia. The styles of most eras are designed to flatter the woman who conforms to the current ideal, and to allow the woman who falls a little short of the ideal to approximate it more closely. Anyone whose natural appearance is far off the mark, however, is likely to be positively uglified by fashion. The sophisticated, intricately cut and stiffened New Look clothes of the post–World War II period were becoming to tall, slim women, but they made short, plump ones look like barrage balloons. Today square shoulders and an athletic frame are in style, and the woman whose small stature and rounded figure would have made her a Victorian beauty has difficulty finding a dress that does not make her appear to be wearing football pads.

Occasionally a style develops that does not really flatter anyone. In the late 1950s women wore bunchy, boxy, square-cut or A-line jackets and dresses which, unlike the sculptured gowns of ten years earlier, did not seem to have an artistic and emotional life of their own yet refused to shape themselves to their wearers. Instead they enclosed us like ill-fitting cardboard costumes in a grade-school pageant. The only advantage of these clothes was that they made you

look slightly pregnant whether you were or not, simplifying the life of baby-boom mothers. It was an appropriate outfit for the years of the Feminine Mystique, when all women were supposed to fit into the standard mold of Happy Housewife.

In *Seeing Through Clothes,* Anne Hollander points out that the human body as portrayed in painting and sculpture changes its shape to fit the fashions of the time; that "all nudes in art since modern fashion began are wearing the ghosts of absent clothes—sometimes highly visible ghosts." Photography, rather than liberating our perception of the body, has helped to tie it closer to fashion. Through a biased choice of models and poses it seems to offer scientific proof that we are—or ought to be—the right shape for contemporary clothes. When posing for photographs, late-Victorian nudes protruded their behinds like bustles; twenties' nudes adopted a debutante slouch and nudes of the forties tucked in their tummies and hips and stuck out their chests to produce the flat-bottomed, melon-breasted figure then considered most desirable.

Human anatomy does not always conform to current fashion; but then, fortunately, neither does erotic taste. As a result, women with flat bottoms and men with full beards, or whatever physical idiosyncrasy is out of favor at the moment, can usually find someone for whom they represent perfect beauty.

Theda Bara, the original vamp, photographed in 1917. Her hypnotic, kohl-rimmed stare was said to drive men to madness. The slippery, shiny material of her costume and her heavy, barbaric-looking jewelry are standard attributes of the exotic seductress, even today.

EROTIC STYLES: THE VAMP AND THE PEACOCK

In different eras different styles of self-presentation as well as different body types are considered sexy. Here there is more overlap, and it is probably true to say that few psychological types ever go completely out of erotic fashion. The heavy-eyed, fleshly sensuous vamp of the 1920s can still be seen at artistic events, draped in a contemporary version of her classic fringed silks and ropes of beads. The busty blonde of the 1950s in her towering platinum wig has become a country music star; the baby doll of the 1960s pouts and cuddles in the privacy of many bedrooms.

Though styles of erotic appeal persist, over the years some of them have altered their significance, since the language of dress, like the spoken language, contains terms whose meaning changes with time. The words "naughty" and "mischievous," which once indicated the blackest thoughts and deeds, now suggest endearingly childish misbehavior; and today heavy eye make-up is no longer the sign of the man-eating tigress but that of the flirtatious teenager. Similar evolutionary changes have occurred in the sartorial equivalent of forbidden words: the skintight sweater, the shirt open to the navel.

Sometimes a style persists but is worn by different sorts of people. In the 1900s, for instance, evening fashions for unmarried girls were sharply distinguished from fashions for matrons and spinsters. A "girl," who might be thirty, wore delicate fabrics and pale colors, often white. A woman wore heavier and richer materials, usually in more brilliant or darker shades, often black. The unmarried girl who appeared in an evening dress such as her mother might wear with perfect propriety—a low-cut, jet-trimmed, ruby-red or emerald-green satin, for instance—was considered either very fast or very badly brought up. Today the signals have been reversed. Well-bred girls go dancing in revealing costumes of neon red, orange and green. Their mothers, on the other hand, wear modestly cut party clothes in the same limited range of colors they favor for day: brown, tan, black, white and pale or navy blue. One possible reason for this change is that there has been a shift in sexual morality. Aristocratic Edwardians, though they paid lip service to virtue and demanded virginity before marriage, condoned a discreet promiscuity afterwards. Today well-born young women, like the female young of some Polynesian tribes, are tacitly allowed to sleep around and even live around a bit before marriage. After the wedding, however, they are expected to behave themselves or get out.

The fashionable male type also changes from one era to the next, though not all men change with it. Prudence Glynn suggests that male clothing promotes either "sexual allure or the territorial prerogative—the offer of the safe nest, [d]epending on the social climate." In 1900 territorial rights were dominant:

> What those frock coats and morning coats and snug overcoats said to women was that the men who wore them were . . . able to provide a well-appointed nest in which the females and young could be tucked up safely. Trespassers entered upon the hearts and laurel shrubberies of these men at their peril.

The same message is presumably conveyed by the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit of the 1950s and his more recent avatars. In the 1920s, and again in the 1960s, fewer eggs were being hatched, and women consequently felt less need for nests. They therefore began to favor a more dashing and colorful sort of fellow, causing a revolution in male dress and grooming. But though there may be more or fewer peacocks and nesting roosters around, both are fairly common, and the woman who is looking out for either type can usually find it.

ALIENS, NOBS AND PROLES

The idea that people from other parts of the world are sexier has a long history, and though there is no objective evidence to support this belief, it has caused many pleasant surprises for foreign visitors. Which foreigners are considered sexier depends on the individual, and also to some extent on the era. In the 1920s, many North American and British women dreamed of being carried away by a sheik, often personified as the film star Rudolph Valentino. Latin lovers of both sexes were popular in the 1930s, and in the 1970s Asians, especially those with an aura of mystical knowledge, made a great many conquests. Since the supply of foreigners who are in fashion at the time is usually not large enough to go around, ordinary natives of Britain and North America sometimes add to their sexual charm by wearing the appropriate exotic garments: in the 1970s Nehru shirts, ivory and brass beads and sandals of water-buffalo hide. In the fantasies of some observers, such outfits implied, even promised, exotic and holy erotic transports of the sort described in the *Kama Sutra.*

Not everyone, of course, finds the currently popular type attractive. Fortunately there is always a range of stereo-

types to choose from; indeed, a single foreign country may provide more than one. A woman can get herself up in a black Oriental silk kimono embroidered with gold dragons to look like the Dragon Lady; or she can wear a pink-flowered kimono and stick knitting needles through her hair to suggest that she will be as subservient and eager to please as a geisha. Sometimes there is a localization of erotic appeal nearer home, so that, for instance, the New Yorker or Londoner may wear rough northern hiking clothes to project a hearty outdoor sexuality, while the genuine woodsman or woodswoman assumes a dark, elegant suit to tell others that he or she prefers a sophisticated erotic experience.

Another common delusion is that members of the other classes are more highly sexed. Those who have not grown up among them often seem to believe that the rich and well-born are always at it, and feel erotic agitation at the sight of a sable coat or the label of an expensive tailor. Others think that the working class is more natural, more sensual and more passionate. This latter belief has often been reflected in fashion, and is probably responsible in part for the popularity of carpenters' overalls, auto mechanics' jump suits and fishermen's jerseys—just as it is for the thrill felt by some refined persons when they hear direct and ungrammatical speech on erotic topics. There are even people who feel that work clothes are more attractive when they are rumpled and stained, becoming the sartorial equivalent of dirty language.

Rudolph Valentino in The Sheik *(1921). His costume, though technically inauthentic, is a compendium of macho gear: sword, dagger, cartridge belt (but, oddly enough, no rifle), open-necked shirt, immense cape and high, chain-trimmed leather boots.*

Sometimes the thrill of the exotic and the thrill of the proletarian are combined, resulting in an outbreak of Greek fishermen's shirts, Italian policemen's capes, French sailor blouses and Argentine gaucho pants. A few years ago there was a fashion among women (and some men) for what might be called Hot-Climate Work Clothing: pale, baggy cheesecloth or homespun cotton pants fastened round the waist with a drawstring, together with layers of shirts and vests and jackets of the same materials. Worn alone, or with jeans, these clothes suggested hard labor in a practical and/or humanitarian cause. More often, however, the peasant effect was canceled by elegant thin-strapped high-heeled sandals, thin pale scarves and glittery gold chains and ban-

gles. The resulting costume did not seem to indicate an interest in planting beans or baking bread, but rather a playful identification with the Near East. Though most of these clothes were made in India, the style was usually referred to as "the harem look." It suggested an acquiescent, nonliberated sexuality and, as in the 1920s, a welcoming attitude toward sheiks. It was especially popular in London, which at the time was being invaded by wealthy Arabs.

LOVE AND DEATH: THE INVALID AND THE SPECTER

One of the most persistent specialized forms of erotic appeal is that which connects love and death, sometimes so closely that only what is damaged or dangerous can arouse the passions. In the Romantic period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the sexual instinct and the death wish were often intertwined. Not only were frailty and delicacy admired; for many Romantics actual illness was sexually exciting. The favored disease was pulmonary tuberculosis, the high fever of which brought a hectic flush to the cheeks and brightness to the eyes, mimicking sexual arousal; it was also believed to produce an unearthly and feverish sensuality in both sexes.

The thin white muslin dresses of the time encouraged respiratory infections and also imitated the invalid's nightgown—or, as some contemporary writers pointed out, the corpse's burial garments. The *Ladies' Monthly Museum* of June 1802 speaks of "the close, all white shroud-looking, ghostly chemise undress of the ladies, who seem to glide like spectres, with their shrouds wrapt tight about their forms." So provocative was this costume that the heroines of Gothic romance have ever since worn some version of it, usually in the form of a nightdress. Semiotically this is a very appropriate choice, since like the Gothic thriller it combines the erotic appeal of innocence and death.

For the Victorians death was so interesting that not only the dying but the bereaved were felt to be sexually charged. A widow, especially a young one, was assumed to be in a

state of heightened emotionality that made it easy for her to be taken advantage of. Her supposed willingness to be "consoled"—to become a Merry Widow—was the subject of many low jokes. It may also have been one reason for the strict rules about mourning dress and behavior, which if not followed were a source of scandal and suspicion.

Even after life was over sexuality continued. Nineteenth-century literature and folklore is full of passionate ghosts who haunt their living lovers like Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), or arise from the tomb to clasp them in a clay-cold embrace as in the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Often these wraiths wear the classic white shroud, sometimes stained with blood, creating an image that even today makes a long white gown patterned or trimmed with irregular splotches of red somewhat troubling.

DRACULA AND VAMPIRELLA

A more violent romantic revenant is the vampire, who returns from the grave not to haunt but to suck the blood of those he loves. The most famous of them, of course, is Dracula, the hero or villain of the novel of that name by Bram Stoker (1897). His continued popularity is deserved, for he combines the charms of the exotic, the aristocratic, illness, death and sexual ambiguity. He is a foreigner, a count and also a bisexual: though his favorite victims are innocent young women in nightdresses, he also preys upon young men. He characteristically wears full evening dress and a batlike black cape, and has rather long black hair. Dracula's attack is a symbolic rape, and if repeated destroys the rapee, who does not die but also turns into a vampire, one of "the undead." The legend thus gives dramatic expression to the nineteenth-century belief that illicit sexual love is not only debilitating but habit-forming, and literally a "fate worse than death."

More recently women's liberation, or some more sinister force, has produced Vampirella, a comic-book heroine whose costume is a kind of space-age female Dracula outfit, scanty and revealing. She has the traditional black hair,

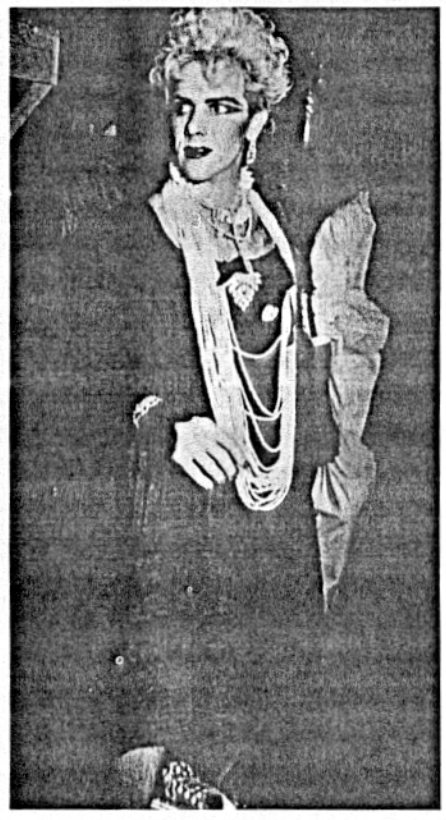
white face and unnaturally red lips, with the inspired addition of long red nails. So archetypically terrifying and thrilling are these figures that any black-haired, pale-complexioned man or woman who appears in all-black formal clothes projects a destructive eroticism, sometimes without conscious intention. Others, of course, may assume this costume as a deliberate sexual message. Today, for instance, the wearing of black leather garments is an accepted signal that you are "into" sadomasochism and interested in playing the part of master or slave either in harmless fantasy or dangerous reality.

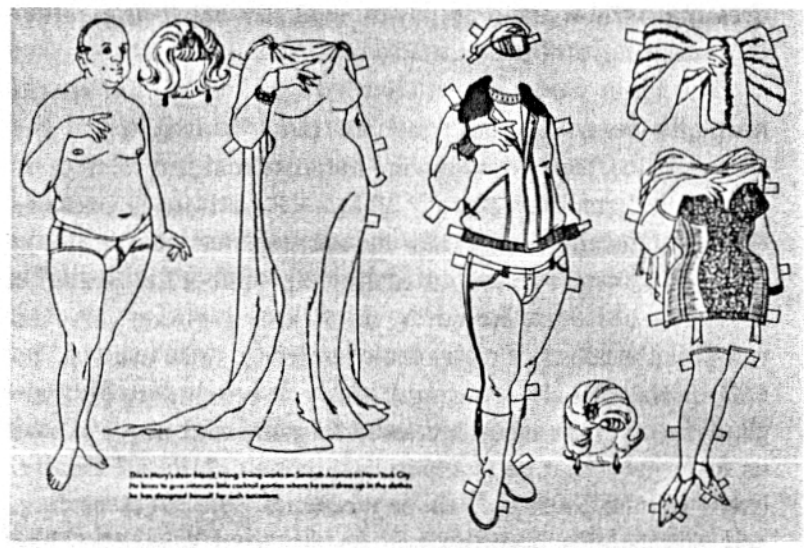
THE WILDER SHORES OF LOVE

Several other minority sexual interests are well represented in costume. The nineteenth-century fascination with childhood, for example, has survived into the twentieth century. Respectable Victorians sentimentalized over the charms of children, especially little girls; less respectable ones, as Stephen Marcus informs us in *The Other Victorians*, went out and bought them. Today childishness in dress is out of fashion, but children are still the focus of sexual interest for a small and necessarily secretive minority, and there is a larger minority who like to imagine themselves or their lovers as children. Such interests are probably responsible for some of the more infantile fashions one sees, especially in nightwear. Even a naturally proper style, like the shepherdess or "Laura Ashley" Look still popular in Britain, occasionally plays on this interest. A recent addition to this costume is a lace-edged petticoat that is deliberately allowed to hang down several inches below the skirt; besides making consumption conspicuous, it imitates the half-conscious seductiveness of the little girl who doesn't know that her pretty white underwear is showing.

In the past only that minority of homosexuals who wanted to resemble members of the opposite sex were easily identifiable. Most straights therefore believed that all gay men wore markedly feminine styles and all gay women dressed in men's wear. Today, when they are out of the

Although women in male clothes usually look like gentlemen, men who wear women's clothes, unless they are genuine transsexuals, seem to imitate the most vulgar and unnattractive sort of female dress, as if in a spirit of deliberate and hostile parody. Photograph by Coreen Simpson, 1980.





The male transsexual feels himself to be a woman in a man's body; he finds dressing in female costume psychologically satisfying rather than erotically thrilling, and usually prefers the sort of clothes a woman of his own age and social position would choose. From Attitude, *a book of gay paper dolls by Tom Tierney, 1979.*

closet, it is apparent that most homosexuals dress like everyone else, at least when in mixed society. Many gay men, in fact, have now adopted the "macho look," and to the casual observer seem more masculine than most heterosexuals. They wear work clothes (especially when not at work): plaid shirts, jeans, athletic shirts, coveralls and heavy work shoes; they also favor Western gear, particularly cowboy hats and boots. To complete the image, they often grow large bushy mustaches and exercise for hours in the gym to develop their muscles.

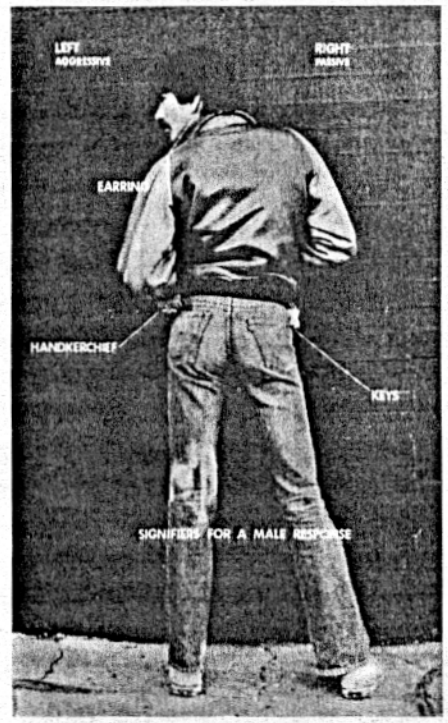
In order to facilitate an active and diverse erotic life, many gays employ a sartorial signal system. As Hal Fischer has pointed out, those who wish to play an active or masculine role wear a bunch of keys or a single earring or a bandanna in their back pocket on the left side; those who prefer to play a passive or feminine role wear one or more of these indicators on the right. If they are "into leather" (sadomasochism) the same signals apply, but the activities they invite are somewhat different.

There are of course some men, both homosexual and heterosexual, who deliberately dress in women's clothes. Peter Ackroyd has distinguished three types, each of which has a characteristic costume. First, there are the transsexuals, who feel themselves to be women in men's bodies. For them

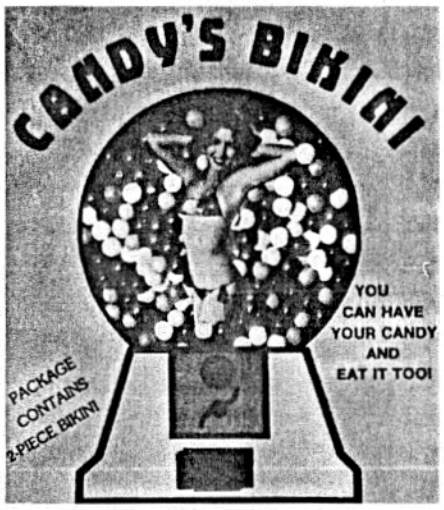
dressing as a woman is psychologically satisfying rather than exciting, and they usually wear the sort of clothes that a respectable woman of their own age and station would normally wear. Second, and far more common, are the transvestites, most of whom are heterosexual and often married. For them the wearing of female clothing is sexually thrilling, and the outfits they choose are often exaggeratedly female and erotic in an old-fashioned, unliberated way. To the keen observer, however, as Ackroyd points out, the transvestite does not really look feminine, since usually "he will, unconsciously or surreptitiously, leave clues to his male gender. . . . A transvestite never forgets—and never allows us to forget—that he is a man in women's clothes." Finally, there are the professionals or amateurs who dress in drag, and are usually homosexual. As Ackroyd says, the drag queen "parodies and mocks women." The typical drag costume is at best a clever caricature of media-stylized female appeal, and at worst a cruel travesty of female ugliness.

Lesbians, most of the time, are indistinguishable from other women, though since today they are usually strong feminists they tend to use little or no make-up and to favor pants and comfortable shoes. A few, however, have adopted extremely short haircuts and prefer to wear men's rather than women's shirts and jackets and coats. Though there are occasional female transsexuals, female transvestites are rare; as Ackroyd remarks, "male clothing has no 'erotic value' because of its ready availability for women within our culture." A male impersonator or "drag king" is almost unheard of today, though in the late-Victorian era, when women were still forbidden by custom to wear male dress, they were common on the stage. Interestingly enough, women who wear men's clothes usually dress like gentlemen, or even like aristocrats, whereas men who dress in women's clothes, unless they are transsexuals, seldom look like ladies.

Beyond these recognized minority styles of erotic appeal there are many more that have attracted only a very limited audience. Probably there is no garment ever worn that has not figured in the sexual life of someone, somewhere. In Britain today, for instance, there is a society devoted to the wearing of rubber rainwear of the sort associated with A. A. Milne's John, who as you may recall had



Urban homosexuals in America have evolved a dress code that informs possible sexual partners of their erotic preferences. Photograph from Gay Semiotics, *by Hal Fischer.*



Edible underwear, made in several fruit flavors and recommended by the manufacturer as "perfect for Pool and Spa Parties, Roadside Picnics, Quickie Lunches, TV Dinners, Bed-Time Snacks." The tie strings can also be eaten.

great big waterproof boots on, a great big waterproof hat, and a great big waterproof mackintosh. For those who are interested, great big waterproof jerseys, pants, gloves, capes and face masks are also available.

In the larger British and North American cities many other peculiar sorts of clothing designed to encourage a diversity of erotic experiences are for sale. For example, it is possible to buy edible underwear, marketed under the name of Candy's Bikini and Candypants and available in strawberry, raspberry, orange, lemon and lime; there is also a liquorice-flavored bra named Teacups. If clothes were words, these would be like talking with your mouth full.

Some readers of this book will feel a certain sticky discomfort at the thought of wearing such garments, or the others described here. They may recall Thoreau's advice that we should distrust any enterprise that requires new clothes. Indeed, whenever a new garment comes into our lives by purchase, gift or barter, it is worth asking what we, or its donor, intend this garment to say about us that cannot be said by the clothes we already own. A similar question might be asked about the clothes we throw away. But thinking seriously about what we wear is like thinking seriously about what we say: it can only be done occasionally or we should find ourselves tongue-tied, unable to get dressed at all.

More generally, the idea that even when we say nothing our clothes are talking noisily to everyone who sees us, telling them who we are, where we come from, what we like to do in bed and a dozen other intimate things, may be unsettling. To wear what "everyone else" is wearing is no solution to the problem, any more than it would be to say what everyone else is saying. We all know people who try to do this; but even if their imitation of "everyone" is successful, their clothes do not shut up; rather they broadcast without stopping the information that this is a timid and conventional man or woman, and possibly an untrustworthy one. We can lie in the language of dress, or try to tell the truth; but unless we are naked and bald it is impossible to be silent.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género

Seminario **Vestido, moda y cultura**
Construcción y comunicación de identidades sociales diversas: del vestido medieval al estilo *dark.*

Sesión 2 Dialéctica cuerpo vestido-cuerpo desnudo

SHAW, Henry, FSA (1998), *Dress and Decoration of the Middle* Ages, California: Fist Glance Books, pp. 8-22.

Introduction by Henry Shaw

PERHAPS NO PART of the history of civilization is more interesting than the changes in dress and fashion of the era from the Norman Conquest of England to the sixteenth century. The different tribes who settled in the provinces of the Roman Empire after its final dislocation in the fifth century appear, in general, to have adopted the civil costume of the conquered Romans, while they probably retained with tenacity the arms and military customs of their forefathers. There was thus a general resemblance between the dress of the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, and other nations of the West. Among the Anglo-Saxons, this style was preserved, with very little alteration, until the latest period of their sovereignty.

The dress of the Anglo-Saxons was simple and uniform in its character. It consisted, as far as we can gather from the allusions of medieval writers, and from the illuminations of manuscripts, of a shirt (called in Anglo-Saxon *syrce,* the origin of the more modern word *sark*), which was generally of linen; of breeches (in Anglo-Saxon *broc*, plural *brec*, the origin of the modern name), which appear also to have been commonly of linen; and of a tunic of wool or linen (called *rooc* or *roc*), which descended to the knee, and was bound round the body with a belt. Over this was thrown a mantle (*mentel*), a short cloak which was fastened at the breast or on the shoulders with broaches. On the legs were worn hose (*hos*), which joined the breeches a little below the knee, which were frequently bound round with fillets, called *hose-bendas* (hose-bands), *scanc-beagas* (leg-encirclers), *scanc-bendas* (leg-bands), or *scanc-gegirelan* (leg-clothing).

The form of the shoes, as represented in the manuscripts, is nearly uniform. They cover the foot to the ankle, are tied with a thong, have an opening down the instep, and are generally painted black, except in the case of princes and great persons, who had them frequently gilt or covered with gold. That gloves were not unknown to the Anglo-Saxons is proved by the circumstances that the name (*glof*) occurs in the earliest Anglo-Saxon poetry.

The form of the articles of dress was the same for all classes of society, differing only by the richness of the material or by the greater profusion of ornament. The leg-bands were used chiefly when the wearer was engaged in the more active pursuits of life, and particularly in traveling and in war.

Rich people, when in full dress, or on ceremonial occasions, wore a more ample tunic, descending to the feet. The sleeve of the tunic, between the elbow and the wrist, appears to be puckered up, and confined above the hand by a bracelet. Laborers and peasants appear frequently without stockings, and sometimes without shoes. Often, as we can see in the

illustrations in this book, all these articles of Anglo-Saxon costume were found in most of the different ranks of society. For example, it was common in England that all the persons seated at a festival meal would be wearing the large, ceremonial tunic.

A soldier's mantle might be similar to that of others, but ornamented by jagging at the border, somewhat like the fashion which became so prevalent in England during the reign (1377-1399) of King Richard II. In the illuminations, the Anglo-Saxons appear generally without hats, except when fully armed for war or traveling. They also contradict the assertion which has been made that the Anglo-Saxons universally wore long, flowing hair, for it is there generally cut short.

The dress of the Anglo-Saxon ladies cannot be described with the same precision as that of the men. The outer vest was a large, flowing tunic, which among persons of high rank was made of richly ornamented material. The Anglo-Saxon *cyrtel* is supposed to have been a shorter tunic, under this, and next to the skin was probably the *syrce* (shirt). The mantle of the ladies was also much larger than that of the men, and hung down before and behind. The head was generally covered with a long piece of silk or linen, which was also wrapped round the neck. The shoes appear to have been the same for both sexes.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, the common dress of the ecclesiastics does not appear to have differed much from that of the laity. The ceremonial robes resembled those of a later period, except that the miter was not yet in use. The tonsure was received among the Anglo-Saxon clergy early, though not without considerable opposition.

In the illuminations, the only addition to the dress of the warrior is his cap or hat, a kind of Phrygian bonnet, generally crested at the top. Perhaps the military tunic was made of thicker and less penetrable materials than that of the civil costume. Mail was probably used only by chieftains. The arms were an oval or round convex shield, made of wood, covered with leather, with the umbo and rim of iron; a sword; and a spear, or an axe. The Danes brought into more general use a double-bladed axe, which was long later known by the name of the Danish axe. The bow does not appear to have been used with much effect among the Anglo-Saxons. It may also be observed that the Anglo-Saxons always fought on foot.

The art of jewelry appears to have been extensively practiced among the Anglo-Saxons. People of rank and wealth covered their persons with bracelets, rings, broaches, and other ornaments, in precious metals and stones. Their ornaments were, in general, richer in the materials than in design. The Anglo-Saxons appear to have been devoid of taste in the arts; their drawings are, with a few exceptions, exceedingly rude and incorrect. The specimens given in this work are much superior to those which are found in

the great number of contemporary manuscripts. The general style of Anglo-Saxon ornament resembles that which was called Byzantine in the nineteenth century. The borders and initials in books are not dissimilar from those found in the earlier Greek ecclesiastical manuscripts. The borders of leaves in books are sometimes painted in a sort of mosaic work, and executed with considerable beauty. ✤

The Anglo-Norman Period

WHILE COSTUME AND THE ARTS of life had remained uniform among the Anglo-Saxons, they had, on the other hand, undergone a great change on the continent. Numerous and great political revolutions, and extensive interaction with Arabs and other foreign nations, had brought many modifications, even into the dress of the people, particularly of the higher classes. The Normans, when they settled in Neustria, adopted the costume and language of the Franks.

The military costume of the Anglo-Normans and Anglo-Saxons differed most widely at the time of the Norman Conquest of Britain by William the Conqueror in 1066. The Anglo-Norman soldiers were covered with the *hauberc* or *halberc*, a tunic of mail, either ringed, or network, or quilted. This article of dress was probably borrowed from the Arabs. It appears in the plate of Spanish Warriors of the eleventh century (page 27), who (with the exception of the round shield) are dressed exactly like the Normans in the Bayeux Tapestry. To the neck of this tunic was attached a cowl, which covered the head, and over which was placed the conical helm, with the long nasal guard descending in front.

The shield of the Normans was long and kite-shaped, and often bore the figure of a dragon, lion, or some other device. The Norman lance had a flag attached to it, and was called a *gonfanon*. The bow and the sling were also formidable instruments in the hands of the Norman soldiers. Before the end of the eleventh century, several changes had been made in the form and construction of defensive armor, and it sustained continual alterations during the twelfth century. The cowl of mail was preserved, but the helmet underwent a series of changes; the nasal defense was thrown away at the beginning of the twelfth century, and a pointed iron cap was adopted; and toward the latter part of the same century the helmet first took the form of a high cone, which later subsided into a flat-topped cap of steel, fastened under the chin with an iron loop. A long tunic was frequently worn under the hauberc, and the latter was partly covered with a surcoat, an article of dress supposed to have been borrowed from the Saracens during the Crusades. The kite-shaped shield continued in use until after the middle of the twelfth century, after which it became

shortened in form until it took nearly the form of a triangle, being semicylindrical instead of flat, as the kite-shaped shield had been. In England, under Richard I, who reigned from 1189 to 1199, the shield was charged with the armorial bearings of its owner. To offensive weapons was added, in the late twelfth century, the arbalest, or crossbow.

At first the civil costume of the Anglo-Normans differed not widely from that of the Anglo-Saxons. They wore the same tunic and mantle, and nearly the same shoes and leg bands, but the mantle was attached with cords and tassels. The Anglo-Normans wore long pantaloons with feet to them, which they called *chausses*. The head was sometimes covered with a flat, round cap.

Toward the end of the century the tunic was made fuller and longer, so that it sometimes trailed on the ground. The shoes were also constructed differently, and were profusely ornamented, as was every part of the dress. Knights and people of fashion wore long, pointed shoes, which were sometimes turned up at the points. In traveling, a cape, which covered the head, was added to the dress. The mantle, throughout the twelfth century, was very richly decorated. Under Henry II, who reigned in England from 1154 to 1189, a shorter mantle had been introduced, from which it is said that that monarch took the name of Court-manteau. The pointed Phrygian cap was the most usual covering of the head in all classes of society, except when the cape was worn. The middle and lower classes of society typically wore a short tunic with sleeves, and chausses, with shoes, or sometimes short boots.

Under the Anglo-Normans the costume of the ladies was far more splendid and varied than under the Anglo-Saxons. Instead of the flowing tunic of the latter, the Norman women wore a robe which was laced close to show the form of the body. The head-covering was arranged more gracefully, and was thrown partly over the shoulders and back. It was called a *couvre-chef*. The hair of the ladies appears to have been frequently plaited in two or more divisions, which hung down behind or before. The information relating to the changes of fashion among the ladies during the twelfth century is defective. Toward the middle of the century, singular, long, hanging sleeves were in fashion.

This fashion appears to have been soon laid aside. The religious satirists, throughout the twelfth century, inveighed bitterly against what was then seen as the vanity, extravagance, and coquetry of the female sex. At the end of the century, Alexander Neckam, one of the best of the early Anglo-Latin poets, wrote numerous satires about the ladies of his time, in which he accuses them of covering themselves with gold and gems, of painting their eyes, of perforating their ears in order to hang them with jewels, of fasting and bleeding themselves in order to

look pale, of tightening their waists and breasts in order to mend their shape, and of coloring their hair to give it a yellow tint.

The most remarkable article in the dress of ecclesiastics during this period was the newly introduced miter. At first it was very low, resembling a stunted cap, as is shown in the plate of Ecclesiastics of the Twelfth Century (page 35), where the bishops carry a very plain pastoral staff. In the figures of ecclesiastics from Chartres Cathedral (opposite, and page 37), the clerics are bare-headed, but the archbishop has a miter which represents a plain, peaked cap. Thomas Becket's miter (page 39), although approaching more nearly the modern form, is still low. That of the archbishops at the end of the twelfth century, appear to be of the same form as that of Becket. In this era, the English ecclesiastics were remarkable for the cost of their apparel, and for their expensive and magnificent style of living.

We cannot perceive that the Normans, immediately after they settled in England, exceeded the Anglo-Saxons in skill in drawing or in taste for ornament; but after that event they progressed very rapidly toward perfection, and the twelfth century may be considered as the most brilliant period of the arts in England during the Middle Ages.

The drawings in manuscripts are generally spirited, and the outline tolerably correct, but they are much less highly colored than at a later period. The favorite kind of ornament during the twelfth century was scrollwork with foliage, which, in the initials and so forth, of manuscripts, as well as in enameled articles, vests, church windows, and so forth, is often extremely elegant. ✤

The Thirteenth Century

THE YEAR 1200 IS NOT a striking division in the history of costume or art, for the first years of the thirteenth century must be considered as a continuation of the last years of the twelfth. In England, the armor of the reign (1199-1216) of King John was nearly the same as that of the reign (1189-1199) of Richard I. In the course of the thirteenth century the quilted armor, then prevalent, began to be superseded by chain mail, which also had been borrowed from the Saracens. A new weapon came also into use, called the *martel-de-fer*, a pointed hammer, used for breaking the links of the armor. The helmet took the form of a barrel, and toward the end of the century it was surmounted by a heraldic crest.

In the time of England's King Edward I, who reigned from 1272-1307, the *aillettes*, for the shoulders, are said to have been introduced, although in one of the illustrations in this volume, of a much earlier period, a cross appears in the situation occupied

by the *aillette*. The plate on page 47 of knights fighting is taken from a continental manuscript, which may account for some apparent anomalies, particularly the kite-shaped shields, which were not used in England at this period.

Several new and rich stuffs were introduced early in the thirteenth century, brought generally from the East. The *siclaton*, which preserved its Arabic name, is supposed to have been a sort of fine, silky wool; the *baudequin*, a rich silk woven with gold, is said to have taken its name from Baldak, or Baghdad.

Siclaton, or siglaton, was chiefly employed in a super-tunic, or outward gown, which was known by the name of the material, and was frequently mentioned by the earlier poets. It was worn indiscriminately by persons of both sexes. Besides these, there were a great variety of costly furs, silks, and so forth, and we now find mention of velvet.

Among the items mentioned in the reign (1272-1307) of Edward I are *sendel* (which appears to have come from India or Persia), *sarcenet* (which is said to have derived its name from the Saracens), *tiretain*, or *tartan*, a.wool cloth of a scarlet color (its name derived by some writers from Tyre in what is now Lebanon), *gauze* (said to have been manufactured at Gaza in Palestine), and *burnet*.

The ladies of the time of Henry III (1216-1272) are most strongly distinguished from those of the previous reigns by their headdresses. The hair was

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now gathered up, and confined in a caul or net of gold thread. The arrangement and shape of this caul appear, during the thirteenth century, to have been varied in almost every possible manner. From the satirists of the reign of Edward I, it would appear that it was then sometimes bound up in the shape of horns, a fashion which became much more famous in succeeding centuries.

The head was still covered with the head-cloth, or kerchief (*couvre-chef*), and the neck was enveloped with a wimple. In the Anglo-Norman romance of Tristan and Iseult, composed probably in the reign of Henry III, the following description is given of the costume worn by the young Iseult:

The queen had clothes of silk,
They were brought from Baldak;
They were furred with white ermine.
The mantle, the bliault, all train after her.
Her locks on her shoulders are
Banded in line on fine gold.
She had a circle of gold on her head.

The *bliault* was a robe which fitted close about the body. One innovation during this century, which appears to have prevailed most in the reign of Edward I, was the long train of the ladies' robes, which dragged on the ground behind them, and did not fail to excite the remarks of contemporary satirists. A song of the reign of Edward I compares the women of his time to pies, and among other points of resemblance, says:

The pie has a long tail
Which hangs in the mud,
on account of its weight;
And a woman makes hers
Longer than any tail
of peacock or of pie.

The men's attire appears not to have undergone so many changes during this century as the costume of the ladies, although it was composed of equally rich materials. Under Henry III the men, in general, wore breeches and stockings, and over them a long tunic, open in front, sometimes as high as the waist. Over these they wore the siclaton. Writers of that century often speak of a fanciful, apparently jagged, mantle, named a *cointise*, which was used perhaps in place of the siclaton.

The shoes were long-toed, and among the rich they were very elaborately embroidered in fretwork. On the head people sometimes wore cowls, at other times round caps and hats, and, when on horseback, a coif attached under the chin.

Under Edward I there was no change in the general character of the dress, but the fretwork was transferred to the stockings, which were richly ornamented. The chief alteration in the dress of the lower orders (which had remained nearly the same since the time

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from Chartres Cathedral (see page 30)

of the Norman conquest) was the addition of a coarse outer garment resembling the modern smock-frock.

The only remarkable change in the ecclesiastical costume was the introduction of the different dress of the many newly-established orders of monks.

In artistic skill, the earlier years of the thirteenth century partake of the character of the twelfth. The illuminations of the middle and latter part of the century are less correct in outline, and deficient in spirit, but more elaborately and richly colored. Ornamental design was becoming gradually so varied and fantastic, that it is not easy to describe its characteristics in limited phraseology. ✻

The Fourteenth Century

THE REIGN OF ENGLAND'S EDWARD II (1307-1327) has nothing very decided in the character of its costume. It may be considered as a period of transition between the reign of Edward I and that of Edward III (1327-1377). The men's clothing style continued much the same as in the preceding reign, except that toward the end of this reign it began to be distinguished by the accumulation of finery, which became so obnoxious to the reforming lollards in the latter part of this century.

At the end of the reign of Edward II, and more universally in the beginning of that of Edward III, the long garments of nobles and knights were changed for a shorter and closer vest, which was distinguished by the name of a *cotte-hardie*, from the sleeves of which hung long slips of cloth; and over the whole was worn a large, flowing mantle, buttoned over the shoulder, the edges frequently jagged, or, as it was then termed, dagged, and cut into the form of leaves and so forth. This mantle was, in general, thrown over the back, so as to leave the front of the body uncovered. The *cotte-hardie* was richly embroidered, and the whole costume was composed of the most costly materials and of the most festive colors. The "painted hoods" were the subject of many a popular rhyme. To the richness of the dress was added a profusion of jewelry and to increase the variety of color parti-colored dresses were now brought into use. The shape of the cap or hat, which was sometimes made of beaver, was frequently changed; one of its peculiarities, was the addition of a feather.

The middle classes of society soon began to vie with the courtiers in the extravagance of their apparel, and sumptuary laws were first enacted in the reign of Edward III, and were frequently repeated in succeeding times. It was during the time of Richard II, who reigned from 1377 to1399, that the extravagance, which these laws were intended to repress, was carried to the greatest excess.

A host of contemporary writers inveigh bitterly against the vain foppery of the times. A writer of a

remarkable alliterative poem on the deposition of Richard II describes these costly fashions as the immediate causes of most of the misfortunes of his reign. Some idea of the costume of this time is shown in the plate on page 63 depicting courtiers of the time of Richard II, especially of the dagging of the edges of the mantle, or rather of the *gown*, for that was the name by which this part of the dress was now designated. Many fashions of this reign appear to have been brought from Germany, which is probably the source of the term "Dutch coats" that is applied to describe them.

The rest of the dress is thus described by a contemporary writer: "Their hoods are small, tied under the chin, and buttoned like those of the women, but set with gold, silver, and precious stones. Their tippets pass round the neck, and hang down before to the feet. They have another garment of silk which they call a paltock. Their stockings are of two colors (party-colored), or pied with more, which they tie to the paltocks with white latchets called herlots, without any breeches. Their belts are of gold and silver, and some of them worth 20 marks. Their shoes and pattens are snouted and piked more than a finger long, bending upward, which they called "crakowes," resembling the claws of devils, and fastened to the knees with chains of gold and silver."

Several articles of dress at this period were common to both sexes. Another contemporary moralist (printed in *The Reliquiae Antiquae, Volume I*, page 41) gives the following account of the dress of the men and women of the reign of Richard II: "Thus the devil fares with men and women: First he stirs them to pamper their flesh, desiring delicious meats and drinks, and so to hop on the pillar (of the devil's temptation) with their horns, locks, garlands of gold and of rich pearls, cauls, fillets, and wimples, and riddled gowns, and rockets, collars, laces, jackets, and paltokes, with their long crakowes, and thus the devil bears them up upon the pillar, to teach them to fly above other simple folk, and saith that they shall not hurt themselves, but he lies falsely, for unless they are as sorry therefore as ever they were glad, they shall leap down from the pillar into the pit of hell."

The women's costume in the first half of the fourteenth century differed little from that of the preceding age. They still wore the same style of coiffure, as well as the kerchief, and the gorget about the neck. The gorget and kerchief were commonly seen during this period.

In the reign of Edward III, the dress of the ladies made the same advances as that of the other sex. The cotte-hardie, sometimes with and sometimes without the long slips at the elbows, was worn by the women as well as by the men. Sometimes, instead of this vest, the ladies wore a tight gown or kirtle, very long, with long or short sleeves, and not infrequently with the same long slips at the elbows. At a later peri-

worn over the gown, reaching to the hips, and bordered with rich furs. This waistcoat came into more general use toward the latter part of the century. The hair was still bound up in a caul of fret or network.

Many of the festive women's fashions of the reign of Richard II are said to have been introduced by Queen Anne of Bohemia. A similar revolution in the same age was effected in France by the love of splendor and gaiety which was the characteristic of Queen Anne of Austria.

Ecclesiastics appear to have rivaled the laity in their love of finery. The splendor of the sacerdotal garments of ceremony was perhaps at its greatest height in the latter part of the twelfth and earlier part of the thirteenth centuries. Yet we can hardly imagine a dress much more rich than that represented in the plate of the incised slab seen on page 55.

Chaucer's description of his pilgrims is the best authority for the costumes of the different orders of society in the time of Richard II. His own portrait, seen on page 61, may be considered a good example of the ordinary costume of the time.

It would require a volume to give a minute account of all the changes in the military costume of people during the fourteenth century. One of the most remarkable innovations was the introduction of plate armor, which began to be used extensively in the reign of Edward II. The construction of the whole reign of Edward II, took the form of an egg, more or less pointed at the top. The neck was covered by a guard of chain, called a camail. Crested helmets were used chiefly in tournaments. Aillettes were more universally worn. The shield took the shape most commonly represented in coats-of-arms, and was sometimes flat and at others semi-cylindrical. To offensive weapons were added the Turkish scimitar, and a new kind of poleaxe. During the reign of Edward III, the body of the warrior was completely encased in steel.

Many improvements at the same period were made in the helmet and the camail. A light jupon, embroidered with the arms of the wearer, and a rich belt, were first worn over the hauberk, then over it with the plastron, and then over the cuirass or "pair of plates," with an apron only, of mail.

In the time of Richard II many fantastical alterations were made in the form of defensive armor, in accordance with the general taste of that period, particularly in the helmet and visor, the latter often being shaped like a beak.

Ornamental design, during this century, was so varied that it would be scarcely possible to give a comprehensive account of it. The styles of drawings in illuminated manuscripts are extremely unequal, some beautiful specimens being found among much that is very inferior. The writings of manuscripts is less handsome, but more flowing, than in the preceding

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centuries. The initial letters frequently possess great elegance and the international ornamental works that we have included represent French, English and other continental workmanship. ✻

The Fifteenth Century

AFTER THE ACCESSION OF HENRY IV to the English throne in 1399, various attempts were made to reform the extravagant fashions and expensive apparel of the preceding reign, and new and severe sumptuary laws were repeatedly enacted, but with very partial success. The dagged and slashed garments were especially forbidden, as were all garments "cut in the form of letters, rose-leaves, and posies of various kinds, or any such like devices."

Among the new names of articles of apparel which became common during the reigns of Henry IV (1399-1413) and Henry V (1413-1422), was a long tunic called a *houp-pelande,* which appears to have been most commonly of scarlet; a cloak of scarlet cloth and camlet called a *heuke;* and an outer garment of fur named a *pilche*.

The general character of the dress appeared, however, to have partaken largely of the fashions of the reign of Richard II, and the satirists continue to speak of the long *pokes,* or sleeves, sweeping on the ground, and best fitted, as they said, for thieves who wanted a convenient receptacle for stolen goods. One of the "abusions" condemned by the poet Occleve was "A robe of scarlet, twelve yards wide, with pendant sleeves down on the ground, and the future thereon set, amounting unto 20 pounds or bet," for which, as he said, if the wearer paid, he would have "no good" left, "wherewith to buy himself a hood."

To this, he adds quaintly:

"Now have these lords little need of brooms
To sweep away the filth out of the street,
Since side sleeves of penniless grooms
Will it up lick, be it dry or wet."

With the reign of Henry VI, we come to a new period of the history of costume. The men's clothing styles of this period were again distinguished by every species of extravagance, and were almost infinitely varied. Among the principal characteristics were long, tight stockings, with feet, and sometimes short boots or buskins, and sometimes boots reaching to the middle of the thigh, called *galoches*.

There also might have been very long toed-shoes — with high fronts and backs that turned over each way — with a jacket or doublet cut short at the shoulders, and apparently an undervest, of which the sleeves passed through the armholes of the jacket. The mantle appeared in every fantastic variety of form, as well as the hat or cap, which was frequently

od a kind of spencer, or waistcoat, came into fashion. armor became more complicated. The helmet, in the

ous illustrations of the state dress of this period.

The long-toed shoes, the hose buskins, and the galoches, with other articles of men's attire, continued under Edward IV and Richard III with little variation. However, the jacket was cut shorter, and was much stuffed and padded, and the sleeves cut open in slits, so as to show the rich shirts. The cap was sometimes made in a form nearly resembling that of the modern hat. The mantle during this period appears to have been less frequently worn.

The extravagance of dress in fifteenth century England appears at no period more remarkable than during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509). Men of fashion wore very broad-brimmed hats or caps, with a profusion of large feathers. The sleeve of the jacket or purpoint was formed of two or more slips, attached to each other by points or laces, leaving openings through which the embroidered shirt was seen protruding.

The upper part of the stockings was sometimes slashed and puffed, while the mantle was sometimes elegantly bordered, or dagged. Sometimes the mantle was made of a square form, reaching hardly to the thighs, but with long, square sleeves which nearly touched the ground, and holes through which the arms passed. But the most remarkable characteristic of the latter part of the fifteenth century was the almost ridiculous broadness of the toes of the shoes, toes of the preceding reigns.

The French writer, Paradin, describing the manners of this century, says that at first "the men wore shoes with a point before, half a foot long; the richer and more eminent persons wore them a foot, and princes two feet long, which was the most ridiculous thing that ever was seen; and when men became tired of these pointed shoes, which were called *poulains*, they adopted others in their place which were named duck-bills, having a bill or beak before that was four or five fingers in length. Afterward, assuming a contrary fashion, they wore shoes so very broad in front as to exceed the measure of a good foot."

The plates from *The Roman de la Rose* seen on pages 108 to 133, best describes the men's costume of the reign of Henry VII.

The women's costume also went through many changes during the fifteenth century. In the earlier years of the century, the dress of the ladies differs little from that of the reign of Richard II, except in the headdress. The hair was still gathered into a gold caul, but was stretched out curiously like two barrel ends, was flattened at the top, and appeared sometimes to be crowned with a garland, or covered with a kerchief or veil. This fashion seems not to have lasted very long, and we soon meet with the horn-shaped headdresses, a fashion which, in some form or other, had certainly existed more than a century before.

In addition to other allusions to the early use of the horned headdress — which has been too hastily stated not to have existed before the period which we are now treating — the subject was addressed in a late thirteenth century French satirical poem entitled *Des Cornetes*, which was printed in Achille Jubinal's *Jongleurs et Trouveres*.

The horned headdresses of the fifteenth century appear first in the shape of a heart, or of a broad miter placed sideways on the head. This fashion appears to have been brought from France. At first it was very fat, as in the figures in the plates of St. Edmund (page 60) and Christine de Pisan (page 83). In the latter plate we see another kind of horned headdress, which appeared in England a little later, resembling in some degree two butterflies' wings; it will be seen more strongly developed in the plate of The Lady of the Tournament (page 101).

It was succeeded about the middle of the century by the high tower, or steele-shaped, headdress, which had, generally, a long veil or kerchief hanging down behind. The cotte-hardie continued to be worn, and was laced very tight, in order to give a small waist to the wearer.

The common dress of the ladies through the reigns of Henry V and VI was a very long, narrow gown trailing on the ground, with hanging sleeves like those of the men. Under Henry VI the train of the gown was first made of an extravagant length, and soon provoked the criticisms of the satirists, who also accused the ladies of this time of having their dresses open so low before and behind as to expose to view the naked back and breast to an indecent extent. Toward the end of Henry's reign, and in that of his successor, the steeple headdresses were worn at an extraordinary height.

A French moralist, who wrote soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, gives us some curious traits of contemporary manners:

"Entering upon the subject of clothes," he explains with sarcastic wit, "One manner of spoiling and abusing one's vestments is, as to the form, which as regards women I consider in four parts. The first is in the head, which used to be horned, but is now mitered in these parts of France. And now these miters are in the shape of chimneys, and the more beautiful and younger the wearers are, the higher chimneys which they carry. The battlements to combat God above are the fine works of silk, the beautiful figures, the gold, the silver, the pearls, sometimes precious stones, and rich embroidery.

"The lances are the great forked pins; the arrows are the little pins. The shield is the large forehead stripped of hair. [It was the fashion in this century to pluck out the hair round the forehead, so as to make it appear larger.]

"The second evil is the great standard which they carry, this great, loose kerchief which hangs down

surmounted by a feather. The plates contain numer- which suddenly usurped the place of the long, pointed

gained the castle against God; for when the men at arms gain a place, they hoist their flag upon it. Another evil is in the body.

"By detestable vanity ladies of rank now cause their robes to be made so low in the breast and so open on the shoulders, that we may see nearly the whole bosom and all their shoulders, and much below down their backs; and so tight in the waist that they can scarcely respire in them, and often suffer great pain by it, in order to make their bodies small. And if it is said in their defense that, though they do not cover their breasts and necks with their robes, they cover them with something else. I answer that the covering is only vanity, for they cover it with a stuff so loose that one may see the flesh completely through it.

"The third evil is in the tail. They make them such long tails, that I see in them four *great* evils. The first of these is useless waste. What is the use of that great heap of cloth and fur and of silk which drags on the ground, and is often the cause of the loss of the robe, and of the time which must be employed to clean these long tails, as well as of the patience of the servants?

"The fourth evil is when they cause to be made for their feet shoes which are so small that they can scarcely walk in them, whereby they frequently have their feet lamed, sore, and full of corns."

fashion, the hair being confined in a lower cap of gold net, projecting horizontally from the back of the head, and covered with a kerchief.

In the reign of Henry VII, the gown appeared fuller, and less tightly laced; the sleeves were full, sometimes slashed, and otherwise ornamented. The hair is now suffered to escape from under the cap or caul, and to hang loosely over the back. There appears, however, toward the end of the century, and in the beginning of the next, to have been no exclusive form of headdress among the fair sex, for we meet with an infinite variety in the pictures from this period of time.

The most prominent alterations in defensive armor in the first half of the fifteenth century were the introduction of the *panache,* or upright plume, on the helmet; some changes in the form of the helmet itself; the absence of the jupon and surcoat; and the addition of a skirt of horizontal bands of steel to the globular breastplate. Large, hanging sleeves of cloth were also sometimes worn with the armor.

During the reign of Henry VI the armor was highly ornamented, and frequently remarkable for the fantastic forms given to the different parts of the suit, of which several additional ones were now introduced. Handguns were added to the offensive arms of soldiers toward the middle of the century. From this time forward, the armor of the nobility was made

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more and more splendid and costly. Elbow and knee pieces, in particular, took very fantastic forms.

The love of splendor naturally carried with it a taste for ornamental work and the fine arts. The latter were cultivated after the middle of the century with greater success than at any former period.

Artists of first-rate talent were employed in adorning manuscripts with delicate miniatures; and many of those preserved are works of art. The best school of miniatures was that of Flanders. The most elegant initial letters during this period are found in manuscripts executed in Italy. Cups, and similar articles, were also at this time ornamented in exquisite taste by excellent artificers. ✻

The Sixteenth Century

WITH THE REIGN OF HENRY VIII, who ruled England from 1509 to 1547, we enter upon an entirely new period of costume and of art, differing in every possible respect from the ages which preceded. Indeed, this era, which coincided with the period of the Italian Renaissance, can be said to mark the conclusion of the Middle Ages as we understand them. Meanwhile, the splendor and extravagance of the feudal baronage — an important feature of medieval society — was expiring, and the gorgeous pageantry of the Roman Catholic Church, which had contributed so much to medieval art, was on the point of disappearing from Britain.

The common men's costume of the higher orders and gentry during Henry VIII's reign may be best conceived by a reference to the illustration of the Earl of Surrey seen opposite and page 165.

As we can see, this fashion consisted of a full-skirted jacket or doublet, with large sleeves to the wrist, with a short, full coat over it, having frequently loose-hanging sleeves. To this was often added a broad collar of fur. A brimmed cap with an ostrich feather, close stockings, square-toed shoes, and an embroidered shirt, showing itself at the breast, and in ruffles at the wrists, completed the dress.

The upper part of the stockings were now slashed, puffed, and embroidered, and appeared as distinct from the lower part, or stockings. The gowns of the higher orders were very costly in material and ornament. Merchants and others wore them in the same form as those of nineteenth century masters of arts in the universities. During the reigns of Edward VI (1547-1553) and Mary I (1553-1558), the cap was often replaced by a small, round bonnet, worn on one side of the head; the shoes took nearly their present form; the puffed stockings (called trunkhose) continued in use; but the doublet was lengthened considerably at the bottoms.

This costume continued in use, with different changes in the details, until the reign of Charles I

almost to their derrieres; it is a sign that the devil has

Under Richard III a new headdress came into