The Ambiguity of Seamlessness: The Poetic Function of Making

YE SEUNG LEE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal College of Art for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012

The Royal College of Art

Copyright Statement

This text represents the submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. This copy has been supplied for the purpose of research for private study, on the understanding that it is copyright material, and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Abstract

This practice-led research examines the paradox of seamlessness in fashion, drawing on the similarities found between the process of making garments, the process of their embodiment and process of research. Integrating practical and theoretical methods, it suggests that the process of making and using garments can be a transitional experience, as well as a device that creates ambiguity of subjectivity, which in turn promotes the subject's reflexive re-adjustment. This analysis informed and was informed by making a series of seamless woven garments which reveal their own construction, showing themselves to be forms in process, representing the ambiguity of modern subjects.

Inconsistency and contradiction are intrinsic to fashion: it is both matter and meaning, both cover and display, both imitation and differentiation, but it is always difficult to locate clear demarcation. As a garment-maker, I metaphorically placed this ambiguity at the material level of seams, openings and edges of garments, from which emerged the research question:

What is the meaning and function of the seam and seamlessness?

My investigation through making garments via hand-woven seaming methods, and my search for an adequate theoretical rendering of the reflections arising from the making, led me beyond the discipline of fashion, to the fields of psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology and art, literary and cultural theory, from which a series of perspectives are derived. Articulated in this thesis and the accompanying exhibition are thus the process and result of my explorations through making, writing, and theory.

The making process involving contact with material is a displacing experience that generates a reflexive value. This demonstrates the ability of garments to test and reset the essential boundary of corporeal subjectivity through the experience of both illusion and reality. Dressing practice is thus the making of the self via repeated reality testing. The poetic function of making thus enables us to generate an authentic knowledge from the experience of oscillating between disparate states. Therefore, together, the seam and seamlessness represent the subject-in-process, and fashion as a particular way of being in this transitional passage.

The estranging effect of my hand-woven seams demonstrate this poetic function of making. In the same way, the thesis reveals the seams between practice and theory, and between diverse references, but also their mutually informing relationship.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Table of contents	4
Accompanying Material	5
Acknowledgments	6
Author's declaration	7
Reading Instruction	8
Introduction	9
The Structure and Summary of the Thesis	12
Chapter 1. The Skin Ego	18
The Bodily Pre-Ego	18
Transitional Objects	26
Materiality in the Liminal State	32
Chapter 2. The Garment Ego	44
Hybridity	46
The Garment Ego	58
Chapter 3. Auratic Objects	70
The Fetish	72
Walter Benjamin's Aura and the Fetish	78
Chapter 4. Here and Now	98
Ritual Making	98
Self-Making	112
Chapter 5. Seaming Hands	126
A Permanent Passage	126
The Cocoon	130
The Handmade – a Resting Place	134
The Commodified Trace	136
Losing the Edge	144
The Unique and Modernity	152
Chapter 6. Seamless?	154
Setting Apart	154
Marking Out	
Putting Together	166
Chapter 7. The Toile Ego	176
Margiela's Seam	176
Locating the Aura in Contemporary Fashion	180
Deconstruction in Fashion	
The Poetic Function of the Weaving-in Technique	
Conclusion	
List of References	

Accompanying Material

A DVD containing photos of the final exhibition (Lower Gulbenkian Gallery, Royal College of Art. 24 April 2013) and selected photos of the final collection worn by a model.

Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible were it not for the help of a diverse range of people whom I would like to thank for their invaluable assistance.

I am very grateful to my supervisors Professor Wendy Dagworthy and Tristan Webber, who have provided unflagging support and guidance throughout the project. Dr. Claire Pajaczkowska guided me through the process with limitless intellectual and emotional support. Dr. Prue Bramwell-Davis generously provided stimulating and constructive advice.

Many other specialists have also freely and generously given their time and advice. In particular Stefan Stefanou of RCA Ceramics and Glass, RCA foundry manager Irene Gunston and foundry assistant Drew Cole taught me mould-making techniques. Master weaver William Jeffries patiently taught me tapestry weaving. RCA Textiles tutor Kim Avella advised me with her extensive knowledge of weaving. I would like to thank Cathy Johns of RCA library for her meticulous proofreading.

My fellow students in Fashion and Textiles Research, especially Rachel Philpott, Elaine Igoe, Emma Shercliff, Katie Gaudion, have provided lively debate and have offered indispensable emotional support.

Professor Louise Wilson taught me how to live through failures.

My very special thanks go to my family.

Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Ye Seung Lee 14 December 2012

Reading Instruction

Readers are encouraged to view the main chapters of this thesis (pp.17-194) with the consecutive odd-and-even numbered pages together as if reading a book—with the odd-numbered pages on the left-hand side and even-numbered pages on the right-hand side—using 'Two Page View' of Adobe Reader.

Introduction

The making I undertook for this practice-led research was done entirely by hand, and was thus a very long process. When the maker spends a large amount time on a single task every day, it undoubtedly influences her. As the making settled in as a daily ritual, my life actually unfolded as I was making. It became my basic mode of 'being', just like getting dressed every day: what I make is influenced by my condition and mood, and by others I interact with; it is not an entirely rational process, but something to compulsively settle into, change direction in, or set aside; the way my making progresses influences me both knowingly and unknowingly. From these similarities between the two emerged my main focus of investigation: what do these habitual modes of doing and being 'do' to me, and to the material? What happens at the boundary where the two different edges meet? How do the influences/changes manifest in both the material and me?

So this research, to put it more precisely, with reference to Christopher Frayling's definition, is 'research *for* the arts'–it is as much autobiography and personal development as communicable knowledge, an investigation of *what I am* through what I make and do.¹

Observing and analysing my own experience required different approaches from the more distant perspective of research carried out from a third-person point of view. As a garment-maker, I devise ways of putting together cut pieces of cloth, and am inevitably used to taking garments apart to mend mistakes or to improve the fit. I am thus more familiar with the inside of the garment than the outside. It is this 'turning inside' of the garment that is here conducted as a research method. Making is working together with 'unruly' things that seem to have their own will. It takes time

_

¹ During a talk given by Christopher Frayling in the first few weeks of starting research, he mentioned the much-quoted categorisation of practice-led research to help us understand what he called the 'Radical Academy': 'Research into, through, for the arts.' In the 1993 article where this originates, he elaborates the three approaches through a quote from E.M. Forster: 'The novelist E.M. Foster's aunt once said to Forster: 'How can I tell that I think till I see what I say?' That seems to me to be very like the first category. If we modify this to 'How can I tell what I think till I see what I make and do?', then we've covered the second category as well. But if we modify it further to 'How can I tell what I am till I see what I make and do?' it seems to me we have a fascinating dilemma on our hands. As much about autobiography and personal development as communicable knowledge.'

and effort to get used to the material, as is also the case with people and the changing self. Rather than by talking or thinking, because it involves actually doing, making teaches me where the limiting edge is, how to approach it, and how to deal with the uncertainties residing on the edge. Making is thus humbling—it compels the maker to 'turn inside' and consider the seams between herself, the material and other people.

I kept work-journals as a method of consciously creating distance from the work in progress. The changing state of myself and my work were recorded in the form of jotted-down notes and snapshots, as if stalking myself: these were supplemented by more purposeful reflections. When I revisited these at later stages, the abundant first person 'I's were not at all certain. To whom were the questions, commands, and whirlpool of emotions geared? Who was the subject or object of the action, and the states recorded?

The attempts I made to gain analytic viewpoints without completely removing the first person may be likened to the approach of ichnologists². Ichnology is a branch of archaeology involving the study of traces produced by organisms on or within a substrate, and encompasses the study of the interaction between organisms and substrates. As a maker-researcher, I empathise with the substrate, the creatures which have left their trace, and also the ichnologist. In a trace fossil, the briefest time (the passing, momentary movements of the creature) and the longest time (fossilisation) coexist³. The way my making moves, stitch by stitch, the extremely slow

_

² '**ichno-:** Gr *ikhno-*, a trace or track, a footprint, a footstep: ... **ichnology**: the study or knowledge of fossil footprints.' (Partridge, 2006, p.4058)

^{&#}x27;Ichnology involves the study of traces produced by organisms on or within a substrate, and includes all issues related to bioturbation, bioerosion, and biodeposition. As such, ichnology encompasses both the study of processes and their resulting products. The processes are all those involved in the interaction between organisms and substrates. The products are the traces themselves, which comprise individual and distinctive structures of biogenic origin ... Trace fossils (such as tracks, trails, burrows, coprolites, fecal castings, borings, scrapes, surface etching scars) represent evidence of behaviour ... Analysis of the morphology and architecture of trace fossils reveals valuable information on the anatomy and ethology of their producers (e.g. mode of life, trophic type, and locomotion mechanisms)' (Buatois & Mángano, 2011, p.5; pp.9-10)

³ 'Ichnologists ... appreciate that the forms are the *process*, and not only the result of the process; that, strictly speaking, there is no end to this process; that the image actually seen is only the 'anachronistic present' of an uninterrupted chance deformation, of alteration, of effacement and of 'revival' of all sorts. ... As, here, *the forms are the substrate*, or rather the dialectic process of the modification of the substrate by a certain gesture. ... They know the anachronism, they acknowledge, for example (without always being able to distinguish it), the superimposition of modern and prehistoric traces. In each imprint, they feel the poignant coexistence of the briefest time—the passing footstep, the panicking gesture, the flutter of a dragonfly wing—and the longest time, that of the 'curing' which is the fossilisation. They therefore know that *the forms are time at work*,

progress of seaming and hemming, feels almost like the time required for a trace to fossilise. Yet the process of making is an accumulation of non-identical repetitions and non-uniform fleeting moments (the brush of hands, skipping stitches, flickering thoughts, the ebb and flow of emotions). Like the creatures oblivious to the trace they are leaving behind, the maker is often unaware of the result of her own action, nor of the changes happening in her. It is only in retrospect that these permanent and momentary traces left at different stages are discovered and appraised.

Just as ichnologists know that the forms are the process, not just the result of the process, what is being studied in this research is the process, 'the dialectic modification of the substrate', the maker and the cloth, created by their interactions.

As I choose to make through a long process, I have gradually been moulded by it. The resulting garments also represent the 'time at work', the contradictory time entangled in the same object.³ The seaming method I employ in my making is this briefest and longest time recorded, countable stitch by stitch. The seams embody the process of interaction.

The experience⁴ of making a mould by life-casting my own shoulder led me to notice the gap between the life form and the inanimate counter-form—the inevitable gap caused by my breathing movements. A displaced view (counter-form) is essential in rendering the experiential knowledge communicable, yet this gap, the emotional and sensuous dimension lost in the process of conversion is often overlooked, despite its overriding influence on the maker, the process, and the work produced. I have attempted to convey this gap, compromising the cool and objective analysis of my own practice.

The fascinating aspect of making with the hands is that it seems to stimulate the brain. As if the sensuous acts of touching, seeing, and moving turn into half-made thoughts and emotions within the place which is exclusive to me and the thing I make, I involuntarily start brainstorming as I settle into the making—even if these thoughts can easily be lost during the attempts to render them permanent by making notes, or while putting down the needle. Am I thinking through touch and movement? What if thoughts were as much an affair of the skin as of the brain, as psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu questions? (Anzieu, 1989. p9) What if emotions were as much an affair

contradictory time entangled in the same image: time of the earth and time of the foot which touched it, for a moment, and forever.' (Didi-Huberman, 1997, p.190) (italics in original) (author's translation)

4 See the journal entry on page 63, Chapter Two.

of the skin as of the brain?

My texts arose from the journal entries that contain these thoughts and emotions. The occasional fragmentary matches between experiences and words were recorded in the most raw state possible, as they emerged. These records were accumulated and used as 'textual material' in more constructed texts. This purposeful writing and conscious reflection reshaped the experience: it not only revealed something that had not been acknowledged before, but dialectically reconstructed the past from the particular time and place of reflection. Writing also served as a finishing touch for the experience of making. As writing in a communicable way required a very different kind of attention from that required for making, the most objective 'I' appraised the process and the result, attempting to re-live the moments while admitting the alteration and deformation. Therefore the texts here oscillate at different distances between self and other, concrete and abstract, as they are the result of this repeated making and reacting. The thesis is laid out to disclose this helical process, the implicit reciprocal relationship between the two components of research-experience and reflection, action and reaction, tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge-overlapping and separating at the seam/fold of the book.

I hope this seam-full writing process explains the 'impurities' in this thesis—the sometimes emotional and uneven tone, as well as the inarticulateness. It is because I am discussing handmade garments that I have learned to embrace impurities. The garments become impure by my making touches, in the same way that any worn garment picks up bits of myself and bits of others. I therefore did not strive to generate a semblance of a seamless finish.

The Structure and Summary of the Thesis

The complex and multi-layered meanings and functions of the cut, the edge and the seam are discussed in this thesis from various angles. A series of chapters focuses on the ambiguity of the seam and seamlessness at different levels of proximity to, and distance from, the self: the seam between unconscious and conscious states of mind, fantasy and reality, body and object, organic and mechanical, nature and culture: each take us a pace away from the close-up point of view, with the inner workings of garment in the last chapter spiralling back towards the point of departure, the recognition of the seams in the self, through the deeply personal yet social nature

of fashion.

While the first two chapters and the last three chapters discuss garments and fashion explicitly, the middle two chapters appear to move away from the fashion context, focusing more on our relationship with general material objects in terms of making, owning and using them. This structure is intended to communicate, via displacement, the significance of the garment that can unknowingly reach the core of our being. Yet more importantly, the structure suggests that fashion is not limited to concerns of garment construction and design, but is centrally engaged with wider cultural issues of the experience of the body, the self in society, the self as constructed through the codes and conventions of representation, and is thus *fundamental* to an understanding of ourselves as human beings.

The textual structure of the thesis is in two halves: the reader may hold one in his/her left hand and the other in the right hand (in hard-copy format rather than on a digital screen). This formalism is deployed in order to integrate, into the dissertation, the sense of the research process being led by the creative practice. Each page of 'explanation' (unfolding, *ex-planare*) is preceded, in space, by a page of journal entries, photographs⁵ and documents, which record the creative process as a form of tacit, implicit, or enfolded, knowledge. The way that the reader holds, in their hands, the structure of the very research process is the 'poetic function' of the thesis.

The first chapter interprets the skin, the garment, the corporeal subject as an ambiguous container—at once permeable and impermeable, with openings and closings—through the notion of the Skin Ego. This interpretation presents the garment as a liminal interface that enables us to exist as both a personal and a social being. This liminality/ambiguity is represented in the material form of seams, openings and the edges of garments. The garment's role is thus emphasised as that which tests and resets the essential boundary of corporeal subjectivity.

The second chapter suggests an understanding of the garment as a second ego, with which we identify, form affinities and create a hybridity with the body-self via sustained habitual contact. The garment regarded as a container, with an inside and an outside, means that all these aspects can also be applied at a social level, which

⁵ All photographs and visual images in this thesis are of my own work, either in progress or completed, and are closely linked to the texts on the opposite pages. Therefore, I have not included captions.

allows the idea of a 'common skin' to be expanded to a social hybridity, similar to the notion of habitus

Chapter Three attempts to convey the emotional and sensuous aspects of making, owning, and using material objects. Through the notion of the fetish and the aura, I explore the appeal of certain material objects that trigger us to experience 'otherness of the self'. The self in such a liminal state simultaneously 'fears' and clings to the object, experiencing intense emotion, fixation, or idealisation. This phenomenon is a transposition of the contradictory human relationship of identification and differentiation within the human-object relationship. The notion of aura and fetish is thus aligned with the uncertainty of self arising from its interaction with an other, whether human or object.

In Chapter Four, the radical otherness of the liminal is formulated as a device of 'defamiliarisation' within the poetic text. Applied to material objects, the poetic qualities found in some artefacts can be said to reside in their ability to create ambiguity. As the estranging effect of my seaming method demonstrates, we can 'use' objects to awaken our ability to reflect. The poetic function of objects becomes effective when the mode of making meets the mode of using or seeing, and this is the origin of the 'authenticity', I suggest, which Benjamin related to the notion of aura.

Chapter Five portrays modern subjects in permanent passage within what theorists have identified as the condition of modernity. It suggests a truly committed and engaged mode of making as both a creative, reflective 'resting place' and as a method of seaming the maker and user through an appreciation of the process of both making and using. The fact that my seaming method is a hand-woven simulation of industrial machine weaving encourages us to reflect on the hand, the machine and digital production in modernity. The seam and the edge are thus explored here in relation to the mode of production and consumption of material things, and their pertinence to the sense of unique self.

In Chapter Six, widespread cultural references are cited to evidence our tendency to idealise the unbroken, seamless surfaces of the body, garments or other artefacts, while viewing cuts and discontinuities as taboo. I analyse this as a reflection of our yearning for a stable subjectivity as well as the underlying acknowledgement of our

liminal, unstable state. This analysis then leads me to suggest that man-made objects such as crafted artefacts or constructed garments are the material reminder of the human effort required in the process of making, which in turn promotes the displaced view of self as constructed assembly rather than a perfect stable whole.

The last chapter juxtaposes my seaming technique with the deconstruction philosophy deployed in late twentieth and early twentyfirst-century fashion. They both imply, by revealing the structural mechanism of garments, that the garment, the body, and the self are all in process. This reveals the contradictory function of fashion: the seams or 'wrong' garments can awaken us to the 'constructed' and inconsistent self, but garments also provide us with an illusion of stability by constantly calibrating the psychological, physical, and social state of the subject. From these observations, I suggest that the auratic in fashion is generated by the poetic function of making—of garments and of selves through using garments.

Intentionally Blank

I touch my hand with my hand and all the lines of my fingerprints start to melt from the point where they touch each other and the fingers, the ten fingers are about to be welded into obscure five. Anxious, I try to pull them apart but they are already merged. My effort to separate them pulls them further apart, into strands, now my hands are seamlessly welded through my fingers and I can stretch them long. A glass-blower in Venice made a small blue horse with beautiful mane for my nephew. The hot blue glass was like transparent, glowing chewing gum drawn out of mouth. I wonder if my hands are going to cure as they are now. The fingertips can feel the stickiness of the initial contact, and become lighter and lighter as they get further stretched. I try to keep the five strands separate as if it would be better than having them all tangled together in one confused mass - somehow I want to preserve the 'finger-ness' of my fingers. What if the touch of my hands melt, any surface they touch are drawn out and extend in long strands? What if the back of people I embrace, the surfaces of their back, their skin and clothes merged, become semifluid, and eventually, the numerous long drawn-out strands from the touches weave a fine web, and we move within this permanent evidence of contacts we have ever made?

A journal entry on Monday 31 May 2010 - 'reading' Javier Perez's Autoportrait (1993)

Chapter One. The Skin Ego

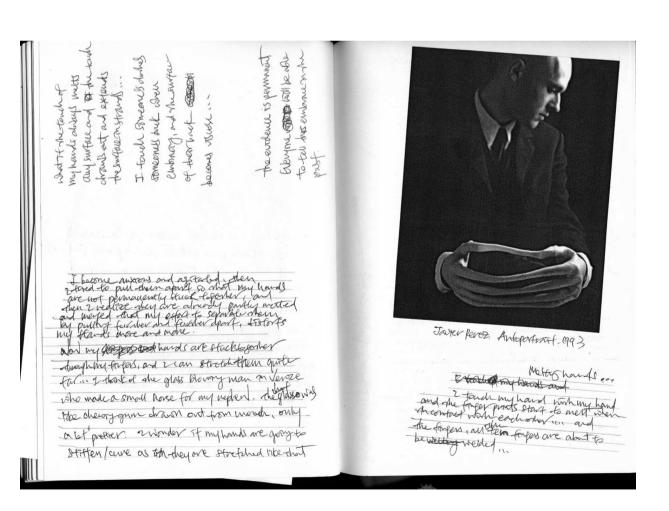
As the membrane which serves as the interface between what is 'outside' and what is 'inside' the body, skin has a powerful symbolic function in generating metaphors for the boundaries that differentiate the self from the world, and the self from others. This metaphorical function of skin as a membrane, with an 'inside' and an 'outside', is, perhaps, most powerfully present in our clothes and clothing. Not only do the cultures of wrapping, shrouding, swaddling, bandaging, veiling, and adorning all carry the meanings of this need to create and represent social membranes in the form of clothes, but also garments themselves are constructed through complex conventions of 'right' and 'wrong' ways of bringing skin in contact with cultural surfaces such as clothes. If skin is nature's container for the biological body, then nowhere is the paradoxical nature of a living organ seen as an impermeable barrier more ambiguously present than in fashion. It is the ambiguity of seamlessness that is the principal focus of this research. There is an ambiguity between skin as a system which is open, has apertures, breathes, interacts and signifies, and the idea of skin as a system which serves to define, demarcate, delineate, and 'close off' one subject from another. The fact that skin is thereby rendered into an organ of sensory communication, of stable containment, and of a protective barrier, is a product of this ambiguity between self, subject and surface. This chapter brings to the reader a series of contentions made by a number of theorists on skin, and relates these to the process by which I have explored the meaning of these through my practice as a garment-maker.

The Bodily Pre-Ego

According to Freud, 'the ego⁶ is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body.' (Freud, 1953-74, p.26) From this theory, the understanding of the skin as a sensitive expression not just of the body's, but also of

-

⁶ To avoid confusions, the terms 'Ego', 'Self', 'phantasy' used in the field of psychoanalysis are simplified to 'ego', 'self', 'fantasy' in this thesis, except in direct quotations.



the mind's, complexion, reached its culmination in the work of Didier Anzieu on the relations between the experience of the skin and the formation and sustaining of the ego. (Connor, 2004, p.49) Following the tradition of Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott and others, who conceptualised the experience of the skin in early object relations, Anzieu focuses on the mapping of early psychic experience based on that of the skin, and the development of the self in an interpersonal matrix.

Anzieu proposes the notion of the Skin Ego as 'a reality in the order of phantasy', which functions as an intermediary screen between the psyche and the body, the world, and other psyches, and 'provides the imaginary space on which phantasies, dreams, thinking and every form of psychopathological organization are constituted.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.4) The notion of the Skin Ego rests on a solid biological foundation, as it places the emphasis 'on the skin as a basic datum that is of both an organic and an imaginary order, both a system for protecting our individuality and a first instrument and site of interaction with others'. (ibid., p.3) Therefore the Skin Ego respects the specificity of psychical phenomena in relation to both organic and social realities. The Skin Ego is a mental image of which a child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body. (ibid., p.40) Whereas in Lacan's theory it is the specular image that provides a unified sense of corporeal subjectivity, negotiating the opposing information received from tactile, kinaesthetic and visual perception, Anzieu suggests that it is the organising and connecting function of the Skin Ego that gives the sense of corporeal unity:

The skin is a surface containing pockets and cavities where the sense organs ... are located. The Skin Ego is a psychical surface which connects up sensations of various sorts and makes them stand out as forms against the original background formed by the tactile envelope: this is the Skin Ego's function of intersensoriality. (ibid., p.103)

This function of intersensoriality provides the person with the sense of a unified self, without the anxiety of the body being fragmented. (ibid., p.104) Through adequate tactile interactions with the material environment at the earliest stages, the Skin Ego

⁷ 'Lacan uses the opposition between the perception of tactile and kinaesthetic information (which yields the image of the fragmented body, the body-in-bits-and-pieces) and visual perception (which provides an illusory unity for the body seen from the outside) to explain the genesis of an always alienated identity for the subject. The subject is incapable of adequately integrating the fragmented sense of its corporeality provided by its sense with the completion, cohesion and totalization of the visual image of the body. For Lacan, the development of the infant's ego is dependent on its ability to identify with an image of its corporeal unity.' (Gross, 1991, p.83)

I sometimes feel as if I am inside a bubble,
from where I can't see out.

From the inside, I am unaware of the world outside.
I wonder if there is an opening in this bubble...
or is the wall penetrable?
This bubble is in me as an ever present fear
even when all seems fine.
I panic when there is no means
to compare myself with others,
as much as I hate being judged.
What if I am the only one inside a bubble?
With no measure of comparison,
I guess I am only competing with myself.
I try to beat or meet what I did in the past.
But sometimes it feels like I'm just beating myself up.

A journal entry on Thursday 10 March 2011

builds up a self-coordinating relationship between the psyche and the soma. (ibid., p.98)

The formation of the Skin Ego starts as an imaginary layer, which constitutes a biological and psychological link with the mother. Anzieu reminds us that the word 'membrane' derives etymologically from words meaning 'skin' and 'mother', conveying the pre-conscious notion that the mother's is the baby's first skin. (ibid., p.13) Developing from Winnicott's notion of 'holding'⁸ and 'handling'⁹, Anzieu suggests that the interaction between mother and child gradually forms the 'double feedback system' like an envelope, taking in the two together. By 'double feedback' he means that the baby seeks the attention of the adults who surround it as much as the adult seeks the baby's attention. From this 'mutual attention seeking', the baby develops a successfully imitated, repeated and learned behaviour, which has a style and temperament that are the infant's own, and these in turn become a grid which serves as a means of predicting the baby's reactions for those mothering it. (ibid., p.56)

The double feedback ... leads to the eventual constitution of an interface, imagined as a skin common to both mother and child, and interface which has the mother on one side and the child on the other. ... Connecting them as it does, this common skin ensures direct communication between the two partners, reciprocal empathy and an adhesive identification. (ibid., p.63)

This system explains how this layer can later reappear as a flexible and empathetic psychological interface between interacting adults.¹⁰ This aspect is further emphasised by the contrasting nature of the intra-uterine fantasy, which is the fantasy of reciprocal *inclusion*, predominant before the formation of the Skin Ego. Anzieu adds that autistic envelopes express a fixation on this intra-uterine fantasy and the failure to accede to the fantasy of a common skin. (ibid., p63.)

⁹ 'To the skin as covering for the entire surface of the body and into which all the external sense organs are inserted, corresponds the *containing* function of the Skin Ego. This function is set in train primarily by maternal 'handling'. The sensation/image of the skin as sac is awakened, in the very

_

1989, p.98)

⁸ 'In the same way that the skin functions as a support for the skeleton and the muscles, the Skin Ego fulfils a function of *maintaining* the psyche. The biological function is performed by what Winnicott calls 'holding', i.e. by the way the mother supports the baby's body. The psychical function develops through the interiorization of this maternal holding. The Skin Ego is a part of the mother–particularly her hands–which has been interiorized and which maintains the psyche in a functional state.' (Anzieu,

young infant, by the attention to its bodily needs it receives from its mother.' (ibid., p.101) ¹⁰ '[the Skin Ego] can be restored in the individual or even extended to groups and institutions.' (ibid., p.9)





This imaginary space provided by the Skin Ego as an extension of skin may indicate its relevance to the formation of social and psychological subjectivities through dressing practice, as garments supplement the protective function of the skin due to human vulnerability in comparison with other animals. As humans advanced into a more developed social, cultural, and moral existence, garments must have complemented social and psychological functions, too. This is evident when Anzieu points out that the skin preserves the marks of external disruptions in its form, texture, colouring and scars, while it shields the equilibrium of our internal functioning from these disruptions, 'and through it a great deal is revealed to the outside world about that inner state which it is supposed to protect.' (ibid., p.17) Just like the skin, garments are both superficial and profound, truthful and misleading. At a physical level, garments not only receive external influences in the form of wear and tear, but are also shaped and stained by the wearer's body and its movement, and the way we dress is socially influenced, revealing much about the wearer.

As an ego based on the experience of the bodily surface, the Skin Ego registers and preserves tactile sensory traces. Anzieu points out that the Skin Ego is 'like a palimpsest, the erased, scratched-out, written-over first outlines of an 'original' preverbal writing made up of traces upon the skin,' which he compares to the social function of scarification, tattooing, make-up and clothes. (ibid., p.105)

The baby's development into an independent person means that this idea of a common skin is gradually suppressed, and the baby, recognising that each has his or her own skin/ego, makes the final transition from the narcissistic relation to object-relations. (ibid., p.63; p.65) Anzieu quotes Sylvia Plath to convey the pain and resistance experienced in the separation phase:

I who for two and a half years had been the centre of a tender universe felt the axis wrench and a polar chill immobilise my bones ... Hugging my grudge, ugly and prickly, a sad sea urchin, I trudged off on my own, in the opposite direction toward the forbidding prison. As from a star I saw, coldly and soberly, ... the separateness of everything. I felt the wall of my skin: I am I. That stone is a stone. My beautiful fusion with the things of this world was over. (Sylvia Plath, 1977, cited in Anzieu, 1989, pp.19-20) (italics in original)

The urchin's skin that separates and rejects contact is the acute sense of loss that Plath felt at the birth of her brother. This first wound, the separation from the mother,



seems to reflect the fundamental human state perceived as separate and incomplete, and also to foreground the continuing attempt to repair the wound by searching for empathetic links with others. This research enquires into the ways that the 'separation' from the earliest relationship might become figured in the ambiguity that is found in various forms of seaming, hemming and the openings and closures of garments.

In the same manner as the registering and inscribing function of the Skin Ego, the continuing 'crises'—separations and suppressions of the Skin Ego—inevitably experienced throughout life involve some form of markings or changes on the level of skin and garment. Without necessarily referring to the scarification performed in the rites of remote cultures, the common practices of tattooing, hair-dyeing, or changing one's style of garments all express the increasing independence of an individual from the maternal environment, as well as their incorporation into social groups, marking a change in social identity.

The notion of Skin Ego thus makes it possible to regard a woven surface (membrane) as the matrix of human interaction. Almost permanently in touch with the skin, a garment is a significant part of the baby's tactile experience. Not only can its influence on the formation of the Skin Ego not be overestimated, the garment itself can also be said to become the material equivalent of the Skin Ego in later life, as explained above. A garment is therefore a social medium, as well as a site of interaction, through which the development of one's individual style as a unique person is encouraged and recognised.

Transitional Objects

As noted above, Anzieu borrows Winnicott's notion of 'holding' and 'handling' to explain the tactile interaction between the mothering environment and the baby within the Skin Ego, which provides the sense of a protective envelope, at the same time as allowing the baby to build up its corporeal subjectivity in relation to others. To understand the place a garment occupies in this developmental stage, it seems necessary to elaborate on this process in relation to material objects by referring back to Winnicott's notion of Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena and 'illusionment and disillusionment' in connection with the social function of the Skin Ego.



Winnicott's Transitional Object refers to 'the first 'not-me' possession' that aids the infant's journey from the pure subjectivity to objectivity (Winnicott, 2005, p.8), revealing the infant's tendency to weave 'other-than-me' objects into the personal pattern. (ibid., p.4) The growing infant evolves phantasies about boundaries revolving around the mother, the first bit of the outside world that enters the orbit of his or her awareness. (Phillips, 1988, p.77) On the part of the infant, the mother (and her breast) evolves from the illusion of being under the baby's magical control to being a part of reality, an external object which is outside the baby's control (through the weaning process). The Transitional Object is never under the infant's magical control, nor is it outside her/his control, in the way that the mother is. (Winnicott, 2005, p.13) The Transitional Object can thus be regarded as the material thing which prepares the baby for the suppression of the Skin Ego, and accompanies her/him in the process. It is the essential tangible thing that provides the 'continuity of the external emotional environment and of particular elements in the physical environment'. (ibid., p.18)

The role of the Transitional Object as the intermediate area between subject and object during the formation of subjectivity is significant in understanding not only the status of garments in the developmental process, but also in distinguishing the fundamental difference between thinking and making with the involvement of holding and handling tangible material which is in/out of control. In the intermediate area involving the Transitional Object, the infant gradually learns his/her relationship with an object that is perceived as external to self as subject, through the use of illusion and reality testing. (ibid., p.15) Winnicott suggests that keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated is the perpetual human task, (ibid., p.3) and the reality testing through the use of illusion, which began as transitional phenomena in the early developmental stage, is repeated throughout life. It is the world of arts or religion that Winnicott considers as intermediate areas¹², where this task is 'played' safely without any real risk of crisis. Culture, therefore, is the medium for self-realisation for Winnicott, unlike Freud's view of it as the sublimation of instinctual life. (Phillips, 1988, p.119)

1

¹¹ Anzieu offers a case study of a child who, when near to sleep, touches her eyelids, her mother's, and her doll's, and her fluffy bear's ear, which 'helps her first of all to go to sleep with confidence, then to have confidence in her mother's return and finally to arrive at a classification of beings and objects in which she can have confidence.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.26)

This explains the role of dressing practice as a reality testing—'... the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality.' (Winnicott, 2005, p.18)



The arts, in other words, are regarded as one of the areas where 'unintegration' can safely happen, as Philips explains:

Unintegration¹³ means being able to entrust oneself to an environment in which one can safely and easily be in bits and pieces without the feeling of falling apart. ... Winnicott insist that a capacity for states of primary unintegration brought forward into later life is a developmental necessity. ... So for Winnicott the healthy integration made possible by a holding environment is always reversible; states of unintegration can be tolerated and enjoyed. (ibid., pp.80-81)

For Winnicott, then, the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion is an extension of this intermediate area of experience. (Winnicott, 2005, p.19) The research practice that is documented here on the opposite page is, in some ways, a form of what Winnicott described as 'transitional phenomena,' a cultural space in which the play of relating subject and object is being constructed, considered and deconstructed.

The notion of the Transitional Object indicates the importance of materiality during the phase of 'unintegration'. It may be said that materiality allows for unintegration without the risk of it becoming disintegration, as with the material in the making process, the body scarification in rites of passage, the role of garments in the everyday changing of identity, and fetish or auratic objects in the crisis of identity, which I will explore in later chapters. The intense emotions and sensations disrupting the cohesive self can be controlled and enjoyed by partly sharing it (if it is imaginary) with the material in contact which temporarily emerges as quasi-subject. With this tangible, grounding material that is temporarily mingled with corporeal subjectivity, the boundary between reality and fantasy can be dissolved more liberally.

... in fantasy things work by magic: there are no brakes on fantasy, and love and hate cause alarming effects. External reality has brakes on it. ... fantasy is only tolerable at full blast when objective reality is appreciated well. The subjective has tremendous value but is so alarming and magical that it cannot be enjoyed except as a parallel to the objective. (Winnicott, cited in Phillips, 1988, p.85)

_

¹³ 'Winnicott has observed that alongside states of integration of the psychical and bodily Egos, the baby tests out states of 'unintegration' which are not necessarily painful and which may be accompanied by a euphoric sense of being an unlimited psychical Self.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.59)

With analogue cameras, there used to be a time lapse between taking and seeing the photos. When I picked up photos from the shop and went through them, they always looked unfamiliar. Lighting, angle and frame added elements of surprise, more so as they were not intentional. I came to expect this each time I photographed my work, and I'd get excited about what unexpected effects I might see in them, and how to use my misinterpretations and illusions in further developing my design. The photos were taken more as alternative points of view, rather than as the representation of work. It was a tool for seeing what I'd missed, and what I hadn't known that I wanted it to be. The skill of seeing the illusions in photographs had to be learned - particular ways of seeing ... Taking pictures of toiles during the process and looking at them later is a way of making them strange. With objects in the picture, the possibilities are endless. I can even mix and match the front, back, and side views of different stand-works, as far as the material allows.

A journal entry on Monday 6 June 2011

When applied to design practice or making, reality and fantasy are tested through interaction with the material, as the matter that the maker interacts with, and as the body which performs the skill or technique. The maker 'realises' what can actually be achieved with the body and the material, testing the limits of control, repeatedly challenging the edge of the fantasy of idea and the reality of materiality. It becomes evident in the process of making that what is more important than 'what if' is the maker's readiness to test whether or not the idea can be applied in reality. No artist or designer suffers from a lack of ideas, but the accumulated experiences of 'realitytesting' as a practitioner provides them with a better sense of where the limit of their 'chosen' reality is, whether this limit can be reset, whether it is worth pursuing. Material is less yielding than thoughts. If making is perceived only as a joy and pleasure, it indicates that the boundary between idea and reality has never been approached or challenged. The experience of meeting this limit is a necessarily frustrating, even painful, one, 14 depending on how passionate the maker was about the initial fantasy. Making teaches where the edge is, how to approach it, and how to stay on this edge despite the challenge, as the idea or fantasy can be most enjoyed on this edge. 15

As Philips points out, 'development through the use of Transitional Phenomena was [for Winnicott ...] a growing capacity to tolerate the continual and increasingly sophisticated illusionment-disillusionment-re-illusionment process throughout the life-cycle.' (ibid., p.121) The making process epitomizes these recurring transitional stages at a material level, and the emotional and uncomfortable sensation when facing the edge of self is also experienced in the making process.

Materiality in the Liminal State

The 'crisis' of the subject in encountering an other which challenges the edge of self and the intense emotion and sensation experienced during the boundary-shifting, can be witnessed in the rites of passage that human beings experience.

The anthropological notion of liminality was first formulated by Arnold van Gennep in The Rites Of Passage (1909), in the context of rituals in small-scale societies. Van

¹⁴ 'Through artistic expression we can hope to keep in touch with our primitive selves whence the most intense feelings and even fearfully acute sensations derive, and we are poor indeed if we are only sane.' (Winnicott, cited in Phillips, 1988, p.81)

¹⁵ The concept of a 'critical edge' was much used by abstract and colour field painters in the mid twentieth century. Marion Milner also writes of the emotional significance of 'edges' in painting in *On Not Being Able To Paint*. (Milner, 2010)



Gennep sees life itself as an expansive transitional stage where people separate and reunite, die and are reborn, in changing forms and conditions, (van Gennep, 1960, p.189) and 'beneath a multiplicity of forms, the typical pattern of the rites of passage always recurs.' (ibid., p.191). Through the three-fold structure of these rites of passage—separation, transition, and incorporation (ibid., p.11)—the crucial changes in life are clearly acknowledged. And this 'marking' of transition with rites is considered to aid the individual along the process: this point is accentuated by the evidence of individual deviancy which is due to the absence of rites in modern Western society, as psychoanalytic case studies show. 'These changes may be dangerous, and at the least, they are upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance.' (ibid., pp.viii-viv)

As is the case with Transitional Objects, the materiality in transitional stages of life cushions the disturbance as well as heightening awareness of the reality. Van Gennep emphasises the importance of concrete materiality in this process of change:

... the passage from one social position to another is identified with a territorial passage, ... so often ritually expressed by passage under a portal, or by an 'opening of the doors.' These phrases and events are seldom meant as 'symbols'; for the semicivilized the passage is actually a territorial passage. In fact, the spatial separation of distinct groups is an aspect of social organization. (ibid., p.192)

If passing through the portal is the phase of transition, the preceding phases of separation include the separation of baby or child from the mother by the cutting of the umbilical cord, the first haircut, circumcision, pulling out a tooth, etc. (ibid., p.62) Therefore the idea behind cutting, piercing, or splitting is the separation from the previous stage, to be incorporated into a new state via the transitional stage.

In Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male (1955), Bruno Bettelheim analyses the meanings and purposes behind circumcision, which is practised in many different cultures. He suggests that circumcision, found among both the most primitive, the most highly civilized people and in all continents, must originate from profound needs, especially when it is practised by choice, unlike infant circumcision. (Bettelheim, 1955, p.16) Through his research, integrating anthropological and psychoanalytical perspectives, Bettelheim concludes that these rituals should be understood less on the basis of the concept of castration anxiety, as postulated by

As a little girl, I once made a small hole in my denim skirt with a pair of scissors. It was secretly done during a school lesson where we were making a pouch for our indoor slippers.

Unlike cutting the cloth provided,

I felt guilty about cutting my skirt. The seams changed
my attitude toward the cloth. I wasn't trying to undo
the seams; puncturing the neat surface was more alluring.

The damage on the surface of cloth was more finite
than that of the seam.

A journal entry on Tuesday 1 November 2011

Freud, but more as efforts of the young, or society generally, to resolve the antithesis between child and adult, and between male and female. (ibid., pp.17-18; p.44)

This can be further interpreted thus: the mutilation of bodily edges or surfaces during rituals may function as a reminder of the edge in the phase of social or biological change when social or corporeal subjectivity becomes confused and less stable.

Anzieu suggests that 'mutilations of the skin—sometimes real, but more often imaginary—are dramatic attempts to maintain the boundaries of the body and the Ego and to re-establish a sense of being intact and cohesive' (Anzieu. 1989, p.20), by 'focusing attention on their skin border and perceiving the limits of their bodies.' (Connor, 2004, p.57)

Reflecting on Anzieu's theory behind the self-mutilation of skin, cultural theorist Steven Connor pays attention to children's fascination with sticking-plasters:

The important feature of the sticking-plaster is its edge, which both seams and seals the otherwise uninterrupted surface of the skin, marking the skin and then placing it 'under erasure'. It appears that the imaginatively erased wound or mark is more powerfully pleasurable than the merely virgin surface. For the child, as for Yeats's Crazy Jane, 'Nothing can be sole or whole/ That has not been rent.' The pleasure in the sticking-plaster makes some of the purposes of deliberate injuries to the skin in adult society intelligible. (Connor, 2004, p.52)

The marking of skin, then, is the means to accentuate its surface integrity as well as its integrity with the bodily ego¹⁶ and the body image, which 'as a 'stabilizing image' and as a protective envelope must at all costs be kept intact.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.32)

Focusing attention on the skin as a border in turn raises the question of the role of material objects incorporated into these rites. Just as Transitional Objects aid the baby through the process of establishing subject-object relations, ritual objects both cushion the shock of change and aid reflexive¹⁷ self-readjustment. Apart from suggesting that mutilations are a means of permanent differentiation, van Gennep also points to the use of temporary differentiations, such as the wearing of a special dress or mask, or body painting. (van Gennep, 1960, p.74) Victor Turner also pays

1

¹⁶ Perhaps not unrelated to the expression 'to pinch oneself', to make sure that something good that is happening is real, that it's not a dream.

¹⁷ 'reflexive': '(of a method or theory in the social sciences) taking account of itself or of the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated.' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010, Oxford Dictionaries. [online] Oxford University Press. Available at:

http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/reflexive?q=reflexivity. [Accessed 11.12.2012]) Also see p.128, Chapter Five, for sociologist Anthony Gidden's analysis of 'reflexivity of modernity' in the main text and footnote 72.

Lines in two-dimensional patterns indicate the seams, edges, and openings of the three dimensional garment. These lines open a space from flat surfaces to house the body. So the seams and edges point at the original pattern 'pieces' 'fragments' that have been put together. What would be the pattern for an emotional or psychological level of garment? Psychological body-limit is not necessarily the same as physical body-limit. How to contain these bodies and where to place the seams and edges? Garments are more of a space than a wrapper ... An embodied space in two dimensional pattern ... where to place the lines??? More essential lines are for openings, not to dismiss shaping lines or seams. When I choose to be in a different space, where would be the opening? ... doors seam different parts of a house, and its main door marks, connects, and cuts off the outside from the inside. Openings almost always function both as connection and separation.

A journal entry on Friday 4 June 2010

attention to masks, costumes, figurines, and such displayed in initiation situations, which are made with outstandingly exaggerated features, sometimes amounting to caricature. Turner sees this as a primordial mode of abstraction—by exaggerating the proportion or discolouring them in unfamiliar way, they are made into an object of reflection. (Turner, 1970, p.103) This draws attention to the significant roles these supplementary objects play in the phases of transition in the everyday life of an individual, and suggests that it is impossible to overestimate the symbolic function of clothing.

The cut and repair of the skin may be displaced into the entering and exiting through the openings and edges of garments. Bodily movement in relation to the garment is comparable to the tactile sensation on skin—putting it on, entering the space within the garment, its embodiment, taking it off—the moments when garments and the body exist in mutual influence. This aspect can be seen as being symbolically celebrated in rituals such as royal coronations, or sacred veilings and unveilings. The traditional courtesy of helping guests out of, or into, their coats on arrival and departure is also a sign of the ritual meaning of entering and departing garments. At a more profound level, dressing practice is a creative conflict resolution that takes place every day. The self constantly crosses thresholds, yet this is so habitual that it is not explicitly noticed by the person as such, but often experienced as an inexplicable change of mood, physical condition, and so on, according to which he/she adjusts the garment. If an individual goes through transition aided by dressing practice, the liminal interface or space between the body and garments would be the seams, edges, surface, space of garments. The seam converts the flat surface of fabric into a space into which the

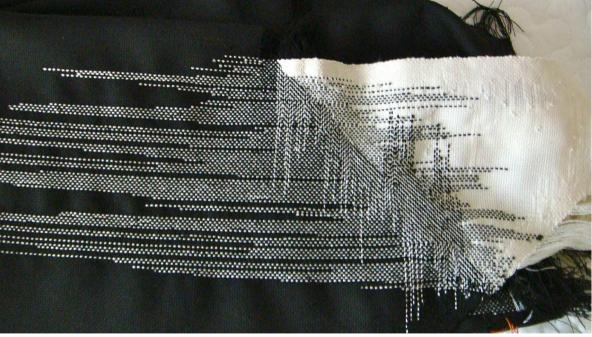
¹⁸ Lacan's famous notion of 'rim', 'objet petit a' and Kristeva's subsequent development of these ideas as, 'the abject' are often analysed in relation to the opening and edges of garments. As these notions conflict with the interpretation of corporeal subjectivity by Winnicott and Anzieu, I choose not to include these in the main line of my research:

^{&#}x27;Lacan speaks very directly of the importance of the idea of the rim, and its fundamental implication in the process of realization of subjectivity: 'Everything emerges from the structure of the signifier. This structure is based on what I first called the function of the cut and which is now articulated, in the development of my discourse, as the topological function of the rim. The relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap.' ... the margins of the body, in places where a cut (*coupure*) of a discontinuity is apparent.' (Warwick, A. & Cavallaro, 1998, p.26)

^{&#}x27;The *objet a* is a part of the subject which is 'detachable' from the body and is thus capable of confronting the subject as alien and external. ... The erotogenic rim which locates the sexual drive in a particular bodily zone is a hole, a gap or lack seeking an object to satisfy it. ... the *objet a* is not the name of a thing, an object, but describes a movement, an activity, the taking in or introjection of the object' (Gross, 1991, p.88)

^{&#}x27;The objects generating abjection—food, faeces, urine, vomit, tears, spit—inscribe the body in those surfaces, hollows, crevices, orifices, which will later become erotogenic zones—mouth, eyes, anus, ears, genitals. All sexual organs and erotogenic zones, Lacan claims, are structured in the form of the





rim, which is the space between two corporeal surfaces, an interface between the inside and the outside of the body.' (Gross, 1991, p.88)

body enters and exists. This is comparable to the individual's passage through the openings (thresholds) of a house, which is often an essential part of rites of passage. The seam also represents the transformation from a solitary biological person to a socially-situated person. Stallybrass explains, in his essay 'Marx's Coat', how people of limited income in Victorian England had to pawn their clothing to get through the period in between their weekly wages: the pawning of their clothes sharply limited their social possibilities, as they could not go out while their respectable clothes were pawned. (Stallybrass, 1998, p.195) Without appropriate clothes, we are denuded of social contact. This is the garment's function as the Skin Ego, where self and other interact, and where external contacts as well as internal responses are inscribed. Garments are thus 'the materials of self-construction, the supplements the undoing of which was the annihilation of the self.' (ibid., p.203)

In many vestimentary cultures, the edges of garments (borders, hems, neckline, collar, cuffs, etc.) are often accentuated as a liminal zone where transfer and transpositions between the 'I' and the 'other' become potent. (Baert, 2011, p.324) Cultural theorists Pajaczkowska & Curtis suggest that hems, collars and necklines serve as ritual boundaries between cloth and skin, culture and nature, and, as such, are materialised by a doubling of the fabric. The fold as a repetition and doubling becomes, in a collar or turn-up, a successfully negotiated transition. ²¹ Garments are the ever-present 'other' that displaces the edge of self, and the edges of this edge—seams and hems—are liminal zones that convey both potentiality and danger. Mary Douglas sees the liminal state as potentiality, as opposed to restriction or limitation.

Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder

-

¹⁹ Essential objects like furniture, kitchen utensils and Sunday clothes were 'fetched from the pawnbrokers on Saturday night with the wages received on Friday or Saturday only to wander back before the next Wednesday ... Happiness was often measured in the redemption of things from the pawnshop.' (Stallybrass, 1998, pp.194-195) ... 'there was sometimes an air of carnival at the Saturday gatherings at the pawnshop.' (ibid., p.204)

²⁰ From Medieval French *habile* (in nuance 'suitable'), *habiller* (to make fit, hence ready, hence to clothe) (Partridge, 2006, p.1361)

²¹ 'The collar of a coat is a frame for the face that manages the transition from the clothing to the body,... The collar-like cuffs, hems and turn-ups speak of the civilized surplus of cloth that frames the edge of a garment by doubling back on itself rather than ending abruptly with an unfinished, frayed or selvedged line. The transition from garment to skin is especially meaningful as a line of demarcation between nature and culture. ... the critical difference between animal vs. human, and nature vs. culture is ... signified by donning an excess of cloth in the form of a fold.' (Pajaczkowska and Curtis, 2008, p.63)

I unravel an edge of woven cloth on purpose and reweave it into another edge of a piece of cloth, taking long hours. During this process, I spend much time with the unravelled edges in its disorientating state, before they become stably re-woven seams. The frayed edges are still visible when finished, as a functional seam is transformed to a decorative surface. I alternate between a seamstress and an embroiderer, between 'need' and 'want'. The garments appeal to me, as they appear to remember the unnerving state of frayed edges, the disoriented state of losing count, and the effort needed to resettle. It's rewarding when the effort and time invested is clearly visible.



by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. ... It symbolises both danger and power. (Douglas, 1966, p.94)

To be hemmed-in is to have restricted space or movement, whereas the unhemmed edge is at risk of fraying; the material state corresponds to the fear and panic experienced in moments of crisis when the solidity of the self is challenged with an abrupt encounter with the other. Yet the possibility that self can be disintegrated and lost is threatening yet compelling at the same time, as Victor Turner saw the coimplication of life and death, unity and fragmentation in the liminal state.²² The power of indeterminacy implies the paradoxical interconnections between destruction and renewal. (Hawkins and Muecke, 2003)

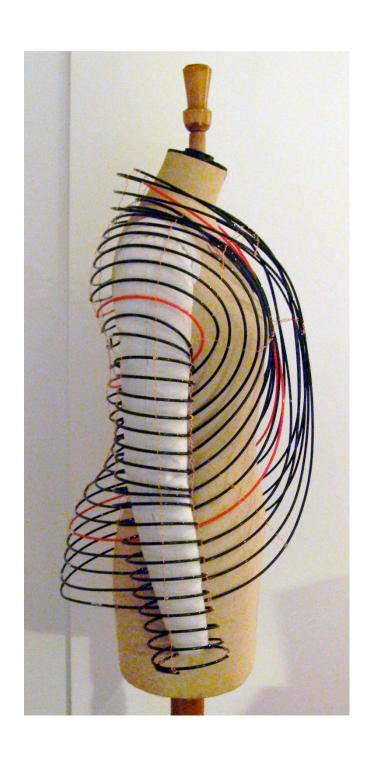
This contradictory aspect of the edge is further explored in following chapters in relation to material objects, corporeal subjectivity and social identity. Chapters Six and Seven, in particular, examine this contradictory aspect in the context of clothing and the contemporary fashion system.

As this first chapter on the Skin Ego ends, the idea of any originary or 'first' skin is called into question. It is only in retrospect that a 'first' skin is made to appear. Theory is an apparatus, which makes apparent to us concepts that are not always evident from experience. At this stage, the reader is invited to consider the seam that joins the left and right hand pages of the book that may be being held in the hands before them.

... by nakedness (which is at once the mark of a newborn infant and a corpse prepared for burial), and by innumerable other symbolic formations and actions. This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither

this nor that, and yet is both.' (Turner, 1970, p.99)

²² 'It is interesting to note how... logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens, for example, by huts and tunnels that are at once tombs and wombs,



Chapter Two. The Garment Ego

A study of both Winnicott's and Anzieu's psychoanalytic interpretations explains the significance of maternal touch and bodily contact with objects in the early constitution of corporeal subjectivity. Both analysts start from the premise that the absolute dependence of the infant on the mother, at the outset of life, is of structural importance throughout life, as it enables the infant to be unaware of this dependency thanks to the mother's 'primary maternal identification', a form of maternal sensitivity to the infant's needs which functions to maintain a 'infantile omnipotence' in the human subject. This primary omnipotence is an illusion which becomes a residual narcissism, and is gradually modulated by forms of self-knowledge, or boundaries. The loss of infantile omnipotence is facilitated by the mother's gradual disillusionment with her infant, allowing him/her to develop his/her own ego and agency through forms of what Freud called 'reality testing'. Winnicott describes this as a process of generating 'edges' and the experience of overlapping edges.

Winnicott's emphasis on the continuation of reality testing into adulthood through the repeated process of illusionment-disillusionment-re-illusionment, explored safely within the cultural domain, hints at the central role that material culture plays in this unending renewal of subjectivities throughout a person's life. The cultural domain can include play, fantasy and education in childhood, and literature, theatre, and art in adulthood. As a designer-craftsperson, I am especially interested in how the process of making can be understood as an aspect of the cultural domain in which this illusionment-disillusionment takes place. Winnicott's suggestion that 'unintegration' should be tolerated, and enjoyed to a certain degree as a developmental necessity, seems to imply the potentiality implicit in the temporary loss of the edge, in the temporary dissolution of the boundary between self and other.

At a material level, the embodiment of objects can be considered as the mingled edge, a hybrid interface between body-self and material other: the non-personal equivalent of the Skin Ego, or the Transitional Object which, as a quasi-subject/object, aids the renewal of corporeal subjectivity. Because the object is at first a transitional object, that is, a concept of something that is both self and 'not self', objects will always imply the capacity of boundaries to become intermingled. Edges









can overlap, and objects can become fetishes (see Chapter Three), or markers of self and other.

The importance of materiality in the phases of change into adulthood was discussed in Chapter One. With more extensive social interactions, as well as contacts with material culture, an adult individual is constantly resetting the edge of corporeal subjectivity. This chapter investigates the emotional, psychological, and social effects of this contact with material objects on the acting subject, especially with garments in daily dressing practice, tools in the design/making process, and other people who come in contact with the subject through material things.

Hybridity

If the mind is considered as a mechanism for maintaining homeostasis and equilibrium, any change is unsettling and brings out emotional responses, which can range from delight, excitement and fear, to anxiety. As a maker, I often experience emotional responses of varying degrees triggered by the process of making. Although it would not be possible to analyse the exact origin of these emotions, they should still be examined as a significant factor that affects both the process and the outcome of making. As with the exploration of any human relationship with the material world, the emotional and psychological aspects must be considered along with the other aspects, as subjectivity cannot be neatly divided into categories, but is always a combined expression of all these aspects. In this respect, Marcel Mauss's notion of 'techniques of the body' and Jean-Pierre Warnier's praxeological approach to material culture may offer possible ways of exploring this, as these notions attempt to explain the mechanism of magic (which they consider as a technical action) and its emotional and sensational effect on the subject, through examining the bodily movements and material objects incorporated into rituals.

Therefore I will first summarise the notions of 'technique', 'magic', 'subject' and 'object' in Mauss's and Warnier's interpretations, and then apply these interpretations to the making of artefacts and daily dressing practice, in order to understand the effects these processes produce on the subject/object.

The psychological boundary of the body is understood to be flexible, changing according to the objects used and what is in proximity to it. Paul Schilder's theory of



'Körperschema'²³, 'bodily schema' or 'the image of the body,' is a kind of bodily synthesis acquired through a long apprenticeship. Schilder suggests, in *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1935) that bodily schema does not end with the human skin as a limiting boundary, but extends far beyond it to include all the objects we use and also those lies beyond our immediate grasp. (Warnier, 2006, p.187) This indicates that not only the surface of contact between the body and material objects, but also the space between the body and objects in proximity are included in the mental image of body-self. Recent research by Longo (2011) also shows how personal space is established, including the objects we interact with and the extent of potential movement in using them.

[For the need to interact effectively with the objects in our space], the brain maintains specialised representations of the space immediately surrounding the body that are different from how it represents the space further away. ... interventions like using a tool which serves as an extension of the body lead to an expansion of the size of the personal space. We found, conversely, that if you put heavy weights on the wrist, which makes it more difficult to act, this actually leads to a contraction or shrinkage of the size of the personal space. (Longo, 2011)

Considering that corporeal subjectivity is constituted via the experience of the skin, according to Anzieu's theory of the Skin Ego, how does the experience gained through this new outer edge (including material objects) influence the subject physically, psychologically, and emotionally? The approach of Marcel Mauss in 'Techniques of the Body' is useful to consider in this regard.

In this article, Mauss theorises how the human body and the way it is used are influenced by material culture, as well as social interactions. Mauss defines 'technique' as an *effective* and *traditional* action—effective as it produces tangible results, and traditional, as it is transmitted via social contacts—and suggests that the body is man's first and most technical object, as 'before instrumental techniques there is the ensemble of techniques of the body.' (Mauss, 2006, pp.82-83) To explain

_

²³ "Bodily schema", both a neurophysiological and a symbolic construct, refers to the psychology of bodily feedback, that is, the sensation one has of one's bodily position, shape and movement. To perceive the environment is to perceive oneself as moving through it. In other words, if objects have material properties (shape, volume, weight), so do our bodies, and we all have a perception of it, however inaccurate or unconscious. The highly plastic 'bodily schema' implies potential actions that can be realized by a given subject. Thus, a focus on the constraining and enabling dimension of technology allows for the exploration of how affordances (of both materiality and the body) in symbiosis with other parameters, such as the brain and sensory-motor capacities, also shape cognitive processes.' (Naji and Douny, 2009, p.418)



this, Mauss introduces the concept of *habitus* as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body through daily practices, varying with individuals as well as with societies. (ibid., p.80) He thus suggests that there is no 'natural' posture or bodily movement for adults; (ibid., p.81) even the things 'which we believe to be of a hereditary kind are in reality physiological, psychological or sociological in kind. A certain form of the tendons and even of the bones is simply the result of certain forms of posture and repose.' (ibid., p.84)

This becomes more pronounced when the body incorporates tools: for example, wearing shoes to walk transforms the way we walk, and successfully embodied shoes become an extension of the body.²⁴ Therefore the Maussian 'art of using the human body,' i.e. the subject's posture, bodily movement, and the way he/she uses tools as an extension of the body, is habitually and traditionally conditioned by the three elements—of the social, psychological, and biological element—indissolubly mixed together. (ibid., p.81)

Yet Mauss specifies that sociological and biological influences are generally greater than the psychological: he sees these as 'connecting cogs', not causes, except in moments of creation, invention, or reform. (ibid., p.92) This implies that in cases of more significant change, such as being incorporated into a new culture or tradition, or creative activities such as making artefacts, the psychological aspects may be as great an influence as social and biological facts, if not greater than them. This is where ritual, magical, or religious practices become relevant in discussing the cause and effect of techniques.

As noted above, Mauss also considers magical, religious or symbolic actions as techniques, (ibid., p.82) because all of these have tangible effects that can be assessed and described. This point of view is clearly expressed in *A General Theory of Magic* (1902):

... rites are eminently effective; they are creative; they do things. It is through these qualities that magical ritual is recognizable as such. In some cases even, ritual derives its name from a reference to these effective characteristics: in India the word which best corresponds to our word ritual is *karman*; action ... In other languages the words for magic contain the root *to do*. However, human skill can also be creative and the actions of craftsmen are known to be effective.

_

²⁴ 'Nothing makes me so dizzy as watching a Kabyle going downstairs in Turkish slippers (*babouches*). How can he keep his feet without the slippers coming off? ... Nor can I understand how women can walk in high heels.' (Mauss, 2006, p.90)

When I make, I am not aware of the tension around my neck or shoulder. My right-handed body stays in twisted position for an extended time. I try to stop to stretch regularly, but often half an hour passes without realising. I resort to setting an alarm every ten minutes to wake me up to relax the back. It's hard to consciously distance myself from the work when I am immersed in it. If I stretch after more than half an hour of tensing, it really hurts.

A journal entry on Saturday 21 January 2012

If could be okay m other contexts, brings out emotion was goy. but in the example of the helf reof,
The many later of looks yearly,
grossim. The This is exactly
what 2 didn't like about the matherial - 15 Ff based on to memony? (memory of tovely the the they steer material? cupleasent about some Fo there somery wed on Eva Hesse Exhibition - latex. The glass cheese clock in. CFSO, TI H do do work 2 The Me Tolean of change In The one bodity that?) moternal as timepasses, but old questor of ' 25 our body how From V & many and Sometimes totally out of contral make one feel manseous. beautiful or gro tesque The latex of trangi to fouch and also smells crafaction the salve have more appeal mell? Myspace (Anthory agents tye etc) populanth Deshaps 2 am weddlig with an penof for Similar to the body Aurd, Aesh, in all these they, yorchy, even surface clacomfortable of wiff what's different too dose to realise and too fundamental to admit. the staff by out and Europanal response on us. the senemal aspects - smell touch while

From this point of view the greater part of the human race has always had difficulty in distinguishing techniques from rites. (Mauss & Hubert, 2010, pp.23-24)

Thus Mauss considers that 'technical action, physical action, magico-religious action are confused for the actor.' (Mauss, 2006, p.82) The example he gives of Taoist breathing techniques seems to eloquently explain this point: certain bodily actions (of ritual) can produce the magical or religious effect: instead of some transcendental soul communicating with a god, through the effective use of the subject situated in the body incorporating other material objects, gods can be created. In another example, the possum hunt ceremony in Australia, Mauss implies the overriding influence of psychological aspects: the hunter carrying in his mouth a piece of rock crystal, chanting a formula, is able to climb a tree, can stay hanging on to it by his belt, and can outlast, catch and kill a difficult prey. He emphasises 'the confidence, the psychological momentum that can be linked to an action which is primarily a fact of biological resistance, obtained thanks to some words and a magical object.' (ibid., p.82). The corporeal subject is thus regarded as both subject and the object of the magical techniques. However, Mauss does not explicitly acknowledge this—the latent object of technical efficacy is the acting subject.

On this matter, anthropologist Jean-Pierre Warnier underlines that 'technology applies both to the material world and to the human person or 'subject'' (Warnier, 2009, p.460)

His praxeological approach to material culture focuses particularly on the subjective, sensual and emotional dimensions of the subject-object relation in movement.²⁷ (Naji and Douny, 2009, p.415) Warnier points out that a subject is always 'a subject-with-its-objects in motion,' as material culture is an essential component of the subject in the human species, in the same way as language is. (Warnier, 2009, p.465) As material objects are incorporated into 'the image of the body' (according to Schilder,

_

 $^{^{25}}$ 'I think that there are necessarily biological means of entering into 'communication with God'.' (Mauss, 2006, p.93)

²⁶ 'Foucault made extensive use of the notions of 'technologies of the subject' and 'techniques of the self'. He underscored two aspects of the technologies of the subject, that is, first, the way a given 'governmentality' acts upon a subject at the very point where the subject takes himself/herself as the object of his/her own actions so as to shape his/her subjectivity and, second, to subject himself/herself to various kinds of power. Moreover, says Foucault, power is addressed to 'the body' and reaches the subjectivities through the body and through material and ideological contraptions (or 'dispositifs').' (Warnier, 2009, p.464)

²⁷ '... while we see phenomenology as 'being', we consider praxeology as 'making' and 'doing'. Hence, we place both approaches in a dialectic relationship; that is, through 'making' and 'doing', we create ourselves.' (Naji and Douny, 2009, p.415)

Weaving in, I become more aware of the existing weave, and feel it in a very different way from when I was looking at it - just as copying out a text by hand lets you experience it differently from merely reading. I imagine the cramped feeling of the existing fabric reluctantly trying to accommodate the invading yarns, making room and standing aside as the new yarns pass by, sometimes even giving up some of its own yarns by being cut and picked out...

31 March 2012. at Lines of Thought. Parasol Unit

As I weave-mould the jacket, I get moulded too. I can match each position of the neck pains with each model. As if my discs wear out of me and get transplanted in the work, the work looks increasingly more pristine as I continue.

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 May 2010

as noted earlier), the subject and object in motion form a kind of synthesis, 'to such an extent that the subject identifies with his embodied objects.'28 (ibid.. p.467) This would mean, if applied to the suggested definition of 'identification,'29 that the sustained contact between the subject and object results in an affinity, i.e. the subject assimilates the object and transforms part of itself on the model of the material object. This affinity can perhaps be understood as 'know-how' or dexterity, physical responses such as the development of a skin condition like a callous, postural tendencies and emotional responses such as anthropomorphising or fetishizing: the subject and material object generally form a hybridity within the confused boundary between the two. Warnier suggests, therefore, that 'the efficacy of the techniques of the subject may rest on a process of identification between subjects and objects.' (Warnier, 2009, p.459)

The corporeal subject is here considered as the object of technical efficacy, as well as the site through which the self is touched, affected and shaped by his or her engagement with the material world, whether knowingly or unknowingly.³⁰ Within the blurred boundary between subject and object, 'the opaque and divided-up subject'31 is confused about whose action has an effect on what or whom. The making process therefore also becomes that of self-making, during which the material and the self are shaped simultaneously. This may explain the changes the maker goes through during the making, as well as the significance of materiality to any change in a person's sense of self. Warnier thus points out:

The mediations of the ritual action are the material things that are used during the ritual, together with the body and words. ... The subjects are transformed by these practices. Their identities are shaped and they experience bodily and psychic changes. (Warnier, 2009, p.465)

 $^{^{28}}$ 'a subject may be a subject-with-his-embodied- fountain-pen writing an article, or a subject-cum-Boeing 707 in the action of piloting.' (Warnier, 2009, p.457) This aspect is explained in detail in another article by Warnier (2001, p.13).

²⁹ *Identification*. The following definition is from Laplanche and Pontalis's *Dictionary of* Psychoanalysis (1967): 'the psychological process by which a subject assimilates an aspect, a property, an attribute of another subject, and transforms itself, totally or partially, on the model of the latter. Personality constitutes and differentiates itself through a series of identifications.' (Warnier,

³⁰ 'This means that one cannot limit issues of learning and knowledge acquisition to technical skills alone, but must investigate ... the way the body itself is shaped by the material world and how it plays a central role in the construction of our relation to others and self.' (Naji and Douny, 2009, p.417)

³¹ In Freudian parlance, the subject of the cogito is obliged to come to terms with its un-conscious as repressed, which belongs with itself and yet is foreign to it. Consequently, the subject is divided up between the two. The division process is what produces a subject. The subject may exist or it may not. It is not a given. It cannot be ontologized. It is never where it thinks it is. It is not a pure consciousness transparent to itself, but opaque and divided up.' (Warnier, 2009, pp.464-465)





This view draws attention to the conditions of labour and its effect on the maker as the major aspect that differentiates small-scale production from mass-production in the fashion industry, as I will explore in more detail in Chapter Five. When making by hand, the maker's manifest goal is producing an artefact, but in fact it also constitutes an effective action on the maker. This is especially the case when the maker is in direct contact with the material and tools, incorporating 'technical' movements and postures of the body in the process. This means that the implicit result of making is the effect this experience has on the maker's psychological, physical and emotional state. Thus this mode of production changes the maker much more profoundly than other modes of making, which do not incorporate all of these elements. Mauss's and Warnier's views on the techniques of the body incorporating material objects indicate that studies into technical practices need to consider the relationship between the subject and object in the process, rather than focusing solely on the end results, to be able to understand the real meaning and effectiveness of the practice. Moreover, their theories highlight the difficulties for the practitioner in observing and analysing their own practice, and also in considering the real subject, object, and effectiveness of their action. The confusion of the boundary between subject and object during the making process means that an 'objective analysis' is not possible, due to the reflexivity involved; there will always remain ambiguous aspects of the self.

The opaque subject/object of 'techniques of the body', influenced by social contacts and shared within the social group which is linked with a particular physical territory, is a clear reminder of the communicative/social function of the Skin Ego, supported by its double-layered structure³² the outer envelope of the Skin Ego (the social function) forms around the inner envelope of the Skin Ego (the individuating function) leaving a small amount of space in between for flexible adjustments. A society is an extension of, and is anchored to, individuals. The biological skin generates the psychological skin via social contacts, and this in turn generates the social skin, in which identity, style and taste are formed. Conversely, the social aspects influence (by displacement)

-

Anzieu explains the therapeutic technique for treating seriously psychotic patients known as 'the pack', which he considers as a demonstrative evidence of his hypothesis, the double anaclisis of the Skin Ego: the biological inner layer on the surface of the body, and the social outer layer. This treatment 'fleetingly reconstructs the patient's ego as separate from others and at the same time continuous with them, which is one of the topographical characteristics of the Skin Ego.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.113) 'The pack' involves physically wrapping the patient in damp sheets and closely encircling of him/her with a group of medical personnel. (ibid., p.112)

Grecian clothing and Vionnet ...
it seems that the translation of bodily fold or contour into
the movement of garment fold with minimal seams implicated
more corporality and its spatial presence than the close
fitting garments of later times. What then could be a
seamless garment that perfectly translates the corporality
and spatial presence of the wearer?

A journal entry on Monday 11 June 2012

The space indicated in flat patterns is 'universal', without taking into account the varying body-shapes nor the movements. Can garment patterns be cut to indicate more than just the lines to be cut and sewn? Two-dimensional patterns rely on bias grain, elasticity of the material, or folds to accommodate contours and movements of the body. So ... the body, with virtually no flat surfaces, moulds the garment through wear. They can't be translated back to two-dimensional patterns as the 'moulding' already eliminated most of the previously flat surfaces. Any fragments of a garment, dissembled at the seams, would contain the space created by the wear. To be able to adopt to individual body shapes and movements, patterns have to be moulds to cast clothes three dimensionally. It might look like a virtual geographical map of the earth's surface.

the individual psychological aspects, and the psychological state of the individual influences the biological body.

I have also tried to convey this through the notion of embodiment, the material equivalent of the Skin Ego within the liminal state between subject and object, and no other material objects represent this common skin both concretely and symbolically in the way that garments do. In the following section, I explore how garments can become, beyond the second skin, our 'second ego'.

The Garment Ego

Garments are at once the tool we use as an extension of the body and the space we inhabit. Dressing practice is one of the primary examples of a repetitive and ritual practice which is ingrained and manifests in unique personal qualities. No other objects interact with the human body as closely and consistently as garments. This is evidenced in the etymology of the word 'habit^{'33} which shows the term's link to both 'dwelling' and 'clothes'.³⁴

The body-self and garments tame each other in many ways. The body shapes clothes through use: bodily contours inevitably appear at the elbows and knees, and the garment bears creases, gets stretched, or becomes threadbare or shiny. Bodily excretions stain and permeate garments. These are the traces of repetitive use and habitual bodily movements on clothes—the physical traces of life. This interactive hybrid surface which is formed between a living body, objects, and its surroundings reveals the way a person occupies and gradually moulds everyday objects and spaces. Just as ichnologists³⁵ can decode the behaviour and anatomy of animals from trace fossils, our lives can be 'read' through the traces we leave in things and spaces, and garments hold so many of these because of their constant proximity to

_

³³ L *habēre* (to hold, hence to occupy or possess, hence to have.) ... Medieval French-French *habile* (in nuance 'suitable')/MF-F *habiller* (to make fit, hence ready, hence to clothe) whence MF-F *habillement* (equipment, clothing)

^{...} L *habēre* has past participle *habitus* (state or condition, appearance, dress), whence Old French-French *habit*

^{...} L *habēre* has freq. *habitāre* ... to have often, to dwell; ... to dress. ... : L *habitat*... natural abode.' (Patridge, 2006, p1361)

^{*} The Sanskrit word $V\bar{a}san\bar{a}$ also developed from the root meaning 'dwelling' and shares the same origin as the word Vasana (clothes). $V\bar{a}san\bar{a}$ is a term that describes an ingrained habit or unconscious propensity, which inevitably manifest later.

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu further developed Mauss's concept of 'habitus' to account for this cultural space that is both unconscious, as with repetitive habits, and is also a space of social 'dwelling'.

³⁵ See footnote 2, on page 10.

As I unravel the edge of woven cloth and reweave it into the other unravelled edge, the existing fabric surface gets framed by this woven-in seam.

The ready-made woven surface seems to gain new meanings within the new context: the woven connection influences the inside. The woven-in excess is like seam allowances integrated into the neighbouring surface. The seam allowances - the excess - are necessary for the meeting, integration and change.

A journal entry from Monday 4 July 2011

the body. In return, garments shape the wearer. The extensive psychological, physiological and social influences of garments exceed the subject's awareness: the wearer can only assume the postures or movements that garments allow, and has to behave as the garments demand.

Repeated and sustained long enough, this mutually interactive interface eventually becomes as much an inseparable part of the wearer as of their clothes. On the part of the wearers, this manifests as their unique style as explained by Mauss as 'techniques of the body'. On the part of the garment, the trace permeates it, whether visibly or invisibly, like the genetic information of the wearer coded in their DNA, permanently linking the garment and the wearer in its 'impurities.'

This clearly explains why garments can be regarded as a kind of Skin Ego (associated more with the subject), or as Transitional Objects (associated more with the object), for adults. An embodied garment is neither simply inside nor simply outside. It is in itself an interface which is able to belong to both inside and outside, yet also can be rejected from both. This hybrid layer, as both subject and object, constantly displaces the wearer. 36 The Skin Ego, as a development from the membrane, becomes the precursor of the matrix of social life, and through dressing practice, we weave self and others together, contextualising both for covert encoded communication in an increasingly diverse modern life.

Our subjectivity thus evolves from the unclear bodily ego of infants to the gradual gaining of independence from the mothering environment, and the further forming and suppressing of the Skin Ego in varying situations encountered as a social being. Through this process, an individual style of gestures and dressing develop, i.e. the techniques of the body and of the garment as a tool. Beginning with the linking and separation from the mothering environment, the history of forming and severing the boundaries, at a psychological and social level between self and others is thus evidenced in style. A body without this social skin (style) would be extremely selfreferential, resembling a closed circle, whereas effective gestures and garments worn accordingly situate the person within the habitus, as Mauss explains.

³⁶ This explains why fashion is intrinsically modern. Fashion changes via displacement. This aspect of fashion will be further explored in relation to various aspects of seams and seamlessness, in Chapter Six: 'Seamless?' and Chapter Seven: 'The Toile Ego'.

I go for a walk to refresh my head.
... even a brief walk changes me.

It's as if I shed off stale fragments of me along the way and pick up some new ones as I moved through the streets. Are these what other passers-by have left behind? or ... something that's come off from the paving stones or the lamp posts...

These things seem to grow on me, and it's nice sometimes to follow the exact same route.

I wonder if my repeated walks change the streets somehow.

It reminds me of the 'thinking space' back in my MA-days. The
tiny attic room with virtually no spare space
beyond a raised pattern table and a dummy.
I used to sit under the table when I needed to think,
initially as there was nowhere else to sit comfortably for
quite a while, but later it became the only place I could
think, really concentrate properly. I used to leave any
important decision-making until I 'had a think' under
that table. That pocket of space was my brain ...

A journal entry on Thursday 22 September 2011

Infants experience the world through touch, registering and marking the boundary between the bodily self and that which is not self. This process includes ambiguous phases when the boundary between the subject and object is confused before finding a new edge. This may explain the phenomenon of children playing at pretending to be a train or windmill (Benjamin, 2005c), as if they are experiencing the world by becoming similar to whatever comes into contact with them, assimilating themselves to the material world around them. This tendency to imitate is also an essential process in absorbing social influences—imitating other humans, being educated, or being trained in institutionalised settings. This continues throughout life: getting used to the objects we use, occupying space via techniques of the body, interacting with people in social settings, continuously readjusting subjectivity by registering the edge of self, as if the whole body were a bundle of antennae constantly sensing the perimeter of the body-self.

Anthropological studies have noted cultures in which people implicitly assimilate the human body-self to the materials in their environment, especially to objects of containment, such as pots, garments and houses. One such example is Benjamin Alberti's study of ceramics from north-west Argentina, dating from the first millennium AD:

[P]ots were treated like bodies ... to compensate for chronic instability, to shore up vessels for life against the ever-present susceptibility to leakage and discharge that threaten their dissolution or metamorphosis.' (Ingold, 2010a, p.9)

Taking care of leakage and other surface damages to the containing artefacts of daily use seems to suggest its implicit link to the preservation of subjectivity anchored on the bodily surface.³⁸ The familiarity with the instability of these materials of daily use may remind them of the human vulnerability which leads people to identify with their material culture. And the daily ritual of caring for these objects would produce, in a Maussian expression, a *magical effect*: the people would polish the surface of pots when they were ill or wounded—the objects thus become fetishised.

³⁷ 'Projection of the skin on to the object is a process commonly seen in infants.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.19)

Anzieu explains the idea of the 'colander Skin Ego' as one of the forms of anxiety caused by the failure of the *containing* function of the Skin Ego. The continuity of the envelope 'is broken into by holes. ... thoughts, and memories are only with difficulty retained; they leak away. It is a cause of considerable anxiety to have an interior which empties itself.' (ibid., p.101) See a relevant case study (of Eleanore). (ibid., p.66)

Working with Stephan the mould-maker. We are making a negative mould of the front and back of my neck area, to sample whether a life-cast torso would be better than mannequin torso to use as the base of my weave-mould. After petroleum jelly is applied for the ease of release, plaster bandages are cut to widths of about 5cms and soaked in water before being laid on my neck and shoulder. While Stephan is working quickly, expertly applying 4-5 layers of bandages, I try to keep absolutely still. But I can't stop my throat moving when I breathe and swallow. I sit there thinking how inaccurate the term 'still-life' is compared to the French term nature-morte. Each passing second, I am aware of my body's movements and the physicality of my body within the gradually setting concrete space. It takes about twenty minutes for the plaster to set. As it sets, the mould increasingly restricts my body's smallest movements. Towards the end, I am trapped in my own contour as the 'atmosphere' around my body cures. It feels as if a fine film of hybrid layer is actually forming around me. It reminds me of the eerie feeling of sensing someone's presence when I enter a space even in their absence. We might be remembered by the space we occupy. Being copied feels very strange. When I see the positive cast of the mould, it's as if I am seeing the touch of plaster I felt during the life-casting. It's like a three-dimensional contact-photo. I wonder how much of my breathing, swallowing, and all that fidgeting are recorded both in and on the mould. If I can capture the gap between the mould and my body, it would be a garment that's a sign of life, as opposed to the bandages of mummy.

A journal entry on Thursday 11 March 2010

Warnier's research observes the way that the Mankon people of Cameroon take care of their skin meticulously, turning it into a supple, shiny and healthy envelope:

... mothers give a daily massage to their newborn babies until they are able to walk. They work the skin of the infant with palm oil or industrial baby lotion, beginning with the shaved scalp and working all the way down to the toes, paying much attention to the folds of the skin around nose, mouth, ears, fingers, toes, genitals, buttocks, etc. They do not leave a single square millimetre of the skin untouched. Similarly, adults focus health practices on the skin. Rituals of marriage and succession are performed by anointing the skin with a mixture of palm oil and crimson camwood. (Warnier, 2009, p.467)

From the daily massages these mothers give the babies until they can walk, which is repeated when people are 'reborn' via the liminal stages of the rites of passage, we can imagine the formation of a healthy Skin Ego which would go on to consolidate the affinity between the Mankon people. This particular emphasis on skin is reflected in the robustness of the Kingdom, which in turn is associated with the well-anointed skin of the king.

Warnier points out that the Mankon also focus on the openings and surfaces of containers, and on all the actions pertaining to the transit of substances through the apertures of all kinds of vessels, and interprets this as originating from their identification with their material culture of containment:

Although this is not explicitly verbalized in an emic way by the Mankon, I would gloss such practices by saying that young infants, adults, brides, grooms and successors are manufactured as leak-proof, sound vessels in order to retain healthy substances and all the principles of fertility and well-being within their skin-container. In other words, they are made to identify with material containers. (ibid., p.467)

The Mankon may not be explicitly aware of the effect of their daily skin-care ritual, yet the sustained contact and repeated bodily motions involving the objects of their surroundings lead them to identify with these objects, which brings about an awareness of the containing aspect of their own body. This identification then expands to include their living space and further includes the entire tribal territory, which in turn is identified with the king's body.

As the sensory information received through skin contacts collectively forms a bodyimage 'in the order of phantasy' (Anzieu), the affinity with others in contact forms a How important is the actual form of clothes?

Can it resemble anything as far as it evokes the same emotion and ritual value of clothes?

Can I move away from the idea of a garment as an immediate body-wrapping?

Can clothes take any shapes on or near the body, or even away from the body?

- not physically but emotionally tactile?

A journal entry on Thursday 11 February 2010

hybrid space that provides a sense of belonging, within a 'common skin'. In this respect, physical space and abstract social space can both be said to be established through the sustained touch. This space is the Skin Ego of people who share the same habits and traditions, and it can be said that this subjectivity extends to the group identity within a shared physical space.

Anthropologist Marc Augé thus suggests:

... the sign of being at home is the ability to make oneself understood without too much difficulty, and to follow the reasoning of others without any need for long explanations. ... A disturbance of rhetorical communication marks the crossing of a frontier, which should of course be envisaged as a border zone, a marshland, rather than a clearly drawn line. (Augé, 1995, p.108)

If rhetorical communication is a measure of territory, then so are the non-linguistic signs pertaining to garments and bodily movements. The social Skin Ego's territory can be created when these allusive signs are shared and understood without difficulty. In modern life, where people speak 'incommensurable private languages, '(Berman, 1989, p.17) taste, as selective and discrete contacts, has become like a password, as has people's 'shared skin', a violation of which brings out visceral responses. This may be the answer to the question design historian David Brett raises: 'Why do the choices of one group provoke the animosity or praise of another? ... Why, to paraphrase Bourdieu, are distastes so violent? How do individual and social tastes support one another?' (Brett, 2005, p.5) The ancient Greeks believed that the living body was made visible, or 'made to appear', by adorning it with clothes, in much the same way as a place can be created by adorning the surface of the ground with people's movement³⁹—a provisional and animated space, the Chora, 40 emerged, with the dance performed on the ground. This seems to symbolise the way in which dressing practice is a socially constructed, territorial practice. Covering the skin with clothes transforms the person from an isolated individual to a socially-relevant one—the Skin Ego, the 'woven' interface (the

appear, so, through the dance, kosmos clothes the ground to make it appear, ...' (ibid., p.45)

_

³⁹ 'Chros (skin) is the Homeric word for the living body, which was understood as a surface and the bearer of visibility, visibility being the guarantor of existence or being. For the Greeks appearing was surface, with *epiphaneia* a word used for both. For them, when a woman *kosmese* (adorned) herself, she wrapped her *chros* in a second skin or body, in order to bring the living surface-body so clothed to light; to make it appear. '(McEwen, 1993, pp.43-44) ... 'As *kosmos* clothes the body to make it

⁴⁰ The pre-Socratic *Chora* is very different from Kristeva's notion of the 'Semiotic Chora', which is an extension of the Platonic *Chora*, a womb-like, narcissistic, regressive state.







ancient Greek term for 'to weave' is *hyphainein*) is 'made to appear' (*phainein*).⁴¹ The way we dress is therefore the result of a process which is at once profoundly personal and social. Neither of these aspects can be overlooked when discussing the culture of clothing, taste, or fashion, as garments function as the permeable interface between the two.

This interpretation of taste relates to the claims that I make here for the power of the garment as 'habit', 'habitus', 'techniques of the body', and which I am attempting to convey through the neologism of the 'Garment Ego'. The Garment Ego is therefore an extension of the Anzieu's concept of the Skin Ego (see Chapter One) and it will be further constructed and deconstructed in subsequent chapters. The process by which I arrive at the concept is similar to the process by which the reader of this dissertation is invited to make sense of this thesis, that is, by a relationship between two different forms of looking and attention (the left-hand page and the right-hand page), practice and theory, action and reflection, tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge.

-

⁴¹ The word 'phantasy' used in the fields of psychology and psychiatry traces its origin back to the Greek term *phainein* meaning 'to show, to bring to light', which is related to *epiphaneia*, meaning both 'a surface' and 'appearing'. For the ancient Greeks, birth of any child was an epiphany (appearing). The word for weaving was *hyphainein* (McEwen, 1993, pp.48-49) Putting together or joining created a visible surface.

THE PARTY OF THE PROPERTY OF THE PARTY OF TH	

Chapter Three. Auratic Objects

The fetish is always a meaningful fixation of a singular event; it is above all a 'historical' object, the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event. This object is 'territorialized' in material space (an earthly matrix), whether in the form of a geographical locality, a marked site on the surface of the human body, or a medium of inscription or configuration defined by some portable or wearable thing. ... This object is also 'personalized' in the sense that beyond its status as a collective social object it evokes an intensely personal response from individuals. (Pietz, 1985, p.12)

In the previous chapter I examined the relationship between material and maker, and noted that the mutual influence in the process results in mutual making. During this process, the maker's conscious or unconscious identification with the material objects he/she is in contact with assists the maker in the making of the objects as well as with the making of the self. The emotional and psychological responses of the maker may be explained by juxtaposing the act of making with ritual acts, which produce a *magical* effect on the person who performs the action.

Perhaps one of the most archetypal of material objects producing *magical* effects on the person in contact with them is the fetish. As the artefacts incorporated in rites or rituals cushion the disturbance of the change being experienced, the fetish and the spiritual properties invested in it may be understood in the same light—they implicate the disorientated state of the subject during crises of identity, and remind him/her of the subjectivity anchored in the materiality of the body.

In this chapter I will first distinguish the original sense of the term 'fetish' from better known later uses of the term, such as the Marxist commodity fetish, or the psychoanalytic sexual fetish, by explaining the circumstances from which these types of fetishism, with their negative associations, derive. I also point out the similarities between the original context of the fetish and the modernist fetish of the art object by comparing it with Walter Benjamin's notion of 'aura': the fact that Benjamin associated aura not only with works of art, but also with everyday ordinary things encountered on the streets, renders the comparison more compelling. Whereas the term 'aura' elicits positive responses, the idea of the fetish evokes ambivalence. This chapter therefore investigates the complex relationship between idealisation and



fixation which suffuses the aura-fetish spectrum in the context of our interaction with material objects, as well as with other humans. Ultimately this chapter will reveal how and why the social significance of a garment is rooted in its intensely personal link with our body and emotions.

The Fetish

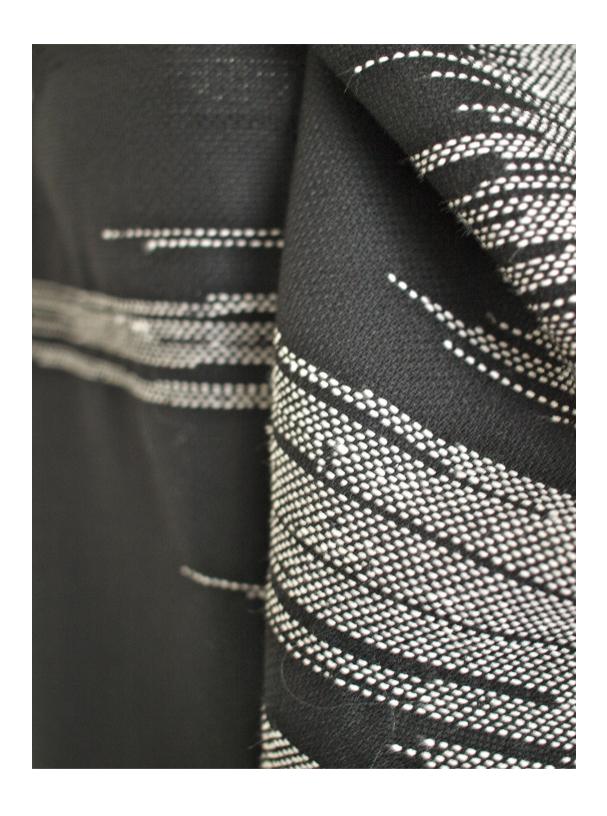
The meaning of the word fetish is laden with negative connotations—including terms such as 'excessive' 'irrational' and 'abnormal.' However, anthropologist William Pietz's comprehensive studies of the origin and development of the fetish as perceived in European culture (Pietz, 1985, 1987, 1988, 2003) reveal the circumstances within which these negative values were attributed, ascribing to them the problem of 'otherness': the divine creations (of the Catholic faith) against manmade things, the transcendence of God (of the Protestant churches) against material importance, the rational and scientific minds (of the Enlightenment) against intuition and chance.

The word 'fetish' as it evolved within European languages is basically a 'middleman's word'. The idea of fetish originated in the mercantile intercultural space along the West African coast, the function of which was to translate and transvalue objects between radically different social systems. (Pietz, 1985, p.6; 1987, p.24) For European merchants, fetish-worship was thought to be the force that blocked spontaneous and natural market activities, as desirable commodities were either adulterated or unobtainable because of their status as fetishes, (Pietz, 1988, p.115) distorting their relative exchange value. (Pietz, 1987, p.45) The paradigmatic image of the fetish from the merchants' point of view was 'any useless or trivial inanimate material object'43, which as a result led Europeans to question the nature and origin of the social value of material objects. (Pietz, 1988, p.109) Therefore the problem of fetish for the Europeans was the problem of the value of material objects associated with the radical otherness within the liminal space of exchange. To this day, the notion of fetish is linked to that which counters neat resolutions and clear-cut boundaries among things and between persons and objects, prompting these boundaries to be transgressed, reassessed, and renegotiated. (Spyer, 1998, p.3)

42 Oxford Dictionaries. 2010. Oxford University Press. [online] Available at:

http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fetish [Accessed 26 August 2012]

⁴³ An eighteenth century travel account notes that 'they make deities of any thing that is new to them, or extraordinary in itself.' (Pietz, 1988, p.111)



The origin of the word fetish in Pliny's *Natural History*, as traced by Pietz,⁴⁴ reveals its evolution from the morally neutral 'man-made' or 'made by art', as opposed to 'naturally produced,' into the valuative 'artificial' (in the sense of 'unnatural,' 'deliberately false,' 'fraudulent'), as opposed to 'natural' (in the sense of 'authentic,' 'true') in the context of commodity exchange. In later appropriation into the Christian cosmology of a God-created natural world, it became to imply 'a man (and Devil)-willed fall into sin.' (Pietz, 1987, p.25)

Unlike the Greek philosophic tradition, ... the Christian distinction between the material human body and the spiritual substance of the immaterial soul ... makes the idea of manufactured material resemblance essentially a negative one. There is no Christian Daedalus: skilful making is not a divine art.⁴⁵ Christianity replaces the idea of such inspired artifice with the idea of mere manufacture in order to distinguish all human craft from the true divine mode of production: creation. (ibid., p.26)

The negative connotation of fetish deepened within the context of Protestant Christianity's iconoclastic repudiation of any material representation. ⁴⁶ For Protestant Europeans, the worship of fetishes represented perversity, immorality, and superstitious delusion, (Pietz, 1988, p.105) and with the new developments in the Enlightenment, fetish worship was 'the paradigmatic illustration of what was not enlightenment.' (ibid., p.106)

The ensuing 'sinister pedigree' of the fetish (Spyer, 1998, p.3) in the late nineteenth and twentieth century—the sexual fetishism of Alfred Binet and Freud, Marx's commodity fetishism, Adorno's or Bourdieu's view of art and culture as a socially-

'materially altered by human effort in order to deceive,' that is, 'factitious' as opposed to 'genuine'.'

⁴⁴ 'The pan-European word whose English version is 'fetish' derives linguistically from the Latin *facticius* or *factitious*, an adjective formed from the past participle of the verb *facere*, 'to make.' The adjective *facticius* means 'manufactured.' It characterizes 'man-made' commodities in contrast to goods produced through purely natural processes (that is, goods merely collected and sold without being shaped or otherwise altered by human effort) ... in commodity exchange, appearance as the signifier of useful value can become a value in itself in the special case of commercial fraud. ...

⁽Pietz, 1987, pp.24-25)
⁴⁵ The ancient Greek's attitude towards human's skilful making is discussed in detail in pages 168-170, Chapter Six.

⁴⁶ 'The only instance of a human ability to make a material object embody a spiritual substance is the Eucharist; this is neither manufacture nor creation but 'transubstantiation.' i.e., the original material substance of the object worked on does not remain - at least according to Catholic doctrine. ... In the 1520s Zwingli and the Swiss theologians adopted the more radical view that denied the power of the Eucharist entirely. To reject the power of saints and sacramental objects as mediating agencies was to challenge the authority of the church itself as the legitimate earthly agent of mediation between man and God.' (ibid., p.27)



constructed fetishistic illusion, and so on—are all essentially an extension of the Enlightenment theory of fetishism. These examples adapted the fetish as a conceptual tool for dissociation: the civilised (the non-fetishists) used the idea to distinguish themselves from so-called 'primitives'. 'In so far as scientific observer claims to possess a method for understanding fetishism that need not itself participate in the delusional experience it studies, the concept of fetishism being employed is likely structured along the lines of the original Enlightenment theory.' (Pietz, 2003, p.310)

More significantly, these examples do not take into account the most defining aspect of fetish, i.e. 'untranscended materiality'. The idea of fetish in relation to a non-material entity thus is essentially a misapplication. The fetish is not a material signifier referring beyond itself. It is 'a real which does not yield to a metaphor.' (Hollier, 1992, p.11) This personified material object derives its physical and psychological efficacy *from its contact with the human body*. Pietz explains the importance of the 'untranscended materiality' for the status of the fetish:

The truth of the fetish resides in its status as a material embodiment; its truth is not that of the idol, for idol's truth lies in its relation of iconic resemblance to some immaterial model or entity. ... whereas the idol was conceived as a freestanding statue, the fetish was typically some fabricated object to be worn about the body. (Pietz, 1985, p.7;p.10)

From this respect, an alternative interpretation may be possible for the biblical story of a haemorrhaging woman who is healed by touching the fringe of Jesus' robe. 47 Rather than interpreting it as the transference of healing power from the divine body through his robe, the fetish-related approach would be something much more similar to Marcel Mauss's 'magical' effect: the contact between the woman's hand and the materiality of the robe created the power: that is to say, the woman's action, involving her body, psyche, and emotions, gave the healing power to the fringe of the robe—the liminal zone or the hybrid space where differences meet and mingle, symbolising the potentiality residing in the edge.

This is the aspect of the fetish that cannot be overlooked: the powers that things have to entrance, raise hopes, generate fears, evoke losses, and delight—how and why certain things exercise the immense powers they do over us. (Spyer, 1998, p.5)

⁴⁷ Mark 5:24b–34, Luke 8:42–48 and Matthew 9:19–22 in New Testament tell the story of the healing of the 'woman with an issue of blood', the Haemorrhoissa. (Baert, 2011, p.309)



Fetishism is an absolute realism: it unleashes real desires, in real spaces, with real objects. (Hollier, 1992, p.22) Back on the West African coast, the arbitrary designation of a material object as a fetish was based on chance encounter and personification. The significance given to objects in the moment of sudden encounter with incomprehensible situations (including the European merchants' technical objects, which they anthropomorphised) suggests that the fetish was a significant quasisubject, similar to a Transitional Object, emerging as they try to make sense of the unknown world, in the moment of crisis when previously-held beliefs and values are called into question.

The significance of the concept of 'edge' in modern painting is evident in the widespread use of the idea of a 'critical edge' of the canvas. The concept of edge as the materialisation of the differentiation of 'self' from 'not self' is present in many psychological contexts, from Gestaltist 'figure' and 'ground' dialectics to the psychoanalytic idea of an ego emerging through techniques of distinction from its 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott). The transition from merged states to demarcated states is conceived as a dangerous journey, requiring tangible objects to assure a safe passage from one to the other. The tactile relationship to edge is here indicative of the relationship between the Transitional Object and the fetish.

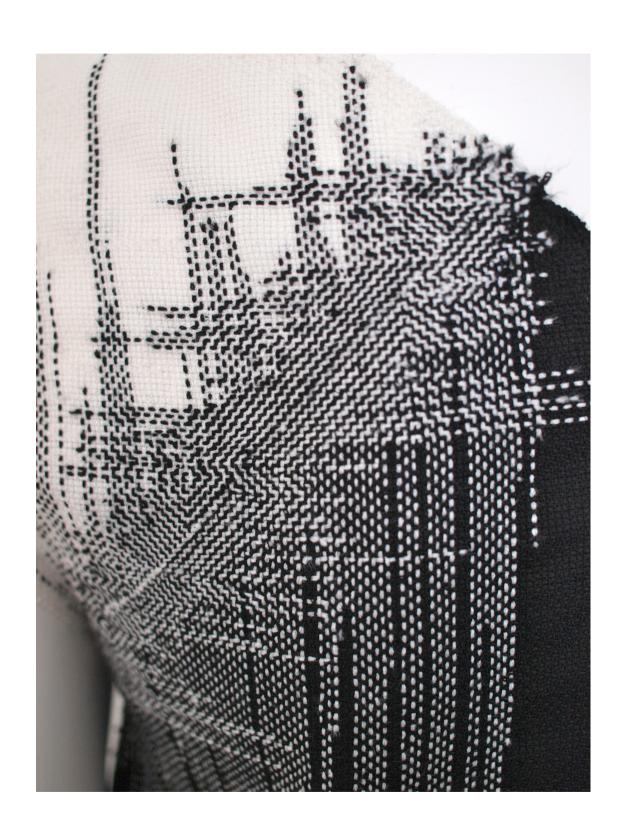
This, I suggest, is the origin of the aura. The auratic object, like the fetish, is the material thing that emerges as being of primary importance during the dissolution of the boundary between self and other, inducing a state of confusion and challenging the solidity of the self.

Walter Benjamin's Aura and the Fetish

Auratic objects as discussed in Benjamin's work bear much resemblance to the anthropological fetish as explained by Pietz. ⁴⁸ The most striking similarities stem from the way the object maintains a hold on the subject. Benjamin's notion of aura as it appears in his works almost exclusively concerns the visual aspect of auratic

_

⁴⁸ Pietz acknowledges Benjamin as the writer who most successfully worked through the critical possibilities suggested by various notions of fetishism: '[Benjamin] developed a materialist method that approached cultural artifacts, be they works of art or common things encountered on the street, as 'dialectical images', whose power to place people's everyday lives within an unavowedly mythicized present the critic must engage by combining research into the historical singularity of these objects with a subjective yielding to the dreamlike fantasies ossifies within even ordinary things. (Pietz, 2003, p.312)



experience. Incorporating the notion of fetish may therefore accentuate the tactile aspect of the auratic experience, as well as its firm foundation in materiality. In a passage from *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk)*, ⁴⁹ 'In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us,' (Benjamin, 1999f, p.447) Benjamin appears to distinguish the notion of aura from that of trace, based on the location of power in the relationship between the subject and object. This interpretation, however, becomes meaningless when the boundary between the two is unclear. The relationship between the fetish and its owner may be relevant to the politics involved here:

[T]he active relation of the fetish object to the living body of an individual: a kind of external controlling organ directed by powers outside the affected person's will, the fetish represents a subversion of the ideal of the autonomously determined self. (Pietz, 1987, p.23)

This subversion is precisely the peculiar appeal of the fetish: the external control that the fetish has on subject is self-imposed—that is to say, the subject voluntarily chooses to be controlled by carrying or wearing the object on their body, endowing it with the power to which he/she yields. By dividing the self-governing power, the fetish-wearing subject ironically feels a complete ownership of self, and this reveals the subject's desire to minimise the contingency that may undermine its supposed solidity. The seemingly arbitrary designation of the fetish hints at the profound emotion and sensation the subject experiences in the moment of the chance encounter with the unknown. The radically different object encountered does not at all conform to the subject's familiar world, and consequently disorientates the subject. In this moment of self-shattering *crisis*, the materiality of the encountered object is something to cling to, as if some fragments of the dizzy self can be contained in it until stability resumes. Subjectivity is 'shared' with the object, blurring the boundary between the two. From this point, any action or emotion geared towards the object is also geared to the self.

For the subject, the encounter may have happened by chance, but its status as fetish is far from arbitrarily given. The object's supposedly inescapable link to the self is recognised only by the subject, and it is this exclusivity and secrecy that intensifies

⁴⁹ The term for the iron-and-glass covered Parisian arcades is 'passages couverts de Paris'. 'Arcade' is the US translators' rendering of the more significant concept of 'passage.' The former is a static space and the latter is a movement, journey, and essentially a journey conducted by foot.



the object's hold over the subject. The more arbitrary it seems to others, the more unique it becomes to the subject. Hannah Arendt explains Benjamin's view on the collector's relationship with his/her objects:

The true, greatly misunderstood passion of the collector is always anarchistic, destructive. For this is its dialectics: to combine with loyalty to an object, to individual items, to things sheltered in his care, a stubborn subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable. (Arendt, 1999, p.49)

Collectors understand the impossibility of the whole; for them, 'the basis of collecting does not lie in 'exactness', in 'silk-reeling' or 'the complete inventorizing of all data'' (Marx, et al., 2007, pp.4-5) They thus aim for 'incomprehensive completion', focusing on the particularity of each relationship they form with the objects they encounter. The more unfamiliar and exclusive the encounter, the more enhanced is the uniqueness of each object. 'Their discerning fascination is one of dis-ease and disruption.' (Shanks, 1992, p.102)

Benjamin believed that a collector 'studies and loves [the objects] as the scene, the stage of their fate.' (Benjamin, 1999h, p.62) The link between the object and the collector, out of all other possibilities, is as much the fate of the collector as of the object, and this inevitability eternalises the link: the object is *individualised* and the scene is *territorialised* from abstract dimensions of time and place into an actual 'stage'. When Benjamin pointed out that the reproduction of a work of art lacks 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be', (Benjamin, 2007b, p.220) not only was the uniqueness of the production considered, but also the uniqueness of the encounter between the artwork and its viewers.

During the late 1920s, Surrealist writers such as Michel Leiris and Georges Bataille attempted to interrogate the real power of the fetish in the short-lived magazine *Documents*. In Leiris's 'Alberto Giacometti', the true nature of fetish, such as that of the African fetish, and its power to *touch* us, can be identified:

We live in a completely oppressive age, and fetishism which remains at the root of human existence has only the rarest occasion to find satisfaction in an undisguised form. ... true fetishism is the love—real love—of [ourselves]⁵⁰, projected out from within and bearing a solid carapace that traps it between the

⁵⁰ 'l'amour – réellement amoureux – de nous-mêmes' (Leiris, 2006, p.249)



limits of a precise thing and situates it, ... in that strange, vast room we call space. (Leiris, 2006, p.249) (translation modified)

The fetish moves us so profoundly because it 'resembles us and is the objectivised form of our desire,' and is 'a counterpart to the internal pole of our love.' So the fetish is an intensely personal material like tears, or the 'dust of fingernails', that Leiris calls 'the marvellous salt', 'the salt of tears', 'the salt of bones and frozen carcasses'. ⁵¹ (Leiris, 2006, pp.250-251) The *unbidden* encounter is a moment of *crisis* when the identity of the self is called into question: the infinite value of the moment becomes fixed, in terms of both places and things, and retains a peculiar power, 'expressing the sheer incommensurable togetherness of the living existence of the personal self and the living otherness of the material world.' (Pietz, 1985, p.12) Leiris adds that true works of art or poetry are 'the petrification of such crises.' The untranscended materiality of the fetish here hauntingly reminds us of our corporeality through the saltiness of tears and sweat, and fingernails.

I find a striking similarity between Leiris' account of the fetish and Valéry's view on works of art, which Benjamin relates to his notion of the aura—except for the lack of the material dimension.

We recognise a work of art by the fact that no idea it inspires in us, no mode of behaviour that it suggests we adopt could exhaust it or dispose of it. We may inhale the smell of a flower whose fragrance is agreeable to us for as long as we like; it is impossible for us to rid ourselves of the fragrance by which our senses have been aroused, and no recollection, no thought, no mode of behaviour can obliterate its effect or release us from the hold it has on us. He who has set himself the task of creating a work of art aims at the same effect. (Valéry, quoted in Benjamin, 1999b, p.183)

Benjamin defines the aura as 'Ein sonderbares Gespinst von Raum und Zeit (a peculiar cocoon/web of space and time)' in his 'Little History of Photography' (1931). Much can be read from this short definition, yet in this context the fiercely exclusive and unique relationship between the subject and the fetish within the concrete material dimension of space and time explains the esoteric nature of the aura.

⁵¹ '... the dust that comes from the fingernails as they are being polished—the impalpable ashes a lover would keep like a relic ... and then the salt of tears, tears of laughter, despair or madness, gentle and vaguely malicious tears, grotesque tears, or heavy tears full of the salt of bones and frozen carcasses, always drops of water, falling tirelessly, sometimes drilling a dazzling well into the silent rock of existence, ... the salt of sweat, the salt of looks...' (Leiris, 2006, pp.250-251)



In the psychoanalytic interpretation of cinematic identification in The Threshold of the Visible World, film theorist Kaja Silverman theorises film's propensity for 'abducting the spectator out of him- or herself' through the concept of aura. (Silverman, 1996, p.93) Suggesting that the notion of the aura designates a subjective relationship enabling what Lacan calls 'whole affective assumption of one's neighbour', (ibid., p.93) she considers cinematic identification as 'fundamentally excorporative or heteropathic, rather than incorporative or idiopathic'. (ibid., p.88) The 'abduction' can thus be likened to the self's partial transposing or displacement into the other, just as in the encounter with the fetish, experiencing the self with the other's gaze. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), Benjamin reminds us of the story of a Chinese painter who gets so absorbed in his work that he disappears into his own painting. Silverman analyses this as an allegory of cinema's ability of 'estranging the viewer from his or her habitual bodily parameters, with the disintegration of the imaginarily coherent self. (ibid., p.90) The spectator departs from herself and becomes the other, 'who emerges at the expense of the self', like a method actor's self-annihilatory identification with the part she plays. (ibid., p.91) During the momentary dissolution of the self into the psychic space of the other, the self is made strange and unfamiliar, and the illusory solidity of the self is shattered. With the aura taking hold of the disorientated self, the self has no other choice but to get lost into what seems to be the only stable thing - other. I will return in the next chapter to explore the line of affinity between the radical disjunction of fetish, the radical otherness of the liminal and the crises of the self, as these become formulated as strategies of 'defamiliarisation' within the poetic and modernist text.

From the aforementioned definition of the aura, 'Ein sonderbares Gespinst von Raum und Zeit', philosopher/literary scholar Carsten Strathausen interprets Gespinst (web) as Benjamin's deliberate choice of word in order to implicate the ghost-like ephemerality—Gespenst (spectre)—of the aura. (Strathausen, 2001, p.5) This, combined with another possible translation of the word as 'weave', implies the dialectical nature of the aura produced in the fragile boundary between self and other, which in turn reveals the insubstantiality of the self.

The defamiliarising moment is captured from the continuous flow of experiences, thus disappearing as quickly as it appeared. Yet the disappearance does not suggest a 'forgetting': for the captured prey, the ghostly web turns utterly real at the moment of



capture. The tremble of the captured thing is magnified on the web, further disorientating the already dizzy prey. This moment of crisis reveals the utter materiality of the (bodily) self to the self. 'Such a crisis brings together and fixes into a singularly resonant unified intensity an unrepeatable event (permanent in memory), a particular object or arrangement of objects, and a localized space,' (Pietz,1985, p.12) which act as the witness to one's own materiality.

Didi-Huberman contemplates this appearance of the ghostly web in his observation of the phasmids in the *Jardin des Plantes*, in Paris:

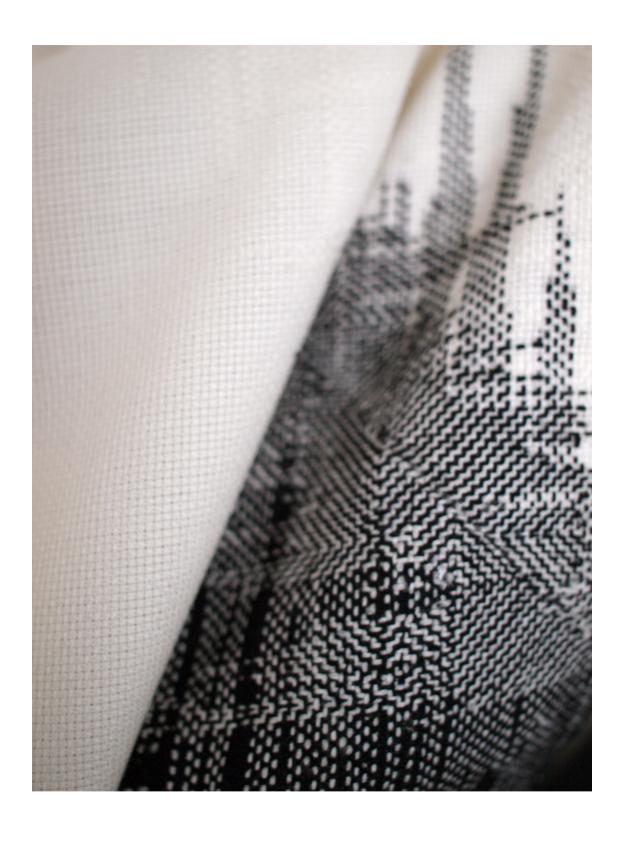
The only things that appear are those which are first able to dissimulate themselves. Things already grasped in their aspect or peacefully resembling themselves never appear. ... appearing is destined to be something like dissimulation. (Didi-Huberman, 1989)

Through its ancient Greek root of *phasma* ($\varphi \acute{a} \sigma \mu a$), the word phasmid is associated with 'phantom', ⁵² which resonates with its mysterious appearing and disappearing. Like the fetish, which 'appears' only to the particular person as she suddenly recognises its hidden resemblances, aura is perceivable at this moment of shift from general to peculiar, from similar to dissimilar, from familiar to strange⁵³. The experience of the otherness of self, the mythic quality suddenly found in the everyday self, manifests as aura–an emblem of the ambiguity of modern existence. A similar scene is depicted by Benjamin in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire';

In a widow's veil, mysteriously and mutely borne along by the crowd, an unknown woman comes into the poet's field of vision. ... The delight of the urban poet is love—not at first sight, but at last sight. It is a farewell forever, which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment. (Benjamin, 1999b, pp.165-166)

⁵² Its etymology reveals a link to the formation of a surface like the Skin Ego: Gr. *hyphainein* weaving ... L *phantasia*, apparition (from Gr 'appearance, imagination') ... Gr *phainein*, to bring to light, to show ... (McEwen, 1993, pp.48-49)

Simmel also describes this fragile boundary between the particular and the general, determined by the self's precarious identity: 'A trace of strangeness ... enters even the most intimate relationships. ... strangeness is ... caused by the fact that similarity, harmony, and nearness are accompanied by the feeling that they are not really the unique property of this particular relationship: they are something more general, something which potentially prevails between the partners and an indeterminate number of others, and therefore gives the relation ... no inner and exclusive necessity.' (Simmel, 1950)



Benjamin points out that Baudelaire simultaneously identifies with and dissociates himself from the crowd,⁵⁴ who have become so much part of the poet-flâneur.⁵⁵ This indicates that his ambivalence towards them stems from the uncertainty of self. The appearance of the unknown object of love that this crowd brings is, in fact, a defamiliarised 'double' of the poet, the 'ever-present-yet-previously-unseen' phasmid. Losing sight of the unknown woman may actually be due to the poet's own movement, not hers: the erratic self in constant passage.

The multifariousness of self, or rather selves, is something that has become constant, that we live with, giving an impression of being an integral whole. But it is 'when integration is at the point of disappearing that the meaning of the particular steps out from behind it.' (Stallabrass, 1996, p.183) With the sudden encounter with an object which reminds us so much of concealed and forgotten aspects of ourselves, the edifice of the supposedly solid self starts to fall apart. 'The formerly hidden emerges and the building regresses to a state which recalls its own construction,' (Edensor, 2005, p.318) revealing the joints and linkages. We thus only notice things when they are *shifting*—either disruptively squeezing into our familiar world or lost from the familiar world. Aura concerns the perceiving of what is already present, and is only seen during the process, or movement, not in the phase of stability and certainty. 'To see phasmids appear requires ... de-focusing and moving back a bit, giving myself over to a floating visibility.' (Didi-Huberman, 1989)

So the disruption caused by the fetish and the auratic object, and the subject's ironic fascination with this disruption, reveals much about the ambivalence towards the not-so-solid self. The appearance of the double, or defamiliarised self, can be enchanting, uncanny or both, depending on the subject's feelings toward the alterity and similarity revealed. In any case, the experience is deeply affecting. The subject's vehement adherence to these objects may also imply the irresistible effect of the estranging experience. Possession of the fetish is an implicit wish by the subject to recreate the first encounter, despite the instability caused by reflexivity. How reassuring is it to

⁵⁴ 'He [Baudelaire] becomes their accomplice even as he dissociates himself from them. He becomes deeply involved with them, only to relegate them to oblivion with a single glance of contempt. There is something compelling about this ambivalence where he cautiously admits to it.' (Benjamin, 1999b, p.168)

p.168)

55 'As regards Baudelaire, the masses were anything but external to him; indeed, it is easy to trace in his works his defensive reaction to their attraction and allure. The masses had become so much a part of Baudelaire that it is rare to find a description of them in his works. His most important subjects are hardly ever encountered in descriptive form. ... Forgoing such descriptions enables him to invoke the ones in the form of the other.' (Benjamin, 1999b, p.164)

```
Garments CONTAIN ... L tenēre, to hold, to endure
 ... F. tenir, pp. tenu, n.f. tenue, outfit; allure; manners
                E. tenue, bearing; deportment; mode of dress
                                   ... Winnicott's 'holding'
L habere, to hold, occupy, possess... F habiller, to clothe,
 ... habitus, state or condition, appearance, dress, F habit
                                 ... F habiter... to dwell...
                         to hold ... hold firmly... to grasp,
     capture something alluring but elusive, disappearing...
                             Hold firmly BECAUSE it's elusive
                        Warburg's Pathosformel, contained in
    folds of a dress and hair in motion described in antique
          "... Flee from the god, who hurled himself upon her.
               Her flight was swift; but he was swift enough
             To capture from her some few strands of hair ..."
    (p124. Aby Warburg, 'Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Spring')
                                        ... 'strands of hair'
                     the last trace of a disappearing object
                  ... the sensation that the object is moving
                        away from me, followed by my gaze ...
                          the thing is slipping away from me
                           as I can still feel it in my hands
                   ... like the awakening moment from a dream
       ... a withdrawal of the thing like breeze, or sigh...
                       "... The breeze stirs her golden hair...
   the opposing breezes made her garments ripple as they met
                   And a light air sent her hair flying back
                 ... Her garments flutter, wafting back behind
                  ... The breeze fills the folds on her breast
                                 (Aura sinus illplet) ..."(p107)
   Aura, the breeze, causes the hair and garments to stir...
      " ... and two Breezes turning their dresses into sails
               (duaeque aurae velificantes sua veste)." (p108)
         ... the aura, breezes, nymphs blowing into the hair
                      and dress, setting them in motion. ...
```

A journal entry on Thursday 12 May 2011

possess the object that can bring back an extraordinary moment in the past which would otherwise rely entirely on chance—yet more anxious uncertainty? As Benjamin recognises:

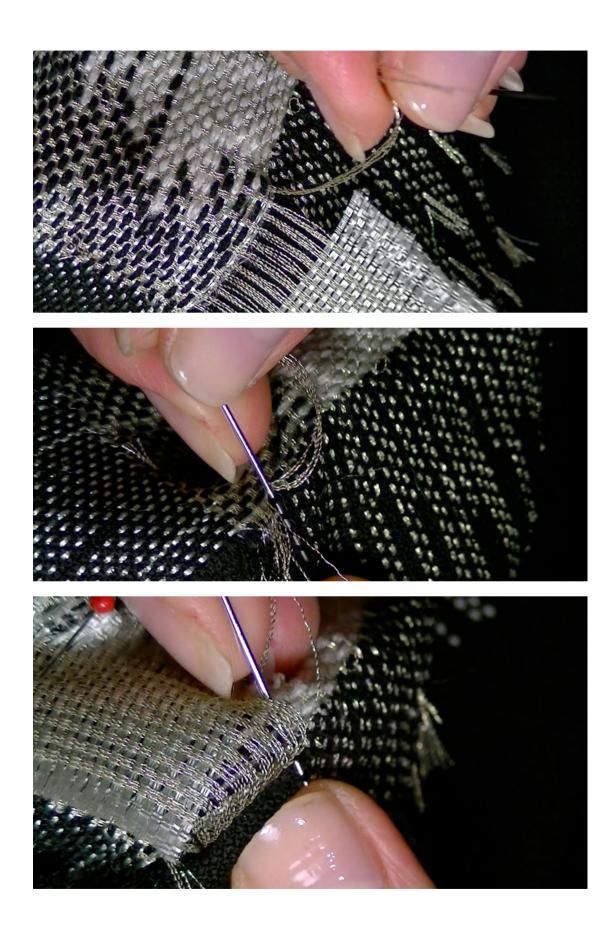
[T]he past is somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us), though we have no idea which one it is. As for that object, it depends entirely on chance whether we come upon it before we die or whether we never encounter it. (Benjamin, 1999b, p.155)

The curious power that the fetish or the auratic object holds over the subject is exclusive to the person and unique to each occasion, without continuity, despite the wish to repeat the original encounter. This is again because of the ever-changing boundary of the self: and the faster the change, the stronger is the object's hold over the subject. What distinguishes aura from trace is thus the ambiguity of the self: the trace is a result of contact, while the self and other exist with clear boundaries, whereas the aura is the result of 'touch' during the dissolution of these boundaries: thinking or reasoning is impossible when the self becomes unknown, and as a result emotion and sensation take over. Therefore, 'in the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us.' (Benjamin, 1999f, p.447)

Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, looks at us in return. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. (Benjamin. 1999a.)

This act of investing concerns an attentive mode of being: 'Perceptibility is a kind of attentiveness.' ⁵⁶ If the gaze is returned, it is the viewer's own gaze reflecting back from the mirror of other, the subject's double, the displaced self. Perceiving the aura thus implies acknowledging the alterity in me and my subsequent desire to hold on to this other to maintain the solidity of self. Thus 'the gaze implies a dialectic of desire, which supposes alterity, lost object, split subject, a non-objectifiable relationship.' (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.6)

⁵⁶ '[L]ooking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met ... there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent. 'Perceptibility,' as Novalis puts it, 'is a kind of attentiveness.' The perceptibility he has in mind is none other than that of the aura.' (Benjamin, 1999b, p.184)



As evidenced in the 'problem' of the fetish, the value of material objects is complex and non-universal. The irreplaceable value of tangible objects derives from their materiality, that which can retain physical contact. Some objects have an enduring link with a specific person, a physical place, or a certain occasion, as 'materialised memory', which is almost always the case when the person, place, or occasion is known or recognised.

But this trace on objects as an indirect physical connection exudes a somewhat different kind of allure when it concerns the touch of unknown people. There exists an uncanny or auratic dimension emanating from the anonymity of these hidden faces. One's late grandmother's jacket automatically brings her back in one's memory, whereas an old jacket that used to belong to an unknown person is more than simply evocative. This anonymity prevents an automatic link with specific people, and the impression is almost entirely about oneself, and its more primal or deep-seated link with the self emerges. The meaning of objects is always reconstructed subjectively, but unlike one's grandmother's jacket with specific references which limit subjective insertions, evidence of unknown touch can trigger an entirely subjective sensation that overrides the dimension of reality.

The appeal of the anonymous 'hidden face' behind objects is understandable when we consider the ritual value of making, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Making with the hands is a primordial mode of making. The genuine physical engagement with the material in a state of heightened perceptiveness and the effect this process has on the maker, reveals striking resemblances to the original notion of the fetish. Both are valued not for what they represent or visually resemble, but for the maker or owner's sensory and emotional responses while in contact with the material embodied in the object, imbuing it with a magic that only affects those who believe in it.

Benjamin associates aura not only with cultic works of art, but also with artisanal objects and any objects which have been incorporated into a person's life:

If we designate as aura the associations which ... tend to cluster around the object of a perception, then its analogue in the case of a utilitarian object is the experience which has left traces of the practised hand. (Benjamin, 1999b, p.182)

In stark contrast to religious icons or idols, the fetish, or auratic object, originates its power from the users' and makers' touch. The reciprocated gaze forms a peculiar

Es ist eine alte Geschichte (It is an old story)

doch bleibt sie immer neu;
 (but remains eternally new)

und wem sie just passieret, (and for him to whom it has just happened)

dem bricht das Herz entzwei.
 (it breaks his heart in two.)

Heinrich Heine. Dichterliebe. poem 11

nexus, within which the viewer's attention is given and the aura is experienced in return. The unreserved attention on the part of user/viewer and the unconditional effort and labour on the part of the maker become part of an 'essential luxury' in staging an auratic experience. This is what essentially distinguishes the traditional mode of production from mechanical production for Benjamin:

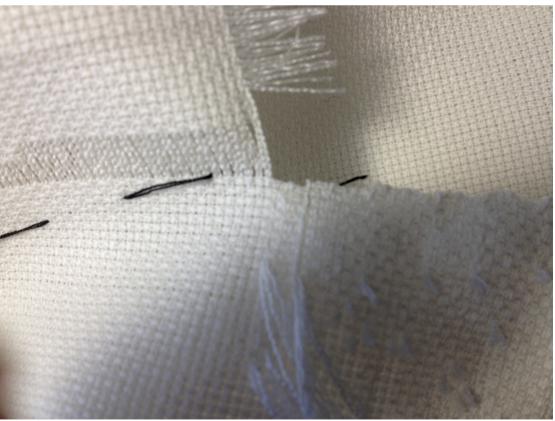
The painting we look at reflects back at us that of which our eyes will never have their fill. What it contains that fulfils the original desire would be the very same stuff on which the desire continuously feeds. (Benjamin, 1999b, p.183)

Aura cannot be produced without the dialectic response of the viewer, as it is not inherent in the object. For an attentive viewer, the same object can remain eternally original. Therefore, aura is a marker of a genuinely committed process that calls for the undivided attention of the maker or viewer.⁵⁷

Applied to the material dimension of crafted objects and clothes, the notion of aura thus confounds the boundary between aesthetic experience and fetishistic obsession. It also demonstrates the limits of theory and reason (of non-fetishists) which 'flattens out' the fears and desires that can arise from an interaction with material in the making process. They 'explain away the extraordinary power that with fetishism is precisely the problem.' (Spyer, 1998, p.5) Without acknowledging that the selvedge of the self can fray away in contact with things and others at a personal level, the real nature of material things at a social level, I would argue, cannot be fully explained. Later, in Chapter Five, I explore the radical disjunctures of self which are symbolised by our bilateral hands. The makers' hands in the process of making represent the possibility of schism to generate new objects and new relations.

⁵⁷ Later in Chapter Seven, I apply this interpretation of aura to 'the poetic garment' and the notion of authenticity in fashion. See pages 190-194.





Chapter Four. Here and Now

The deeper the remoteness which a glance has to overcome, the stronger will be the spell that is apt to emanate from the gaze. (Benjamin, 1999b, p.186)

Ritual Making

Benjamin suggests that the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. 58 (Benjamin, 2007b, p.223). At the very core of fashion (as a system based on the dialectic relationship between the high-end consumer and the mass market) is the notion of 'authentic' as a the marker of distinction, the desire for which generates change. Often this authenticity is an abstract commercial value fabricated by designer idolatry and media-driven marketing using the 'glamour' of celebrity. Yet the real origin of authenticity needs to be recognised in the mode of production, which subsequently inspires the mode of consumption. An appreciation of the way things are made affects the way things are used, linking the maker and user through the product. This link renders the product an object for keeping, rather than throwing away or replacing, further accumulating the traces of use. Marcel Mauss does not differentiate magic from ritual, because the effect of magic is created in the process of ritual. The person who performs a ritual is the creator of magical power, rather than a medium, or a receiver, of existing magic. Authenticity is created from the way that makers engage with the act of making, and the way that users buy, use and keep these objects.

The ritual value of an artefact can be said to originate from a person's response in encountering it as an unfamiliar other, functioning in the same way as objects for self-reflection in the liminal stage (Turner: see Chapter One, pp.36-38); the object as a constellation of the time, place, and person of a chance encounter (see discussion of the fetish, Chapter Three), and objects of identification through embodiment (Warnier:

⁵⁸ 'The triple conjunction of use-value, ritual, and the uniqueness of the place ... purifies the concept of use-value of any utilitarian connotation. *Use-value has nothing to do with usefulness*. Benjamin roots it not in factories but in churches. Use-value implies only this: ... It resists displacement and reproduction. ... [Proust's] The tyranny of the Particular simply names an absolute dependence on 'jealous,' irreplaceable objects.' (Hollier, 1992, p.12) (italics my own)





see Chapter Two. p.54). With the appearance of the new other, the subject looks for the edge of self for the affirmation of self. This origin is perhaps most clearly seen in the prehistoric context, when human beings were facing unknown natural forces, as the well-known cave drawings at Chauvet or Lascaux suggest.

The ritual purpose may have preceded all other purposes in the origins of human making. Architectural historian Spiro Kostof considers the simple arrangements of nature for ritual use by prehistoric humans to be the first architecture. When the first human generation lacked confidence in their own position with regard to nature, their hope and expiation were expressed by making use of the natural architecture of each cave, conjuring an inseparable whole from the cave, the animals and their own images. (Kostof, 1995, p.24) In Kostof's description of the Lascaux cave drawings, the common enduring aspect of making—as much for prehistoric as for modern humans—is evident:

The hunter had thought of himself as insignificant in the face of the universal and mystery-filled presence of nature. He was caught up in the flux and flow of life, moving with the herds, courting them, slaying the beasts reverently, and devising magic rituals to ensure their continued abundance. ... in obscure and womblike caves, the only ray of security in his unpredictable and perilous life was elaborately enshrined. (ibid., p.26)

Their survival depended on ensuring the continuing presence of the other, which was not exactly under their control. Animals were revered and consumed in a ritual way, continuously renewing the edge between human and animal for survival or for 'affirmation' of self.

In this sense, genuine making is humans' response to the uncertainty experienced as he/she mingles with the unknown, which is always unpredictable. In the emotions and sensations arising from this 'crisis'—this frisson, whether stemming from fear (the extinction of self) or excitement (of survival)—using and making, consuming and worshipping, overlap and get confused.

⁶⁰ 'The paintings convey ... the animals ... the attitude toward them seems reverent. According to one school of thought, the caves are sacred repositories of animal spirit, and the hunter's guarantee of participating in the special power of the animal. The painted image is hope and expiation in one – the hope of drawing the animal to the kill, and expiation for having to kill it. Weapons themselves were often carved into animal forms, and men danced in animal masks. At some time, the very eating of the animal came to be a sacrament.' (ibid., p.24)

⁵⁹ '... if architecture describes simply the act of making places for ritual use, it was one of the earliest human needs. Indeed, architecture may be said to have been there from the beginning, in raw from as it were, in the very arrangement of nature.' (Kostof, 1995, p.21)



Victor Shklovsky's notion of 'defamiliarisation' explains ritual value as proportionate to the unfamiliarity of that which is encountered. Shklovsky was a literary critic and writer working within the Russian Formalist movement. His concept of defamiliarisation/estrangement in literature influenced the radical theatre of dramatist Bertolt Brecht, who in turn influenced Walter Benjamin. This concept was also developed by the Prague Linguistic Circle, and it forms the nucleus of Roman Jakobson's concept of 'poetic function' in language. It is the poetic or prose-like qualities of artefacts that turn my attention to this notion: what is it that renders some objects mundane and others captivating, auratic, and 'disruptive', like the fetish? In my view, this is contingent on the relationship between subject and object articulated through the notion of defamiliarisation. In his essay 'Art as Device', Shklovsky suggests that poetic language is structured, impeded, distorted speech, as opposed to easy, economical and correct prose, (Shklovsky, 1991, p.13) that it removes the perceiver from the domain of automatic, or conventional, perception, making them pause and dwell on what is being perceived. (ibid., p.12) Applying this to other domains of art, Shklovsky proposes that artistic practice aims to make objects foreign and unfamiliar: to increase the difficulty of perception, because the process of perception itself is the main purpose.

By 'enstranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.' The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the *fullest*. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant. (ibid., p.6) (italics in original)

The distance from which one can perceive aura, or rather that which aura demands, is the sudden feeling of strangeness which is sensed in response to something which is already familiar or taken for granted. The process of artistic practice is here suggested as a technique for staging this auratic experience. Benjamin describes the effect of the traditional mode of art production, as opposed to that of mechanical production: 'A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. ⁶¹ In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art.'

_

⁶¹ 'There was once a painter who one day painted a landscape. It was a beautiful valley with wonderful trees and with a winding path leading away toward the mountains. The artist was so delighted with his picture that he felt an irresistible urge to walk along the path winding away

When I work with warps, I work within that boundary yet always try to break free from it at the same time. Without having to introduce different types of stitch, one purposeful inconsistency - skipping one, wrapping twice - not only gives it an accent, but also suddenly brings out the rest.

A journal entry on Wednesday 27 May 2010

The real value of hand-weaving may be in the irregularity not the immaculate regularity. Repetition by machine cannot evolve through improvisation.

A journal entry on Monday 8 November 2010

Not all the fabric is secured yet, but I
think I should now start
on the first outfit anyway.
It'll take ages to make.
Even if I get everything organised
in advance, the fabric may never arrive in time,
or I might change my mind
and not use the ordered fabric.
Better start now and develop
the details in stages, according
to what's available and feasible.

A journal entry on Tuesday 14 June 2011

When making, an idea is only a start and should not so much be valued in itself. There are always unforeseen details to sort out. Making is knowing by doing. Getting through it to know. At least for me, nothing is finished without repairing, editing, and patching up.

A journal entry on Monday 23 January 2012

It frustrates me when I can't take chances while making.

If everything has to be planned in advance, the only possible way is down. Things don't always work out as imagined, and it's depressing to let others and myself down.

A controlled work process makes me anxious as it excludes any contingencies that may refresh the initial plan.

Anxiety comes not only when things go out of control, but also when I'm too much in control. Predictability is agitating. I need some room in case I get stuck or bored.

Accidents are bound to happen and whether they are positive or negative depends on the way I take it.

A journal entry on Wednesday 16 June 2010

(Benjamin, 2007b, p.232) The painting, with its multivalent appearance, also allows the spectator—who empathises with the artist—an absorbed state of appreciation, or a 'poetic experience', as Shklovsky would put it.

Shklovsky's notion of art as device, then, compels the maker to produce an object which promotes the defamiliarised reflection on the part of the perceiver. This is comparable to the use of caricatural objects in rites: Victor Turner has interpreted these as objects of reflection, as their unfamiliar appearance triggers neophytes to rethink their existing system of values. Yet there was another method, the example of breathing technique for meditation given by Mauss: the most mundane bodily function is made strange and unfamiliar solely by the person's attentive perception. This indicates that poetic experience—as it is contingent on the mode of perception—can be self-generated. The object may not necessarily be something new, but the subject's sharper awareness sees it as if it is new. Conventional and automatic perception blinds us even to what is well within our sight. 'We do not see them, we merely recognise them by their primary characteristics. The object passes before us, as if it were prepackaged. ... Gradually, under the influence of this generalizing perception, the object fades away.' (Shklovsky, 1991, p.5) In his 'Little History of Photography' (1931), Benjamin demonstrates the mode of perception which seeks particularity within the mundane. The formulaic sameness of the studio setting in early photography provokes Benjamin to search for the smallest clue which may aid an empathic connection with the photographic subject:

No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. (Benjamin, 1999a, p.510)

His search for contingency is intensified by the fact that it appears to be implicit, hidden or difficult to detect. German literary scholar Carolin Düttlinger, whose research explores changing conceptions of attentiveness in German literature and culture, locates the aura within this attentive search for contingency on the part of the viewer, who in this case catches the gaze of the photographic subject, which he recognises, at first vaguely and then piercingly, from his own experience:

How much should the element of chance - the inherent character of material and the circumstances of making - be allowed?

Should I let the material dictate certain parts of the process? or should I learn to maximise the control over the material for a planned outcome?

Is expertise in essence about control of the material and the working condition?

A journal entry on Tuesday 2 November 2010

William's weaving hands are almost 'automatised' - his body with the tools gains rhythm soon after he begins to weave and the hypnotising movement gets faster as he settles. Yet his hands sort out the mistakes or intentionally leave them as he goes. It's fascinating to watch, as it's never the same. Making by hand can easily be as unthinking and unmotivated as machine manufacture. It's the attitude of maker and his ability to improvise that makes the difference.

A journal entry on Wednesday 8 October 2008

"... Automating some stage of the making gives greater coherence to the activity itself. Working picks up some internal necessity at those points where the work makes itself, so to speak. ... the artist has stepped aside for more of the world to enter into the art.

This is a kind of regress into a controlled lack of control."

(p.87, Morris, 1993. Continuous Project Altered Daily:
The Writings of Robert Morris. MIT Press)

I need to pull some warp yarns to give the woven structure
a bodily contour. I am pulling a yarn...
I am pulling another yarn ...
They smoothly slide along the channel
between the wefts to find
the points to stop, and then resist my pulling hand.
Usually if I carefully sense and give in to
this resistance,
the warps end up forming
a regular pattern.
They know where and when to stop.

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 May 2010

Benjamin's focus is again on the sitter's gaze, the site of the picture's inherent tensions but also of its particular appeal. ... It is this detail, rather than the surrounding scene, which attracts the viewer's attention, triggering an empathetic response in Benjamin. (Düttlinger, 2008, pp.88-89)

A work made explicit leaves no room for the viewer to engage. *Explicit* was the closing word of a manuscript or early printed books, originating from the meaning 'the scroll has been completely unrolled'. ⁶² Complete unfolding puts an end to the work. The appeal of chance and obscurity is founded in the tension existing on the edge of the known and the unknown. The pleasure of knowing is proportional to the fear, frustration and desire experienced during the state of uncertainty in the process. Shklovsky points out that it is unpredictable deviations that turn plain prose into something poetic.

[A]rtistic rhythm may be said to exist in the rhythm of prose *disrupted*. ... we are dealing here not so much with a more complex rhythm as with a *disruption* of rhythm itself, a violation, we may add, that can never be predicted. (Shklovsky, 1991, p.14) (italics my own)

When I make, I fear and anticipate this unpredictability. Contingencies protect me from mindless repetition, and the work from being a mundane one. The handmade contains this poetic rhythm, which is irreproducible. It is as if the hands are thinking, forgetting, stopping, and remembering. Human repetition deviates, bringing about differences rather than that which is identical.

Ceramicist Edmund de Waal has created a series of works which are arrangements of very similar shapes with slight variations which are made by subtle pushes of the fingertips. Next to each other, the pots offer a syntax of deviations:

... there's a very basic level of skill which is only acquired through repetition. ... it actually seems self-evident to me that the more objects you make of the same size, same shape, the more attuned you get to slight differences. Your eye and your hand become more carefully attuned to difference. (de Waal. 2005.)

My inconsistency, the inability to reproduce the identical, renders my work uniquely mine. The purpose of repetition in making by hand is to break the rhythm while

⁶² 'The LL-ML *explicit* is short for *explicit(um est volumen)* and for *explicit(us est liber)*, 'the book has been completely unrolled'; then, at end of the MS, as if the verb were intransitive, 'here endeth' (Souter). Cf the E adj *explicit*, which comes, through late MF-F *explicite*, from that same pp *explicitus*.' (Partridge, 2006, p.2468)

The Nylon tubing arrived this morning ...

someone cuts and rolls it in a certain diameter either chosen at random or just to fit in the packing box and posts it to me. It acquires a tendency (of curling in one particular direction) during the transit. By the time I receive and am ready to use it, it has a determinate direction of curl. The virtual tubing in the virtual modelling program would have been perfectly straight and well-behaved. ... There are 'others' present in the real process - the tubing, the person who packed, and perhaps the courier service deserve some credit for taking so long to deliver it.

A journal entry on Monday 25 January 2010

As I undo the tube frame, I experience some unexpected resistance at some joints which I'd assumed to be weak; it takes a few good pulls and twists to separate them, or I even have to cut them altogether. When I'm not sure if something's solid enough, I should try undoing it... Yet some trusted joints come apart with no effort at all. It makes me feel almost betrayed. When the material fails me, I feel properly snubbed. I want a cooperative, understanding, and self-adjusting material that gets on with the job even when I am not watching. When I misjudge it and do something inappropriate, invariably comes the blunder. It's most disappointing when this happens with a time lapse, sneakily when I am not there, divulging my miscalculation and complacency.

A journal entry on Saturday 27 February 2010

Why do you have to make it so public?

working within it. The maker submerges herself in her work and repeats the similar process until her perceptibility reaches its fullest state, experiencing 'the intangible differences within the persistent, transferable sameness of the reproduction.' (Shiff, 1997) Unlike mechanical reproduction, the maker's own act of reproduction finetunes her perceptibility. The creative leap is not so much the change in the work itself as the maker's perceptibility of the subtle changes happening in the work. When she becomes more familiar with, and in control of, the material, the maker deliberately lets go of control over the material to make it unfamiliar again, as therein lies the purpose of making. Making by hand is thus a real in-and-out-of-control situation, in terms of the material as well as for the maker herself.

In this sense, the authenticity originating from ritual making is based on the maker's ability to create a 'successful ruin' (Rabe and Düttmann, 2012) from purposeful deviations, the result of expertise which breaks expertly as well as building expertly. The unique quality of the handmade is thus a combined result of the laborious process and irreproducible contingency which cannot be replicated in the modified versions of the mass-production market. This distinction lies in the quantity as well as the quality of labour, and, most importantly, in the attention and attitude of makers involved in the process. The most contrasting aspects of my professional experiences in both high-fashion ateliers and mass-production companies were the mode of perception and the psychological state while working. Whereas the workshop practice required my full concentration, motivating me to challenge my abilities, particularly if the task itself was not challenging enough, commercial work seldom failed to put me in an automatic psychological mode: the lack of challenge in this work would always send my mind somewhere more interesting, with my hands alone taking responsibility for the work. I was not fully present, and found no pleasure in the process itself.

The reflexive modern attitude has focused our attention more closely on handmade objects, which are considered nowadays almost an escape from patterns of excessive production and consumption. Examining modern craft in a social context, Tanya Harrod points out that Iftikhar Dadi's use of the cheap toys which are made in Pakistan using hand-operated plastic moulding machines, reminds us of the homogenizing effects of globalization. (Harrod, 2007, p.33) The crude, all-too-visible seams are a counter-indicator to the inhuman perfection 'seen' in the invisible seams of modern manufacture, as well as highlighting our almost compulsive resistance to

... will all this time and effort pay off?
How do I make sense of the effort poured into a work that is only to be a test sample? How, if ever, does the energy invested in the test pieces manifest itself?

A journal entry on Monday 13 September 2010

The stitches used in these seams are extremely disproportional - I only needed a fraction of stitches if I just wanted to secure the seam. Are the excess stitches wasted? If not, Where is this surplus energy stored? Is this more meaningful? more beautiful as an object? more rewarding? One thing is certain - I feel much more emotional about this dress. I can narrate the agonies and joys of the 'dramatic moments' to anyone patient enough to listen.

A journal entry on Monday 24 October 2011

Weaving a continuous-warp-tube in rayon.

I always seem to find a way around when it comes to techniques.

I somehow manage to neatly arrange 32 layers of the flimsy rayon yarn and to weave without getting them all tangled, which didn't at all seem possible in the beginning. Step-by-step. When something gets intimidating, all it needs is time: time to stay away from it, and time to invest when I resume.

... It is essential that I pause to be able to continue.

A journal entry on Saturday 17 April 2010

I pour my weave very slowly over the mould. If it were plaster, for instance, it wouldn't take much time to pour, but just a bit of time to set. Do I feel the shape more because the pouring takes longer? Does the shape become more familiar to me because I had a longer contact with it? In tapestry weaving, every single cell of the finished surface has passed through my hands. Every single pick needs to be beaten down in-between each warps. All the weft yarns on the bobbin pass my hands as I wind it. I have watched every single stitch and every single line being formed. ... To achieve a successful gradation of colours, to work out suitable stitches for a desired look ..., I need almost unnatural amount of concentration and patience. Slow progress does not mean a relaxing one - each decision is made with a certain anxiety.

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 May 2010

its lack of individuality and sameness, the desire for deviation being triggered by the boredom of mass-production. Yet nostalgia is just a wishful reconstruction of the past. The particular and authentic can be created or found in the 'here and now', as Shklovsky's idea of poetics and Mauss's analogy of magic and ritual suggest. The 'woven-in' seam draws attention to the way things are made, and subsequently users' attitude towards it, like the crude seams of the plastic toy. The ubiquitous, hence 'invisible', machine-sewn seam is made visible by the attempt to eliminate it. It reveals the labour required for putting together pieces of fabric to make a garment by employing an exaggerated form of craft labour, as if demonstrating the nonautomatic, nor unconscious, formation of an affinity between production and consumption. Through the long and laborious, and thus utterly uneconomical, process, the making of seams and edges are prolonged by forgoing an easier and familiar device. The real purpose of this project is in the process, in becoming aware of the nature and possibilities of the weave, in exploring the effect of making, while contemplating the real value of craft labour. The uneconomical expenditure of attention and labour here becomes an 'essential luxury' for staging a poetic experience. The remnants of this process are seen in the unfamiliar texture and visual effect of the connecting surface, which estrange the viewer. The estrangement from the illusion of seamlessness is, therefore, also an invitation for the viewer to reconsider the 'invisible' workings of garments, whose presence we take for granted in the habitual and automatic way we 'use' dress. The seam then functions as a metaphor for the illusory mechanisms that culture deploys in order to 'make good' the schisms and contradictions that exist at the heart of modern subjectivity. The stitch, which imitates weave, becomes a 'play', or illusion, which the viewer is invited to enjoy by simultaneously 'seeing it' as a handmade stitch and pretending it is simply mechanically-manufactured weave.

A genuinely engaged mode of making, like that of prehistoric humans reverently drawing their animal images on the cave wall, inevitably produces an emotional effect. The more engaged the maker is, the more organic and improvisatory the process becomes. A state of concentration does not remove the emotional nor unconscious side of the maker, as there exists no clear and solid subjectivity. A ritual mode of making cannot, therefore, be quantified or analysed. The moment the 'l' breaks down into subject and object, nearness and distance gets confused, and the 'l' loses its point of view. Yet this emotional and psychological effect that the maker experiences

A made object is an accumulated trace of the maker's movement - physical as well as the movement of thoughts.

A journal entry on Monday 25 October 2010

Unknowingly I get used to the behaviour of this particular other rather than manage to change it to my liking. What strikes me most at the end of a making process is the extent it changed me.

I couldn't do a half-hearted work without feeling guilty or like selling myself. I distanced myself from this kind of work mentally engaging with something else while drawing.

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 May 2010

The Gyrotonic instructor tells me to learn to generate the bodily movement from the spine. I should think of my body as a container full of fluid and imagine the spine sending movements to other parts of body like waves. You aim to move the body parts as an all linked system, so you can prevent any concentrated stress on one particular part. Well coordinated, the movement becomes effortless. She breathes and moves with such an ease that I don't even know what I'm supposed to watch and remember as she demonstrates. But when I try to copy her, there are too many things to think about that I can hardly move at all. ... Relax breathing in, turn in the elbow, lift the head. Breathe out as I dive down from the top of the head, arch the spine, open the rib cage towards the front, push the arms forward gradually turning the elbow out, push the floor with the feet transferring the weight towards the I'm supposed to find the rhythm so the entire movement connects seamlessly. I know how to breathe and move, but not the way she wants me to. I need this elaborate machine to remind me of the muscle, ligament, and joints I've always had. Making a conscious movement and breathing consciously requires considerable effort. As I move and breath in staccato rather than seamlessly, she encourages me by moving together explaining each steps. She uses metaphors more than descriptions - it simply isn't possible to explain all the detailed and coordinated bodily movements in words. I can relate to 'the moment the tips of your hands hit the water when you dive in' or 'push your feet against the water to go forward and then just float.'

inevitably manifests in the artefact as the *disrupted rhythm* which distinguishes the authentic from the inauthentic.

Self-Making

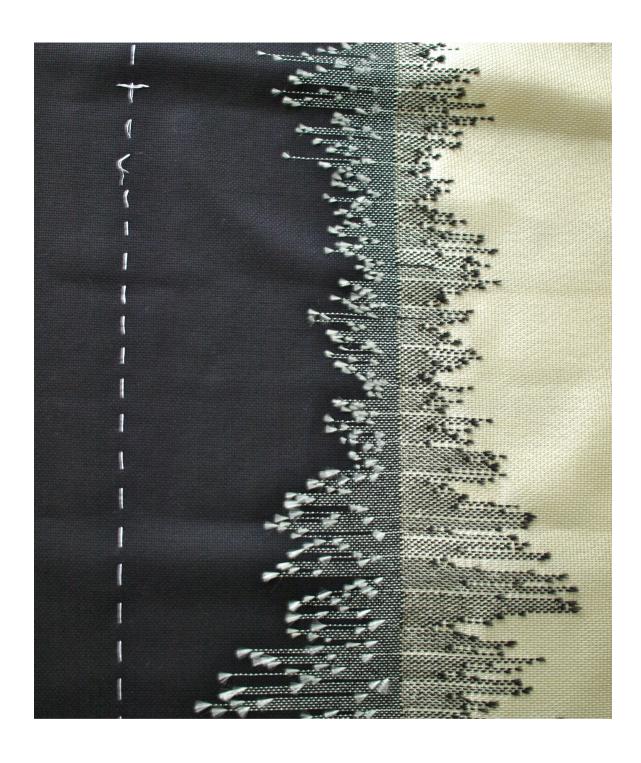
How can I tell what I am till I see what I make and do?⁶³ (Frayling, 1993. p5)

The way we 'put together' ourselves is reflected in the way we make things. The artefacts we make resemble us: perpetually in process and provisional, repeatedly crossing thresholds, from birth till death. Making can therefore be said to be the process of facing up to, and getting used to, the different aspects of the 'I', during which maker and material are both transformed. Through making, the maker becomes aware of the various unfamiliar aspects (the 'otherness') of the 'I', as well as her own imperfections or limits, if not exactly where they reside, which are the result of these inconsistent aspects of self. Finding the edge of the 'I' thus remains a constant quest. This may be why the process, not the end result, should be the focus of genuinely engaged making.

The maker and the artefacts are thus formed simultaneously. They both constitute the trace of reciprocal sustained contact with each other, which contains the emotional effects generated in the process. The uncomfortable task of facing the self is necessarily intense, as evident in a neophyte going through a rite of passage. This aspect needs to be addressed in discussing the process of making. However, studies into the practice of making often focus on the general aspects of human making from a third-person point of view, from which the psychological and emotional aspects are difficult to perceive in their actuality. If practitioners study their own experience in their respective domains, within which they have spent many years practising and improving, this can reveal aspects of making which are more difficult to be perceived by others. Apart from the more serious attitude of professional makers towards their practice, compared to that of hobbyists or someone who tries it out a few times for curiosity or research, the accumulation of time invested in practising in a specialised domain usually gives professional practitioners a deeper insight into the effects of making and the relationship between maker and material.

.

⁶³ See footnote 1 in page 9.



The philosopher Michel Serres describes the experience of going through a change as truly crossing over a boundary, accompanied by a full visceral and emotional response, rather than just jumping over it:

No one really knows how to swim until he has crossed a large and impetuous river or a rough strait, an arm of the sea, alone. ... The outside observer willingly believes that the one who changes passes from one state of belonging to another: ... No, that would only be true if the middle could be reduced to a point with no dimension, as it is in a jump. The body that crosses surely learns about a second world, the one toward which it is heading, where another language is spoken, but, above all, where the body is initiated into a third world, through which it passes. (Serres, 1997, pp.5-6)

The experience of a 'third world', the process of change, cannot be separated from the experiencing person. A first-person experience involving sensorial and emotional changes is not something that is easily perceived by watching from the outside, as it involves a myriad of details that are not explicit enough for the observer to notice. This experience is elusive, even to the first person, as it loses its sensorial and emotional dimension as it becomes thoughts. Proust says, in *In Search of Lost Time (A la Recherche du Temps Perdu)*, '... griefs, at the moment when they change into ideas, lose some part of their power to injure our heart.' (Pollak, 2007)

Yet this elusiveness may be precisely where the real value of making, and the attempt to transfer this into knowledge, lies. Benjamin hints at the importance of uncertain, ambiguous moves in the process of thinking, as this is what impedes the process, resulting in the originality of the ensuing knowledge:

Every piece of knowledge, ... contains a dash of nonsense, just as in ancient carpet patterns or ornamental friezes it was always possible to find somewhere or other a minute deviation from the regular pattern. In other words, what is decisive is not the progression from one piece of knowledge to the next, but the leap implicit in any one piece of knowledge. This is the inconspicuous mark of authenticity which distinguishes it from every kind of standard product that has been mass-produced. (Benjamin, 1999e, p.699)

Benjamin scholar Gerhard Richter explains the significance of the word *Erkenntnis* for its implication of incompleteness and ambiguity:





... unlike mere *Wissen* (knowledge), *Erkenntnis* (cognition) signifies the moment and process of attempting to translate perceptual phenomena into the security of interpreted knowledge. But his thinking focuses on how the process of cognition depends on its formation on what has not yet fully understood. If full understanding of a phenomenon had already occurred, there would be no more process of interpretive cognition and active reading, but simply the treacherous stasis of allegedly secure knowledge. (Richter, 2001 p.28)

Pertinent examples of placing the focus on the ambiguous edge can be found in religious practices. In many Buddhist practices, coming across nonsensical or inconsistent instructions and formulae is common. In the process of intensive engagement with confusing teachings, such as Zen riddles (in Korean: 선문답, 禪問答), the intellect ceases to function usefully, and instead perceptual phenomena are experienced without an attempt to hurriedly or forcibly convert them into thoughts. This concentrated yet uncertain state (uncertain or obscure is not the same as unthinking or mindless), before things are provisionally settled, is perhaps more genuine than safely framed certainty. Experiences which are not fully processed into explicit knowledge, before they settle as language, thoughts, and reason, perhaps contain a more genuine response of the person to various phenomena. It is said that the riddle implies an elusive truth ('the non-existence of self' in the case of Buddhism) which is only graspable through practice, not by thoughts alone. It points out the incomprehensiveness of intellect, and credits other dimensions of 'knowing'. Buddhism abandons 'truth' in different phases of practice, setting up new ones as if demonstrating that settled thoughts cannot correspond to the actuality, and therefore should be constantly overcome.

Setting aside its symbolic meanings, the ritual of gazing or drawing mandalas in certain branches of Buddhism is essentially devoid of an aim. But its effect is clear in the sensation experienced during the concentrated state which occurs in any genuinely engaged making. Put simply, making artefacts is a method of experiencing things as they are or for what they could be, rather than to confirm what is already known. The advantage of purposely prolonging this uncertain state by a laborious process such as making by hand is thus evident. With the advent of advanced technology, making by hand does not necessarily produce better, or a greater quantity of, objects. The motivation for taking long detours by making with the hands is to experience the genuine involvement with 'others': evolving inwardly from the material, the tools and the maker's own body, and eventually to recognise the self as

It looks just ridiculous. ... I can't show this to anyone.

No one must see this. I think I'll bury it somewhere

and pretend it never existed.

and then I'll go and find somewhere to hide.

A journal entry on Saturday 14 November 2009

'the transitional object ... is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena ... have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common''

(p7, Winnicott, D., 2005. Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena . In *Playing and Reality*. USA and Canada: Routledge, pp. 1-34.)

other in making. Making by hand thus focuses the priority of making on the process of investigation rather than the resulting artefact itself.

The ancient Greek approach can be seen to relate closely to this analysis. McEwen explains the typical response of the ancient Greeks in the way they encountered apeiros, or inextricable⁶⁴ problems, such as the labyrinth without escape. For the early Greeks, the dangers of aporia⁶⁵ were 'not problems to be solved but the basic precondition for artifice.' Their methods of dealing with such entanglement was making, or 'cunningly crafting'. 66 The labyrinth appears under two very different quises. The narrative labyrinth is inescapable dead-end passages, the terrifying embodiment of aporia. Yet the image of the labyrinth as it appears on Cretan coins, as well as in later representations in Roman mosaics, is as the choros, the dance floor, that which can be explored by bodily engagement, 'tracing paths through journeying'. (McEwen, 1993, p.60) It is possible to untangle a complicated knot not by calculation or logic, but by carefully unravelling it bit by bit. The labyrinth in this case would stand for the pre-linquistic practical engagement of doing and making as redemption from dead-end reasoning, turning it into tracing and journeying. The process of meticulous craft construction, the act of engaging with the inextricable other, is seen to be of value in itself as the very essence of Greek knowledge, 'order', as well as divinity, appearing in this process. Rather than regarding artefacts as reproductions of existing ideas, or Platonic Form, in pre-Socratic knowledge primacy was placed on the process of discovery through the making of artefacts.

The emotional and visceral responses produced during an engagement with material define the maker's relationship with his/her work. As noted earlier, the ambiguity between subject and object means that the maker is uncertain of what her action is geared towards. The maker challenges the material by pushing the limits of control and predictability, not necessarily realising that the material is challenging her back. This produces the real effect of practice: pride and a feeling of achievement often

-

⁶⁴ from Latin *inextricabilis*, from *in- 'not' + extricare 'unravel'* ← extricate: early 17th cent.: from Latin *extricat-* 'unraveled,' from *ex-* 'out' + *tricae* 'perplexities.' (Partridge, 2006, p.1035)

^{65 &#}x27;aporia' - an irresolvable internal contradiction or logical disjunction in a text, argument, or theory. Etymology: via late Latin from Greek, from *aporos* 'impassable', from *a*- 'without' + *poros* 'passage.' (Oxford Dictionaries. 2010. Oxford University Press. [online] Available at: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/aporia [Accessed 14 November 2012])

⁶⁶ In Ancient Greek, *daidalon* means a well-made, or 'cunningly crafted' thing. McEwen points out that this word has come to apply more and more frequently to textiles, especially so qualified when they are tightly woven, like a ship's joints, and have a luminous sheen. (McEwen, 1993, p.53)

Showing a work as unfinished is different from showing the work in progress - I haven't yet let go of it.

Work in progress is a very private thing, still a part of me.

I feel vulnerable an exposed.

I'm still not separate from it even though I'm not sure exactly which part of me it is. ...

I want to be standing next to it covering and protecting it from the gazes of spectators to make sure it's decent. There still are some issues to be dealt with ...

it's unfair that I have to be so exposed.

A journal entry on Saturday 27 February 2010

One of the Olympic athletes suffered cramps in her leg soon after the start, so she had to give up the race. The despair and disheartened tears on her face was hard to watch. One of the contestants on the TV baking programme couldn't stop crying over a treacle tart that went wrong.

... They certainly care.

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 September 2012

Can real loss be possible without genuine care? Where is the meaning in losing something that you don't care about?

A journal entry on Tuesday 11 September 2012

I heard of makers who liken the process of making to giving birth to a child. Perhaps for a mother, her baby is what she achieved and also an idealise version of herself. My mum never seems be able to get out of the blind idealisation. But perhaps the process of making is more like growing up. A child idealises her mother ... only to slowly begin to see flaws in the 'perfect' mother. The growing child loves and hates the mother, but eventually learn to love for her imperfections which are also the child's own that she unknowingly identifies. When I pick on mum's flaws and drive her mad, it's because I care - I see the same flaws in me. ... When I can no longer identify with the work I made, my emotions fizz out, unlike what I feel about my mother, who I increasingly recognise as my double.

A journal entry on Wednesday 12 September 2012

come only after frustrating disappointments during the process. With easy and predictable tasks, the mode of perception and making becomes automatic, thus robbing the making of its ritual value. The maker is compelled to remain on the edge of certainty and uncertainty, between the trace and aura. Making of this kind becomes a duel between the maker and the 'spirit' of the material. In the course of pushing each other to the limit, the maker is as much tamed and moulded by the tools and the material as the material by the maker. They stab and caress each other while also copying one another, a process which marks them both. 'Mimicry would thus be accurately defined as an incantation fixed at its culminating point and having caught the sorcerer in his own trap.' (Caillois, 1984, p.27) Absorbed making is a process of reciprocal copying between human and matter, temporarily blurring the edge between the two.

In his essay 'Vogel's Net' (1996), Alfred Gell also uses the hunter's trap as a trope to explain the true nature of the relationship between the artist, the artwork and the spectator. Gell cites an account of an expert chanter of magical epics among the Fang of West Africa:

... chimpanzees are like human beings: when they have a problem, they stop and think about what to do, instead of just running off and crying out. ... So the Pygmies have devised a special trap with a thread, which catches on the arm of the chimpanzee. ... Instead of breaking the thread, it pulls on it very gently to see what will happen then. At that moment the bundle with the poisoned arrow falls down on it, because it has not run away like a stupid animal, like an antelope would. (Gell, 2006, p.226)

The chanter was talking about the complex and evanescent nature of wisdom/ magical power, which is often compared to traps; you think you can get hold of it, but it escapes, and it is you who gets caught. (ibid., p.226) This account proves that this trap only works when both parts are truly engaged: the hunter needs to really know about the behaviour of the animal that is his prey, and the intelligent animal needs to think, unfortunately, as it always would. It is only in the ritual mode of making that self-making as well as self-trapping, can happen.

The trap is both a model of its creator, the hunter, and a model of its victim, the prey animal. But more than this, the trap embodies a scenario, which is the dramatic nexus that binds these two protagonists together, and which aligns them in time and space. (ibid., p.228)

Repetition shows a gradual transition.

Is it the maker's character appearing in the object?

Her trace becoming more obvious?

Then does the objects' trace become increasingly apparent in the maker?

How does it manifest?

A journal entry on Thursday 26 February 2009

... the paradoxical way in which this net had been itself caught, and tightly bound, within a second net. This recursive metaphor of capture and containment would have been itself enough to give them pause, halt them in their passage, and induce them to stand and stare, like [the] fated chimpanzee. Every work of art that works is like this, a trap or a snare that impedes passage. (ibid., p.234)

Making an artefact (the trap) can thus be seen as a process of capturing the unknown self. The knowledge associated with the making is elusive, as the self and the material are in constant change, yet the maker is constantly drawn to this process—in the same way as the fetish is entrancing. So the trap ends up resembling both (and perhaps more) aspects of the maker. This process is in turn replicated between the artefact and the viewer. The protagonists linked in this nexus seem to demonstrate the weaving pattern of another web—Benjamin's aura. The aura 'is always constituted in a process of self-detachment.' (Strathausen, 2001) Displaced perception profoundly affects and transforms the maker. The ambiguous boundary between the maker(s) and artefact is expressed at a material level as the web/weave by Benjamin.⁶⁷

Just as the trap resembles the hunter and his animal prey, what we make resembles us. The manifesting of personal style as a result of the interaction within the Skin Ego has been noted by Anzieu: the skin's ability to preserve the external disruption in, or 'inscription' on, its outer appearance reveals much about the inner state of the person, and our socially 'inscribed' identity, as well as our conscious and unconscious responses to social influences are revealed in the way we dress. Likewise, there exist implicit/explicit resemblances between the artefact and the maker. In this sense, style is this intact trace of the making process manifesting in the finished work as an unmistakable mark of the maker: it reveals the way in which the maker and the finished objects have tamed each other. Style, according to Barthes, 'springs from the body and the past of the writer and gradually become the very reflexes of his art. Thus under the name of style a self-sufficient language is evolved

-

⁶⁷ 'What, indeed, is the aura? A strange web of space and time: the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be.' (Benjamin, 1999a)

⁶⁸ Style, from 'stylus' implies that stylistic individuality depends on the incision of self into the 'matter' of form.

⁶⁹ '[each trap/ model/ implement] may actually reflect the outward form of the victim ... Or... more subtly and abstractly, represent parameters of the animal's natural behaviour, which are subverted in order to entrap it. Traps are lethal parodies of the animal's *Umwelt*.' (Gell, 2006, p.227)

Unable to make any progress in drawings, I read more of Paul Klee's Notebooks - The Thinking Eye and The Nature of Nature. There are meanings and reasons behind every single strokes, tones and hues in his works. But where does the distinctive

style come from? The slight hint visible in the beginning intensifies in his later works. Nothing in the Notebooks implies why his lines and compositions

were so characteristic.

Can style be explained?... even the most mathematical and analytical artist didn't analyse his style.

A journal entry on Wednesday 19 May 2010

which has its roots only in the depths of the author's personal and secret mythology, that subnature of expression.' (Barthes, 1984) This may explain why makers often knowingly and unknowingly identify themselves with the artefacts they produce. Objects can represent the maker, and she experiences pride, shame, love, hate, and many other emotions through the object she has made. The space of emotion and reflection on the 'passage' of making may be transmitted to the wearer/viewer/user via the artefact. When the passages of the maker and wearer meet, the poetic function of the artefact fully manifests itself.



Chapter Five. Seaming Hands

Victor Turner shares van Gennep's view that life itself is a transitional passage, during which undoing and dissolution are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns:

It is interesting to note how ... logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens, for example, by huts and tunnels that are at once tombs and wombs, ... by nakedness (which is at once the mark of a newborn infant and a corpse prepared for burial), and by innumerable other symbolic formations and actions. This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both. (Turner, 1970, p.99)

'The peculiar unity' of the liminal stage would then mean the unity of disparities, the meeting and processing of differences before starting anew. This process is acted out in the way that neophytes are *cut off* from the rest of the group during a rite of passage, often accompanied by *cuts and wounds on the body*, and kept on *the edge* of the territorial boundary for a period of reflection before being reincorporated into the group. With perpetual change regarded as the characteristic modern condition, we are in permanent liminality, processing change with various methods of *cuts and markings* of our own. In this chapter I investigate the modern condition that disorientates us with its constant, rapidly-paced change, and how we respond to this in diverse and self-contradicting ways, suggesting the craft mode of making as a positive response to the defamiliarisation triggered by modernity.

A Permanent Passage

Philosopher Marshall Berman suggests that the unsettling modern condition is more prominent now than ever, as modernity has thoroughly permeated our world, unlike the partial influence it exerted in nineteenth-century Europe:⁷⁰

⁷⁰ 'Marx and his contemporaries experienced modernity as a whole at a moment when only a small part of the world was truly modern. A century later, when the processes of modernization have cast a



[M]odernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air.' (Berman, 1989, p.15) ... To be a modernist is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own. (ibid., pp.345-346)

To be at home in perpetual change, the modern subject needs to somehow self-reflect during each change in order to rethink existing values. Sociologist Anthony Giddens points out 'the reflexive appropriation of knowledge'⁷² (Giddens, 1990, p.53) as the main cause of the uncertain and disorientated condition of modernity. The knowledge gained from self-reflection can no longer be applied to the self, the original object of reflection, as it has already been transformed by this very knowledge. More frequent reflexive states caused by perpetual change seem to further accelerate this rate of change and its disorientation. This implies ever-present contingencies, and one remains a perpetual stranger to oneself.

Therefore the reflexivity of modernity means that the self is always incomprehensive and partial, and is a relative notion dependent on what is other. This insubstantial self thus desperately longs for something solid to cling to, yearning to form more grounded links with others, yet the ambiguous boundary between self and other means that this other, as much as self, constantly oscillates between nearness and distance. Benjamin's aura is a symptom of this experience, a response to both the social and the psychical shock of modern life.

Aura is thus a yearning for a solid subjectivity. As a solidity of self can never be achieved in reflexive modernity, the search for aura intensifies. The brief sense of relief coming from self-understanding is quickly unsettled when one can no longer find the self that used to be. Unable to find a home in the self, we set off on a new search. "Home' is not a physical place but a mobile need; wherever one is, home is always to

The reflexivity of modernity, which is directly involved with the continual generating of systematic self-knowledge, does not stabilise the relation between expert knowledge and knowledge applied in lay actions. Knowledge claimed by expert observers rejoins its subject matter, thus altering it.' (Giddens, 1990, p.45)

_

⁷¹ 'Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.' (Marx & Engels, 2009, pp.44-45)

I think best in public places where I can be 'alone'
- in cafes, on the bus or tube, on the street I can create a small space where I'm invisible to the outside
but I can see the world going by. It allows me more private
and lucid thoughts than when I'm at home.
The world and others exist as concrete and real,
and I can feel myself in relation to them.
My thoughts and place feel more peculiar,
and suddenly I am more real too.

A journal entry on Thursday 2 February 2012

be found somewhere else.' (Sennett, 2011, p.88) This paradoxically turns aura into a sign of the constant yearning for, and further disorientation by, change.

Giddens also points out the emergence of 'absent' others in modernity. Universal time (effected by extensive use of the mechanical clock) replaced the more individual approach to the measuring of time, i.e. rituals, habits, or other regular activities bound to particular places, which also was replaced by 'empty space', independent of time or activity:

The development of 'empty space' may be understood in terms of the separation of space from place. ... The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. (ibid., p.18)

The awareness of abstract and 'absent' others subsequently empties the self, intensifying the desire for a 'present' other. We thus constantly attempt to re-localise this boundless time and space into 'filled' time and physical place for a grounding sense of realness.

The Cocoon

Anthropologist Marc Augé calls this emptied time and space a 'non-place,' which proliferates in 'supermodernity.⁷³' (Augé, 1995, p.77) A 'non-place' is the antithesis of a 'place' defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity. The compelling aspect of Augé's notion of 'non-place' and 'place' is that they can coexist, and that they are contingent on individual modes of perception. Typical 'non-places' such as the airport lounge, motorway, or trains can thus contain 'places' within them, depending on the person's way of being. According to Augé, 'place' seems to emerge dialectically within the instability of 'non-place':

To the coexistence of worlds ... movement adds the particular experience of a form of solitude and, in literal sense, of 'taking up a position': the experience of someone who, confronted with a landscape he ... cannot avoid contemplating. Thus it is not surprising that it is among solitary 'travellers' (on impulse or for unexpected reasons) of the last century ... that we are most likely to find prophetic evocations of spaces... (ibid., p.87)

⁷³ 'Supermodernity' is a term Augé uses to differentiate the thoroughly permeated modern condition today from its partial existence in the earlier periods.



This modern form of solitude, afforded by "cocooning", retreating into the self' (ibid., p.119) notwithstanding the transitional state, gives a sharp awareness of present, past and future, and opens up the possibility of 'place'. To cite Benjamin's definition of aura again: 'a peculiar cocoon of space and time', the dialectic awareness of the aura in modern life becomes evident. "Non-place' never exists in pure form; places reconstitute themselves in it; relations are restored and resumed in it.' (ibid., p.78) Therefore Augé considers that 'in the world of supermodernity people are always, and never, at home.' (ibid., p.109)

Augé seems to show us how we can make ourselves at home in the maelstrom of modernity. We are constantly in a state of passage, but there are always possibilities of home within this, in the same way that the familiarity of home can turn into strangeness, and as the prophetic modernist Benjamin found aura in the Parisian 'passages.' It would mean that Shklovsky's idea of modern artistic practice as a device for defamiliarisation and for staging poetic experiences (see Chapter Four) can be adopted in everyday life: Benjamin theorised the *flâneur*, drawing on the poetry of Baudelaire, as an emblematic figure of modern existence. The flâneur practices the 'technique' of displacement via an attentive, searching attitude: the flâneur decelerates and 'hangs around' (Rabe and Düttmann. 2012), choosing to take detours rather than a faster, more direct route. Compared to other passers-by, who aim at getting somewhere in time, who therefore do not notice anything unexpected, the flâneur's ways of existing in urban space open up the chances of being caught in a peculiar cocoon of time and space. The attentive mode of being can radically transform what one perceives in the same space.

This is pertinent to the social aspect of the Skin Ego and the role of the garment as a 'password' within the 'rhetorical territory', as I noted in Chapter Two. The result of the virtual interactions that have replaced much of today's actual face-to-face interactions is the decline of the social Skin Ego, which responds with an increasing urge to mark off the boundless into particular territory. Increasing demand for the bespoke and the handmade, and a growing participation in craft activities, appear to be expressions of this urge. What grounds us in the unsettling modern condition is concrete materiality, the 'present other' with a particular link to self, and concrete locality.

The woven-in lines seep into the neighbouring surface to appear as a surface itself. The emergent surface is noticeable

yet cannot be separated from the existing ones. It looks as if permeating not only into the neighbouring surfaces, but also

into the depth. It sinks down or rises up from the plane. It evolves from dots into lines into a plane into a space and then into time as it evokes those hours that I shared with it.

A journal entry on Saturday 2 July 2011

The Handmade – a Resting Place

Following Winnicott's explanation that the intermediate phase is aided by the materiality of the Transitional Objects which act as a 'resting place' for a baby, I suggest that making by hand can create a resting place where one can contemplate whilst being in contact with material. The two layers of the structure of the Skin Ego⁷⁴ adjust themselves with a certain flexibility, leaving some space in between. This space leaves the Ego the possibility of being able to withdraw into oneself. (Anzieu, 1989, p.62) Therefore this space can be a creative resting place, a transformative, cocoonlike place, rather than an autistic shell.

For those people who voluntarily choose hand-made methods for tasks that can now be achieved by machine, the process often puts them in an reflective mode; the maker gets into a 'zone', or 'a place within non-place', in Augé's words, within the non-place of the fashion system that constantly and frantically over-produces for a market that over-consumes.

This distinguishes the contemporary handmade, or bespoke, from that of earlier times. Displacement gives us a sharp awareness of the state we are in, revealing the joints and problems in the seemingly solid and smooth system, letting us see how this illusion is constructed. These modes of production should not be considered as an expression of nostalgia, or a passing retro trend, but as a necessary caution indicating the ailment the system currently suffers from. As sociologist Richard Sennett suggests, 'the solidity of undisplaced things, as of selves which have not experienced displacement, may indeed be the greatest of illusions.' (Sennett, 2011, p.54)

In similar way, this dissertation may be held in two hands and the reader's attention is drawn to the images and words on the two pages that face one another. The seam, or the centrefold, that joins the two pages is made 'invisible' by the conventions of reading. Yet the seemingly disparate contents on each page will, I hope, encourage the reader to make a conscious effort to find connections between the two, as well as the implications of this layout.

⁷⁴ The maternal/ social environment as the outer layer and the surface of the baby's body as the inner envelope.



The Commodified Trace

Although fashion is one of the most rapidly-moving industries, it still depends heavily on a significant amount of manual labour in its manufacturing process. Many parts of the process are now mechanised, but the most essential operation—the putting together of a garment—is yet to be mechanised. The attempt to devise a seamless woven garment was motivated by the need to reduce production costs by eliminating human labour, which still remains its main aim. Seams in the garment therefore inevitably involve the human hand, and are where the last traces of human operation—mistakes, variations, improvisation—may manifest. At a less material level, the placement of seams complementing the chosen material, as well as the wearer's body, directly connects to the designer's ability to transform raw material into a garment relevant to actuality.

Not only the trace of the maker, but also the trace of the wearer can manifest in seams. Cultural theorist Kitty Hauser explains how FBI research on the identification of denim trousers from surveillance footage effectively reveals the criminal: although the criminal's face is invisible to the camera, the individuating properties of the creases and wear patterns of his jeans are clearly visible, most prominently at the seams and hems. 'These are likened by the investigator to barcodes, which may be unique to each garment.' (Hauser, 2005, pp.154-155) The trace of making and using left in the seams renders even the most industrialised production unique. On a smaller-scale production level, these individualising properties would parallel the uniqueness of fingerprints, exceeding the function of barcodes.

The Belgian designer Martin Margiela has developed sweaters with the shape of elbows, breasts, and other traces of the body 'as if someone's grandmother had worn it hundreds of times, as if someone had found it years later in some attic.' After years of research, he used heat-mouldable yarns and cooked the sweaters on an oversized dummy, in an industrial oven of an automotive factory. (Wilson, 2008) In this project, in which Margiela replicated the trace of use, he seems to have wanted to connect the trace of making with the trace of wearing. The research and work involved in the process, the maker's trace, meets the 'invaluable' values of the personal meanings and memories of the wearer, suggesting the possible affinity between the two. For makers, the affinity they have built up with the material while making renders the products inalienable despite their status as commodity. The



enduring link after they are eventually bought means the maker pays the utmost attention so that the product lasts for a long time, accumulating its users' traces. Designers in the 'deconstruction movement' during the 1980s and 1990s subverted both kinds of trace: like the aforementioned sweaters, the traces of consumption which are usually absent in new products were artificially added, to achieve a 'used' look. Rei Kawakubo used boiled wool, which Ann Demeulemeester later adopted in her poetic rendering of the punk aesthetic, and Margiela's frequent use of second-hand material (a leather butcher's apron reworked into an evening gown, etc.), shredded jeans, or garment surfaces with mould, accentuate the value and meaning which are added through use. The trace of production was revealed and celebrated by using linings as outer layers, leaving hems raw and exposing seams so that they are rough on the outside. Less manifestly, the repeated handling during the long process of making by hand 'ages' the material. This emergent, rather than purposeful, trace of the maker can be regarded as a condensation of the process.

For some, the user's trace on the garment functions as inscribed memory. When we lose people who were close to us, their absence is most felt in the physical space and their belongings left behind. The interface of the Skin Ego formed between empathising people would mean that the other person is left with only part of their Skin Ego until the mourning is complete. A garment is in itself the space a person occupied. Like the unique pattern of wear visible on the seams of denim jeans, in detective fiction the trace of the wearer on garments provides as many identifying clues as the person's body. The garment left behind may be a medium that connects us with the absent person, which is profoundly consoling, or perhaps uncanny for some.

This emotional appeal of the trace, the mutual shaping between wearer and garment and between maker and garment, is widely exploited in contemporary fashion: the poetic origin of the 'used look' is forgotten when adopted in the mass-consumption market, which focuses on visual appearance alone. This look, now taken for granted, is an emblem of the changing relationship between user and object, mirroring the pattern of change in the maker's relationship with the object, as the market moves toward more mass-produced one.

Even 'some luxury brands strive to associate craftsmanship with their product ranges, yet they are mass producing in such a way that the artisan skills are no longer evident.' (Montgomery, 2012, p.6) Skilled craftspeople are placed on an industrial

my memory.

I saw an advert on the side of the webpage I was reading. Apparently from the label's new season collection, the outfit looked fantastic on the model in the picture. Tempted, I ended up logging in to their website and ordering the jacket. When I opened the box after receiving the delivery, I could immediately tell it was crumpled without having to take it out of the box. I held it up - the jacket was in a sorry state with un-snipped-off threads everywhere inside and out, never been steamed or pressed properly. The fit wasn't right specially at the shoulders which I could clearly tell, wasn't done carefully. I went to the shop to return it myself. The very friendly and smiley staff issued a refund with no problem. As she was waiting for the receipt to be printed, she quickly and efficiently (?) shoved the jacket into a shallow desk drawer, without folding or arranging it. I could see parts of the collar and sleeve 'spilling out' through closed the drawer. I then saw all the drawers were full of squashed item of clothes shoved in the same manner. I looked around the shop, to find and compare some other items I saw online, and it wasn't a pleasant experience. The clothes were too densely packed on the hanging rail that it was impossible to browse or pick one out without dropping several items next to it on the floor, which was already strewn with the garments fallen off the rail. If I was going to wear any of these garments, I would have to make a conscious effort to erase this scene from production line, taking part in isolated roles, without being involved in the whole process. Often the products are made in far-flung places, at the lowest cost, to be disguised with 'made-in...' labels which no longer are considered to be a genuine reflection of the garments' provenance. This tendency unfortunately further exploits workers from developing countries, who do not benefit from the disproportionate added value.

In these situations, the seam represents the ambiguity of value introduced by the process of making. The act of seaming turns raw material with a relatively straightforward market value into a garment with socially and culturally determined added value. The African fetish was devalued by Europeans, as its gold content was reduced by mixing it with other metals for sturdiness, but it was invaluable for Africans because of its status as fetish.

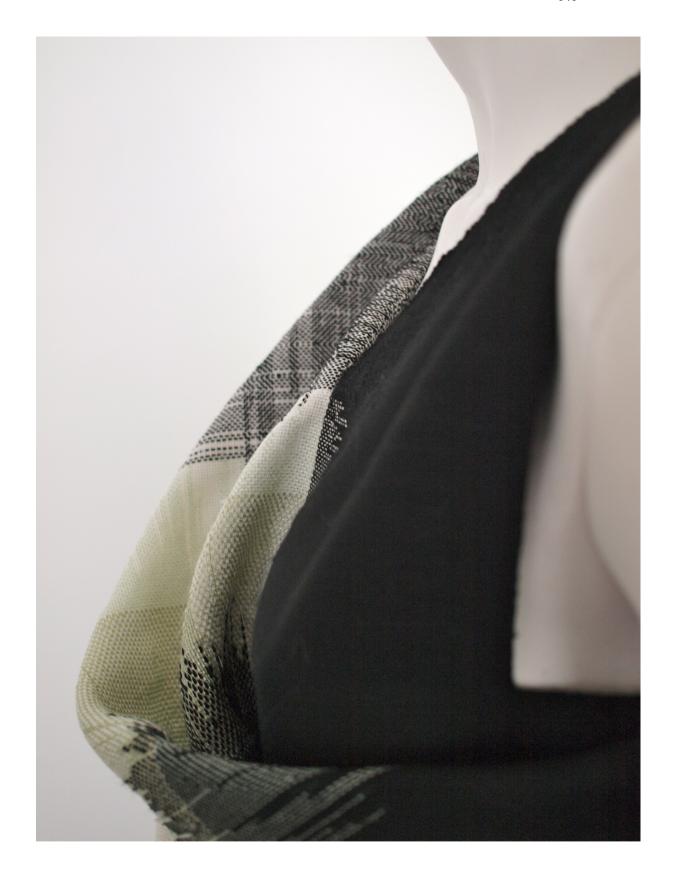
Excessive value added by the distorted notion of authenticity and the fabricated trace is mirrored in the exploitation of the maker-user relationship of made-to-measure garments. Bespoke goods appeal to users' desire to be included in a process of making, where a good fit is achieved through face-to-face interaction during the fittings. This leads the consumer to care about who made it, where it came from, and how it was made. This then connects to the experiential values of buying, using, and owning carefully-made objects. Yet the bespoke and the personalised are now available to the masses: 'Burberry bespoke' offers an opportunity for online customization of its trench coat, now available in 12 million iterations (The Future Laboratory, 2012, p.11). Lower-priced brands, such as Levi's, Converse, Nike and many others, also offer online customisation. But all these examples⁷⁵ are devoid of real interaction, where the solutions for users' needs would be improvised, and makers would feel rewarded by their satisfaction.

The fabricated trace in these examples is created as an abstract image, rather than through a process of genuine engagement. Stallybrass criticises this commodity fetishism as worship of the transcendental value that erases both the making and the wearing of a garment:

bag will look. Once the order is placed, it will be sent to a Louis Vuitton workshop where the letters

will be hand-painted.' (Relaxnews, 2010)

⁷⁵ 'Fashion companies offering online bespoke services include Ralph Lauren, which allows you to customize a Polo shirt, and luxury French house Louis Vuitton, which allows you to add monogram initials onto its Speedy handbag, Keepall travel bag, or Pégase 55 models. Customers can play with color swatches and designs via a Web application on Louis Vuitton's website to visualize how their



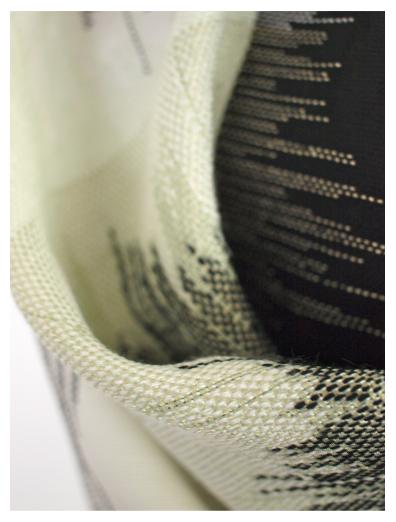
... a society that consumes ever more concrete human bodies. The abstraction of this society is represented by the commodity form itself. For commodity becomes a commodity not as a thing but as an exchange value. It achieves its purest form, in fact, when most emptied out of particularity and thingliness. (Stallybrass, 1998, p.183)

Fashion as a system is a symbol of capitalism, where garments can exist only as abstract value and image, but the possibility of particularity is always offered at the tangible material level of the garment. This depends on the mode of producing, selling, buying, wearing, keeping, and handling the garments, as tangible material that gets shaped by us and shapes us. The nature of our relationship with material things determines the abstractness or concreteness of things, as much as that of us. Without the physical and emotional trace of making bodies and using bodies, the products remain as mere garments, not an extension of the Skin Ego.

Benjamin considers commodity fetishism as 'empathy with exchange value': 'empathy with the commodity is probably empathy with exchange value itself.

Actually, one could hardly imagine 'consumption' or exchange value as anything else but empathy with it.' (Benjamin, 1980, p.140) There seems to be a fine line between commodity fetishism and the original sense of fetish as suggested by Pietz and Benjamin. Both involve empathy with inorganic matter and a form of 'consumption,' but the difference lies in the abstract/concrete nature of the thing valued. Benjamin seems to have been aware of the workings of African fetish, which was sometimes believed to take effect (going further than just wearing it) by being ingested, becoming an integral part of the body. This is in line with the way Kostof describes the prehistoric ritual which involved 'consuming and slaying animals vehemently' for a continual abundance of animals to be hunted. The abstract value worshipped in commodity fetishism renders the consumer increasingly empty: she becomes increasingly abstract herself in proportion to the abstractness of the 'other.' In the absence of the concrete other, she loses the edge of the self.

Empathy with the fetish or auratic object would then mean empathising with its ritual value by owning and using it while identifying with it, as Warnier would put it (see Chapter Two). The fetish in the West African coast was difficult to put a price on, exasperating the European merchants and thus blamed for blocking the smooth flow of exchange. Yet given the relationship the owners have with their fetishes, how can one put a price on oneself?





Losing the Edge

The importance of tactile interaction for babies and infants implies that a lack of skin contact would have a negative effect on the formation of subjectivity and social relationships. For adults, who incorporate much more of the space around them as bodily perimeter, reduced face-to-face communication would certainly have various effects on their psychological make-up. As noted earlier, in the absence of a concrete other, we are more desperate for the affirmation of our edges than ever. We need boundaries, while at the same time we do not always want to feel limited by these. Our relationship with things with which we can identify through use console the yearning for the unique self, the marking of the edge.

With the rampant increase in disposable garments of increasingly poor quality, which are carelessly distributed, there is no time to accumulate the trace or build affinity with garments. As the garments become merely garments, we are slowly losing our skin. It's not the rapid fashion cycle which is to blame, but a mode of production and consumption which does not care about clothes to keep and to use again.

Anzieu explains that one of the functions of the Skin Ego is the 'individuation of the self', giving the self a sense of its own uniqueness. Anzieu thus considers that the anxiety described by Freud as 'the uncanny' is connected with a threat to the individuality of the self through a weakening of its sense of boundary. (Anzieu, 1989, p.103) This weakening of the self's sense of boundary can be enjoyed and tolerated as a 'developmental necessity', as Winnicott pointed out. A tolerable degree, the temporary loss of the edge of self, would be what anyone experiences from time to time: these would be displacing experiences such as the auratic experience; the imitation stage during identification, the embodiment of material objects and space. However, when experienced to an excessive degree, it could entail a serious loss of subjectivity—as witnessed in some types of insect mimesis and schizophrenia⁷⁶—and, at a physical level, the disfigurement of the body. This more serious loss of the edge

⁷⁶ 'a 'borderline' state is one on the border between neurosis and psychosis, possessing features common to both those traditional categories. In fact, the patient in such a state is suffering from an absence of borders or limits. He is uncertain of the frontiers between the psychical and bodily Egos, between the reality Ego and the ideal Ego, between what belongs to the Self and what to others.' (Anzieu, 1989, p.7)

^{&#}x27;In schizophrenia, the whole of external reality (which is imperfectly distinguished from internal reality) is considered dangerous to assimilate and loss of the sense of reality enables the subject to preserve at any price a sense of the oneness of the Self.' (ibid., p.103)



is also comparable with commodity fetishism as a pattern of consumption which is afforded by the exploitation of labour in systems of mass-production.

Roger Caillois's original studies on insect mimesis illustrate this loss of the edge to different degrees, from temporary imitation to 'imitation into death'. Caillois describes mimetic insects' affinity with their surroundings as something of a bewitchment.⁷⁷ Allured by the space they come into contact with, the insects morph themselves to simulate the surrounding space. These insects, in imitating their surroundings, seem to be expressing their psychological, as well as their material impression of the space which *touched* them. Caillois considers chromatic mimicry as a kind of photography, and morphological mimicry as photography 'on the level of the object, a reproduction in three-dimensional space with solids and voids.' (Caillois, 1984, p.23) The entire *scene*, the space containing the imitating insect, is in itself the *hybridity*, the outer layer of Skin Ego *materialised*⁷⁸, appearing and disappearing along with the empathy between the insects and the space. This space may be comparable to Benjamin's aura ('the peculiar cocoon of time and space'); the place within the 'non-place', as Augé conceptualises, and the territorialisation of the fetish.

Caillois compares this to Flaubert's description in *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*⁷⁹:

The Temptation of Saint Anthony [ends] with a general spectacle of mimicry to which the hermit succumbs: 'plants are now no longer distinguished from animals. ... Insects identical with rose petals adorn a bush. ... And then plants are confused with stones. Rocks look like brains, stalactites like breasts, veins of iron like tapestries adorned with figures.' In thus seeing the three realms of nature merging into each other, Anthony in his turn suffers the lure of material space: he wants to split himself thoroughly, to be in everything, 'to penetrate each atom, to descend to the bottom of matter, to be matter.' (ibid., p.31)

Yet mimetic insects sometimes fail to reset the boundary, demonstrating a serious weakening of the inner layer of the Skin Ego that is supposed to protect the self's

-

⁷⁷ It is tempting to draw parallels between the 'bewitching' quality of insect imitative psychosis and the powerful 'fascination' of fashion. The etymology of fashion, lying in the root word which also produces 'faction' or 'a group taking up a political position' (Partridge, 2006, p.1041), suggests that sartorial culture is widely used to establish visible mechanisms of similarity and mimesis. Moreover, cinematic theory (Silverman, Mulvey) which analyses spectatorial identification with the screen as an instance of 'unconscious fascination' and its compulsion to imitate, also indicates the similarities between these different forms of 'camouflage' and copy.

⁷⁸ Modern subjects' chance encounter with auratic objects and the fetish is explored in Chapter Three.

⁷⁹ Benjamin also considers this in relation to the empathy with the inorganic. (Benjamin, 1980, p.140)



uniqueness. The two examples⁸⁰ of mimetic animal behaviour offered by Caillois show that sometimes the purpose of mimicry is not self-preservation from predators, but merely to become similar, indistinguishable, to the extent that the self disintegrates and completely loses its edge. The case of the praying mantis is even more uncanny. Art theorist Rosalind Krauss analyses this as the infinite automatic imitation, resulting in a total loss of the original subject, to exist only as 'other':

... when [the praying mantis] is unable to keep the distinction between itself and its leafy milieu intact. ... so deep is the imitative reflex ingrained in this creature that it can, when decapitated and thus truly dead, continue to mime the functions of life, such as hunting for food, building a nest, even laying eggs, all the way up to the ultimate form of its preservation of life: 'playing dead.' (Bois & Krauss, 1997)

Hal Foster contrasts the Surrealist imagery of 'the mechanical-commodified' and 'the outmoded' in this context:

[the automaton] evokes the reconfiguring of the body as machine. On the other hand, the romantic ruin evokes the displacing of cultural forms by this regime of machine production and commodity consumption—not only archaic feudal forms but also 'outmoded' capitalist ones. (Foster, 1993, p.126)

In an ironic inversion of the mockery and demonisation of the African fetish, the Surrealist notion of the 'mechanical-commodified' mocked machine production and commodity fetishism. It was intended to recall the forgotten value of materiality in favour of abstract commodity exchange value in capitalist society, which became our demonic double, endlessly consuming our machine-like labour. Benjamin's definition of aura as an empathic 'transposition' of human rapport to a relationship with an object inverts the definition of commodity fetishism (ibid., p.196). In stark contrast to the original notion of fetish, the human dimension remains forgotten in commodity fetishism.

The dialectical relationship between the outmoded and the mechanical-commodified in Surrealism indicated the relationship between 'the aura of the crafted object in which human labour and desire are still inscribed, and the fascination of the fetishistic

⁸⁰ '... this is an 'epiphenomenon' whose 'defensive utility appears to be null.' ... geometer-moth caterpillars simulate shoots of shrubbery so well that gardeners cut them with their pruning shears. The case of the Phyllia is even sadder: they browse among themselves, taking each other for real leaves, in such a way that one might accept the idea of a sort of collective masochism leading to mutual homophagy, the simulation of the leaf being a provocation to cannibalism in this kind of totem feast.' (Caillois, 1984, p.25)

When I weave-in, I don't intend to imitate the machine-woven original fabric. I cannot do it. It's far too complicated. Besides, I don't see the point of competing with machine.

I am deliberately simplifying the weave as non-disruptive way as possible. The aim is minimising the instability of the surface. It doesn't look perfect, but that's just me.

A journal entry on Friday 4 March 2011

The method of 'weaving-in' is different from 'invisible mending', as it uses the existing surface as a firm base.

Invisible mending fills a hole by forming a surface with intersecting warps and wefts alone.

It is also different from embroidery which sits on the existing surface and the newly added stitches don't necessarily follow that of the base.

In contrast, the woven-in lines follow the original weave faithfully, if in simplified way.

'Weaving-in' is closest to the weave done on a jacquard loom.

My research started with making seamless garments
via hand-woven tapestry method, of which
the replicated and mass-produced version
is jacquard weave.
Visually, the jacquard weave closely resembles woven
tapestry,
although the structures are not identical: the patterns on
jacquard fabric are additional to the surface,
whereas in woven tapestry the discontinuous wefts

machine or commodity in which such production is either incorporated or effaced.' (ibid., p.127)

In the premodern instance the machine is thought to mimic the organic movements of the human (or animal) body that is its model⁸¹...; the machine remains a tool, suited to the craftsman and subservient to him. In the modern instance, however, the machine becomes the model, and the body is disciplined to its specifications, ... as the worker resembles the machine, it begins to dominate him, and he becomes its tool, its prosthetic. (ibid., p.129)

This is far from the identification with the embodied tool that Mauss and Warnier describe, and also from the fetish as our auratic double. Foster further explains the attempt to erase human error in order to achieve increased efficiency of production, evolving from disciplining the body towards being a worker-as-machine in a modern industrial plant⁸²:

... automatic behaviours [of the docile, manipulable body] was perfected in the factory and emblematised by the automaton. ... In 1738 [Jacques Vaucanson] presented his famous automatons ... in 1741 Vaucanson ... worked to mechanize fabric production (his mechanical loom was the basis of the automatic Jacquard loom of 1801), and in 1756 he designed a silk factory near Lyons that, ... is often considered the first modern industrial plant. ... the central site where man-as-machine, worker-as-automaton, is produced. (Foster, 1993, p.131)

My 'woven-in' seaming method essentially copies Jacquard weave, which itself was the first mechanical reproduction of woven tapestry—one of the most labour-intensive methods of textile production. The experience of copying mechanically-produced fabric by using craft labour, working between the pre- and post-modern modes of production, unwittingly led me to reflect on the place that the handmade occupies within the contemporary fashion system, as well as modes of production and consumption, and the link between the two. While existing seamless garment construction techniques invariably focus on cost-effectiveness, the hand-woven

_

before the invention of the present locomotive, [there were the attempts] to construct a locomotive that actually had two feet, which after the fashion of a horse, it raised alternately from the ground' (p328, Marx, K., 1887. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Moscow: Progress.)

⁸² 'All these psychotechnical procedures were designed to increase capitalist profit through cuts in labor cost: 'to reduce to a minimum the resistance offered by man,' as Marx foresaw, 'that obstinate yet elegiac natural barrier.' Taylor was explicit about this goal: the scientific management of labor was to eliminate extraneous movements and individualistic gestures; 'elements of chance or accident' were also to be eradicated. All such characteristics were henceforth considered 'mere sources of error.'' (Foster, 1993, p.151)

are not additional, but the main body of the weave. Jacquard loom produced much lower priced replicas, awakening the modern weavers to reflect on the value and purpose of their labour. The newly emerging 'artist-weavers' didn't follow the cartoons designed by someone else. They created their own designs improvising as they go. Modern woven tapestry explores the medium in its texture, structure, and it affinity with the space, rather than the woven-version of pre-existing pictorial image. The 'woven-in' seams, both functional and decorative, simulate the mechanically woven fabric by hand. The resulting surface is necessarily rougher and less regular. The process is as labour-intensive as that of woven tapestry. What do I gain and lose from this experience of simulating machines?

A journal entry on Thursday 9 February 2012

tapestry method and weaving-in techniques are utterly uneconomical. These contrasting modes of producing or eliminating seams reflect the ambiguity of the value of human labour in modernity.

The Unique and Modernity

Just as the modernist value of originality was stimulated by a world of increased mechanical reproduction, appreciation of the handmade and the made-to-measure has increased with the over-abundance of disposable goods in the contemporary fashion system, as if we are clinging to the unique and enduring things that might rescue us from being carried away in the maelstrom of mindless consumption.

Fashion, as a product of a post-industrial culture and the urbanisation of nineteenth-century Europe, exists in the dialectic relationship between the high end of fashion (Including ready-to-wear and made-to-measure) and its diffused, mass-produced copies, which generate *vogue*⁸³ and accelerate change. As the copies displace the original, high fashion continually creates differences which distinguish and demarcate it from its copies.

As pointed out earlier, the handmade, or bespoke, often represents the uniqueness of high fashion that distinguishes it from modified versions, but its real meaning is lost in the current scene as low-cost labour is exploited for the pursuit of disproportionate added value. It seems to me that the *unconcealed making process* and its appreciation by consumers may be the last defence against this exploitation. If consumers are more discerning about the making process, the trace of the genuine engagement of the maker can replace the labels, and this may eventually result in the industry producing less—and subsequently wasting less—which may be the antidote to today's throwaway culture.

⁸³ The word 'vogue' implies *movement*: '... derives from MF-F *voguer*, **to row** (a boat) ... perhaps an *-o-* modification of Old High German *wëgan*, (German *bewëgen*), **to cause to move.'** (Partridge, 2006, p.3723)





Chapter Six. Seamless?

An individual⁸⁴ going through a transitional rite is 'set apart' from the others and is exempt from ordinary rules and prohibitions. Sometimes the individual is considered to be dead during the liminal period (van Gennep, 1960, p.81), going around naked, evoking a state before birth or after death. The liminal state is, above all, about ambiguity. As it does not fit into existing categories, it is set apart and excluded until it can be defined, identified, and contained: menstruating women are sent out of the village; madmen are cast onto the ocean on the 'ship of fools'; adolescents are sent out into the world on a 'gap year'. This tendency to set apart reflects our ambivalence.85 the innate human desire to maintain stability, and offers a way of coping with the change that threatens the boundary of self. Liminality is thus equally pertinent to the temporal and geographical, as well as the psychological, state. In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which this ambivalence is transposed at the level of body images, garments and other artefacts by examining various cultural references, and I will analyse the idea of perfection and imperfection as an exaggerated expression of ambivalence, of our tacit awareness of our own fragile and protean subjectivity. This analysis then leads me to suggest that man-made objects, such as crafted artefacts or constructed garments, are the material reminder of the human effort required in the process of making, which in turn promotes the displaced view of the self as constructed assembly rather than as a perfect stable whole.

Setting Apart

Liminality in an anthropological context is connected to the notion of the 'sacred', as noted by Mary Douglas:

... in some primitive cultures the sacred is a very general idea meaning little more than prohibition. ... the Latin word sacer itself has this meaning of

⁸⁴ Unlike the word 'neophyte', which implies 'renewal' or 'new beginning' (from Greek *neophutos*, literally 'newly planted'), this word 'individual' now seems to be unfit to indicate a modern subject. Is a person really 'non-divisible'? (from ML -videre, to separate, disjoin, to divide) (Partridge, 2006,

Ambivalence is generated by change and transition as it disturbs the narcissistic 'homeostasis'.



restriction through pertaining to the gods. And in some cases it may apply to desecration as well as to consecration. Similarly, the Hebrew root of k-d-sh, which is usually translated as Holy, is based on the idea of separation. (Douglas, 2008, pp.9-10)

Thus the notion of *sacred* means prohibition, restriction, the separation of differences through consecration *and* desecration—the system produces the heterogeneous at both the high and low ends. (Sedofsky, Krauss, & Bois, 1996) Steven Connor also points out this duality of the sacred:

There are many forms of the vernacular sacred, in which things are made untouchable in order that they be subject to a special kind of destructive touch. The plumply-folded, fluffy towel, the sharply-creased handkerchief, the immaculate newspaper, all signify to a fragile interval of entirety, the power and rapture of which derive from the awareness of its very tenuousness, and the certainty of the ultimate ruin. (Connor, 2011, p.8)

The untouchable status of the towel, immaculate or filthy, embodies two extreme ends of the sacred, and expresses the desire to set apart.

Douglas interprets the 'perfect' body, with no deformity or injury, as an external, physical expression of the idea of holiness. ⁸⁶ (Douglas, 2008, pp.64-65) The etymological meaning of 'holy' being 'separateness' or 'set apart' subsequently relates it to the idea of wholeness and completeness, which consolidates the sense of stability. Pointing out that much of the Book of Leviticus is taken up with describing the physical perfection that is required of things presented in the temple and of persons approaching it (ibid. pp.63-64), Douglas sees the notion of physical perfection as essentially an exaggerated illusion pursued to impose order on the system. ⁸⁷

... ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, ... that a semblance of order is created. (ibid., p5)

⁸⁷ Similarly within the Christian tradition, 'moral characteristics were given to various physiological disorders' and certain diseases were regarded as a corporeal signifier of sin. (Grosz, 1994, pp.5-6)

_

⁸⁶ 'Holiness is exemplified by completeness. ... To be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind.' (Douglas, 2008, p.67)



Julia Kristeva's notion of 'abjection' is a similarly amplified response to ambiguity triggered by the subject's unconscious awareness of the conflicting aspects of self. To take up 'proper' sociality and subjectivity, the 'improper, unclean, and disorderly' elements of corporeal existence must be separated and excluded. (Gross, 1991, p.86) Yet, as these undesired aspects of self 'can never be fully obliterated but hover at the border of the subject's identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution', (ibid., p.87) it provokes the sensation of abjection. As a result, it becomes an inadvertent 'display of fragility.' (Kristeva, 1982b, p.4) 'It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite.' (ibid., p.4)

Kristeva considers corruption to be the socialized appearance of the abject, and 'an unshakable adherence to prohibition and law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside.' (ibid., p.16) This attempt to hem in manifests as social exclusion, taboo, transgression (of the Law) or sin, in a Christian context, (ibid., p.17) all of which are invariably forms of defence against the threatening otherness, of harnessing abjection.

This mutual transposition between the bodily state and the socio-psychological state is also evident in the idea of stigma, as Goffman explains:

The Greeks, who were apparently strong on visual aids, originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was ... a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, ... Today the term is widely used in something like the original literal sense, but is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it. (Goffman, 1963, p.11)

The Greek origin of stigma as 'branding' or 'marking'88 evolved from bodily wounds imposed as the sign of a different moral status, to be associated more with immaterial, psychological branding. The fact that other related words, such as style, stigma, stigmata and etiquette, despite deriving from the same root, each connote a contrasting positive, negative or sacred quality (Partridge, 2006, pp.3240-3242) indicates our tendency to mark out, to impose order and distinction.

0

⁸⁸ Ancient Greek *stigma* (a pricked mark, a brand) ... derives from *stizein* (to prick or pierce) (Partridge, 2006, p.3241)



In a similar way, the notion of the perfect, idealised body is transposed onto the stainless, undamaged surface, or the seamless unstitched garment, both of which reflect a moral and social ideal. The need to idealise, or render 'pure', is a form of repair of the imaginary damage that our ambivalence exerts on the social fabric. Thus idealisation reveals our implicit awareness of the unstable, imperfect, and incomprehensive self. As evidenced by Warnier in his study of the Mankon people of Cameroon (see Chapter Two, p.64), people identify with the material objects of daily life. Observing the instability of material objects as susceptible to damage, and the impossibility of perfect execution which is an inevitable part of the experience of any human making, thus always requiring assembly and repair, demonstrates humans' innate awareness of their own fragility.

In the Book of Leviticus, a garment of cloth made of two kinds of stuff⁸⁹ is described as unclean and impure, as it challenges the idea of 'holy'. Similarly, Connor ascribes the undesirability of seams on garments to the suspicion of mixed colours in the medieval European tradition:

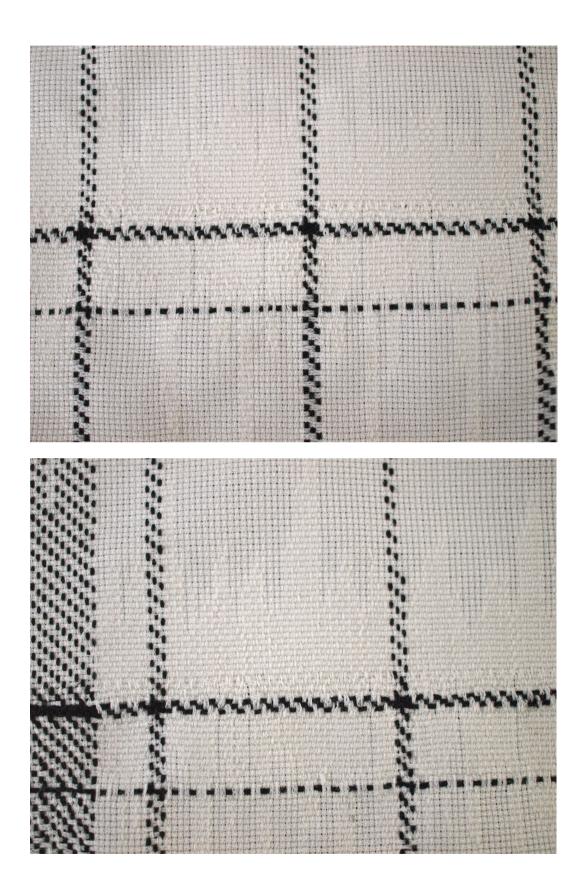
The suspicion of patched or pied colours in medieval Europe was probably because they suggested this abundance of seams or edges. The avoidance of the seam even extended to the dividing of clothes, either at the waist or the crotch, ... Indeed, we still have a sensitivity to 'seaminess' and the seamy side of things. (Connor, 2003, p.54)

Again, the material aspect of the seamed surface, having the rough edges of seams visible, is transposed into a moral judgement, that something 'seamy' means disreputable and sordid. This attitude appears to proscribe not only the mingling of different sorts, but also to a rough and untidy appearance. Yet it may also be productive to explore whether there is a connection to the taboo against *stitched* clothes found in the Indian subcontinent⁹⁰, and if this may be relevant to the original idea of the Greek stigma: 'a mark made by a pointed instrument,' which developed to

_

⁸⁹ '... you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall there come upon you a garment of cloth made of two kinds of stuff ...' (Leviticus XIX,19.) (Douglas, 2008, p.66)

In the Indian subcontinent, unstitched clothes are worn as a sign of purity '... most rituals related to birth, death and Upanayan among the Hindus and even among the Jains and Buddhists are performed in unstitched garments. Even today a very large majority of our population primarily dresses in unstitched garments: dhoti, lungi, mundu, saree. We had no stitched garments before the Kushanas, and it was probably the Greeks who brought the scissors to us.' (p33, *Indian Society: Syncretic Culture, Mixed Heritage*, n.d., Available at http://www.pluralindia.com/book/Illustrated_prmier/Chapter_4.pdf.>)



mean 'to embroider' or 'to pierce'. (Partridge, 2006, pp.3240-3242) The taboo against bodily marking may have been transposed to the avoidance of marking or piercing cloth, which disturb the integrity of the surface.

Therefore, the anxiety about our own vulnerable self manifests in responses such as prohibition or idealisation, as an exaggerated defence adopted to maintain a sense of the individual as an indivisible unit.

Marking Out

As much as the idea of wholeness is expressed in the image of the perfect body, the opposite idea is expressed in the anomaly of the grotesque body. Because we all recognise stereotypical body imagery, it functions as 'a paradigmatic expression of the notion of abnormality and also absurdity' (Koepping, 1985, p.196) In similar sense, in *Le Renouveau du Grotesque dans le Roman du Xxe Siècle* (The rediscovery of the grotesque in the 20th century novel) (2010), literary theorist Rémi Astruc proposes an understanding of the grotesque as 'a fundamentally anthropological device that societies use to conceptualise alterity and change.' (Munier, 2010) Therefore it functions as a dramatized emblem of the human condition, with inconsistency and heterogeneity as its essence. The absurdity perceived from this figure originates from a mixture of self-identification and differentiation, and reveals our fear of losing the illusory solidity of self.

Closely connected to the physical imperfection of the grotesque is the archetypal liminal character of the trickster. This figure universally represents duality and ambiguity through the abnormality of its body—half human and half animal, hermaphrodite, or metamorphosing. Often featured in creation mythologies, the trickster either acts as a destructive complement to the creative god, or possesses both qualities within itself as split-off personalities. (Jung, 1969) As a liminal character, the trickster mediates but also often draws attention to the ambiguity or arbitrariness of the existing order, thus foregrounding change and renewal, which makes it an 'anti-structure' figure. Because of this, the trickster is often featured as a

⁹¹ Hermes in ancient Greece, Native North American tricksters Raven and Coyote, the Norse trickster Loki, the Indian Vishnu avatar Lord Krishna, etc. are some of the well known trickster figures. ("Trickster" *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*. David Leeming. 2004. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press.

http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t208.e1591)



'Weaving in' with a tapestry needle. The surface is cut through, picked at unravelled, pierced. Choking, puckered in

а

frown, a grimace, or is it a laughter? ... Steam-pressed... The instant transformation into the smooth and quiet new surface. What does the steaming process do to the tension between the warp, weft and the invading thread?

A journal entry on Friday 12 July 2011

wanderer, embodying the potentiality residing in movement and change and also the reflexivity of modernity, as does the flâneur, or the traveller in Augé's 'non-places'. This 'anti-structure' character, considered together with the complementary aspect of the sacred, implies that the idea of the perfect body and the grotesque body are two sides of the same coin: both are exaggerated responses to ambiguity, revealing the fragility of the ideal. They express the unrecognised and unwelcome otherness of self, set apart and transposed to a chosen other.

As noted earlier in Chapter One, the individual going through the transitional stages of ritual was often accompanied by objects with exaggerated features or unusual colours, which Turner interprets as objects of reflection. (Turner, 1970, p.103) This view is pertinent to Baudelaire's view on caricature. In his 'On the Essence of Laughter', a poetic survey of the doubleness of laughter and the grotesque through French caricatures of the late nineteenth century, Baudelaire questions why he sees an indefinable element of beauty in works which are intended to represent man's (both moral and physical) ugliness. (Baudelaire, 2010a, p.147) This 'indefinable element' is the ambiguity: the caricatures stand between proximity to us and distance from us. The sense of empathy is mixed with an uneasy otherness. The vague recognition of this otherness as the forgotten, or un-embraced, side of the self can be powerful and alluring. The caricature is thus a reflecting surface, returning our own gaze.

... the doubleness of laughter in the Baudelairean formulation: the laughter at once distances [us] from that condition of human fallibility [we] locate in a comic object and identify with this fallenness. Laughter, for Baudelaire, is the comic product of this moral contradiction; the quintessentially modern joke is that our capacity for reflection ushers in an awareness of a more fundamental incapacity — our imperfection, our human finitude. (Nieland, 2006, p.81)

The ambivalence, then, comes from our ability to self-reflect and acknowledge our 'un-whole-ness'. Baudelaire therefore regards laughter as profoundly human, as it is essentially contradictory; 'at once a token of an infinite grandeur and an infinite misery. ... it is from the perpetual collision of these two infinites that laughter is struck.' (Baudelaire, 2010a, pp.153-154) Baudelaire's modern artist is a person who has



Shoulder lines, undersides of arms, side-lines of torso where the arms cover and the inside legs ... are where functional seams are usually placed, because they are less noticeable from the front or back.

As I am trying to eliminate seams, I spend a lot of time staring at these areas. Seams shape a garment (aided by gravity) and a garment takes a certain shape out of all the other shapes it could've been, according to the position of seams.

... can you convey the maker without seams? where would the maker be in seamless garment? ...

A journal entry on Tuesday 6 October 2009

been displaced: he thus understands the multifarious aspects of himself, ⁹² like the sage who 'laughs not save in fear and trembling.' (ibid., p.148) In his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life', Baudelaire also described the citizen of modern life as a perpetual 'convalescent', recovering from a permanent trauma, 'modernity', which dislocates and schismatises. (Baudelaire, 2010b)

The comic characters Harlequin and Pierrot, in the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, are quintessential caricatural figures, with their make-up, costumes, and gauche gestures. They are exaggerated expressions of our fragmented and uneven state, which is superficially smoothed out or hidden in everyday life.

The English Pierrot swept upon us like a hurricane ... upon his floured face he had stuck, crudely and without transition or gradation, two enormous patches of pure red. ... It was truly an intoxication of laughter–something both terrible and irresistible. (Baudelaire, 2010a, pp.160-161)

The clown's face may be the state of our real selves before smoothing, the image of our seam-full nature. Through its lack of gradation or sophistication it reveals our attempt to be an unbroken whole through repair and mending, as well as our innate tendency to forget this seam-full state. We calibrate the changes and disparities through constant adaptation to maintain the self by creating the illusion of seamlessness. The woven-in seam materialises the enormous effort to minimize the inconsistency, to pull oneself together, to appear seamless: perhaps a little like the 'natural' make-up we put on everyday, compared to the sewn seam, the naïve make-up of the clown.

Putting together

It becomes evident that seams and joints are more often related to the idea of imperfection than to perfection. Earlier references reveal their connection to the idea of the unholy, incomplete, disreputable, shabby. In modern standard clothing, functional seams are ideally unnoticeable: a successful seam creates an illusion of an undivided surface, and garments are lined to protect the vulnerable edges and to hide the unsightly evidences of assembly. Clothes supplement the imperfect functions of

⁹² 'The man who trips would be the last to laugh at his own fall, unless he happened to be a philosopher, one who had acquired by habit a power of rapid self-division and thus of assisting as a disinterested spectator at the phenomena of his own ego.' (Baudelaire, 2010a, p.154)

Imperfections I committed in my past works are cut in my memory and bother me at times. Some of the stitches in the leather surface work might have come off ... some of the knots could have come undone ... I wish I could be there to repair this kind of embarrassment. I am the one responsible for my errors. The uneven edges of gathers hidden under the webbing straps would still be there, if I could track down the dress and unpick the straps now - as a hard evidence.

A journal entry on Tuesday 13 January 2009

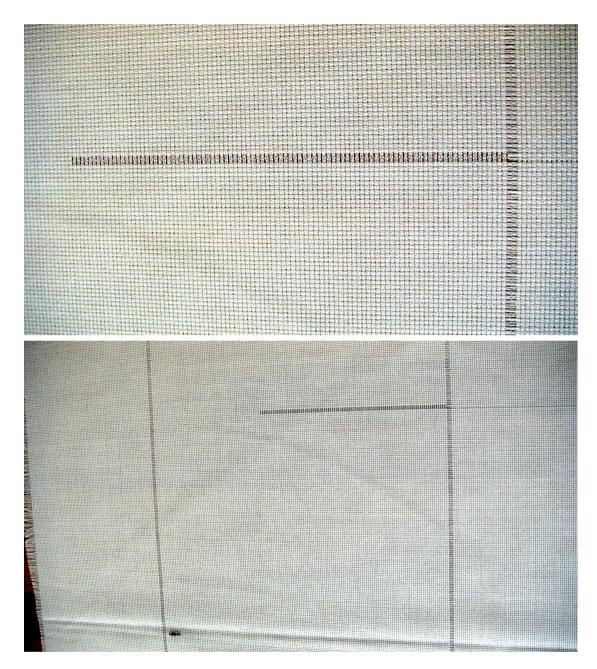
skin and body, yet there exists a perpetual yearning to replicate the seamless bodily surface on the surface of clothes. One of the main aims of seamless garment production is to minimise the irritation to the skin which can be brought on by seams, and is mainly used for baby clothes and sportswear. With advanced technology which is capable of producing an almost skin-like fabric, the elimination of seams appears to be a reasonable next step towards the ideal. By erasing the last reminder of artificiality, the garment is more in rapport with the most 'perfect' human form: that of the baby and of the athlete. The technology seems to aim to approach real 'unadulterated' nature by removing the evidence of human assembly.

As reflected in the notion of the fetish, the view of man-made objects evolved from a value-free one to a value-laden one, associated with notions of the factitious, fake, or fraudulent. This reflects the anxiety involved in commodity exchange, which was due to the non-universal value of material things, as evidenced in the disputed value of gold in the context of the West African coast-the debased gold used to make fetishes was priceless for Africans, but a source of deep suspicion for European merchants. Yet in the real meaning of the word 'perfect', the sense of wholeness or completion is absent: a perfect thing is something 'made, or done, thoroughly.'93 Unlike divine creation, humans can only repair discontinuous fragments by meticulously joining them. The aforementioned taboos against stains or stitches on cloth ignore the fact that fabric is also fabricated, man-made, un-holy, as it is, and that hand-woven fabric is permeated with the impurities of humanness. In contrast, the ancient Greeks recognised the defining character of human operation—putting together and joining. Socrates believed that perfection achieved by human beings is seen in well-adjusted joints, and that cosmos, or order, was conceived through artefacts that were held together by perfect joints. (McEwen, 1993, pp.48-49)

Just as the mystery of the unknown expressed on cave walls was revered and enshrined by early humans, for the ancient Greeks the 'unending appearingness of the Greek gods ... is what resided in the scintillating surface of the *daidalon*'. (ibid., p.55) Architectural historian Indra Kagis McEwen explains that *daidalon* is commonly translated as something that is 'cunningly-crafted' and 'curiously wrought', and as a product of reassembly, it is understood as 'something that could always be remade.' (ibid., pp.55-56):

-

 $^{^{93}}$ L *perfectus*, pp of *perficere*, to make or do thoroughly: *per-*, through(out)+-*ficere*, c/f of *facere*. (Partridge, 2006, pp.2362)



A journal entry on Tuesday 5 July 2011

It is because it was itself a deathless appearing that the well-made, the cunningly crafted thing was able to reveal an unseen divine presence. ... the facility of appearing and reappearing under different guises was one of the basic qualities of divinity. (ibid., p.56)

In the *daidalon*, as in the fetish, divinity is conveyed in man-made material things through the very characteristics of human operation, as opposed to the Christian view of human making as 'fake' unless mediated by church or Christ. Divine quality is something that is perpetually in process, being remade and renewed. Movement is a sign of life, as opposed to fixity, and the unending genesis of Greek gods in their changing forms meant constant renewal. The word aura originates from the Greek word $a\bar{e}r$, meaning 'a gentle breeze', 'puff of air', or 'breath', and it appears to be a sign of life, and change, setting others in movement as they come into contact with it. ⁹⁴ McEwen suggests that 'craft gives things life, and it is not accident that [the Greek words] *tiktein* is to give birth, *tektein* to build, and *technē*⁹⁵ a letting appear.' (ibid., p.55)

'Well-seamed' things, therefore, typically represent well-made things by humans. The masterful execution of seams and joints has always been evidence of great craftsmanship, evoking the immaculate creation of *deus faber* (God the creator) as opposed to the laboured assembly of man the creator (*homo faber*):

... it excites interest less by its substance than by the junction of its components. It is well known that smoothness is always an attribute of perfection because its opposite reveals a technical and typically human operation of assembling: Christ's robe was seamless, ⁹⁶ just as the airships of science-fiction are made of unbroken metal. (Barthes, 1993, p.88)

The way the sections of Bertoni's Citroën D.S. (F. *Déesse*: goddess) were dovetailed was so impressive that the car appeared to have 'obviously fallen from the sky' rather than made by human labour. (ibid., p.88)

Etymology reveals its later development into the Latin words *texere* (to weave), and *toile* (cloth, a spider's web, nets, snares), (Partridge, 2006, p.3389) which is a clear reminder of the two aforementioned nets, those of Benjamin and Gell, as well as the cocoon of Augé.

_

⁹⁴ '... genuine aura appears in all things, not just in certain kinds of things, as people imagine. ... the aura undergoes changes... with every movement the aura-wreathed object makes.' (Benjamin, 2005b)

Etymology reveals its later development into the Tark.

^{&#}x27;... the priests of Israel wore garments without seam ... Possession of the seamless garment of Christ, a symbol of the unity of the Church, mentioned in John 19:23 as the *chiton arraphos* or *tunica inconsultilis* for which the soldiers cast lots at the Crucifixion, is claimed both by the cathedral of Trier and by the parish church of Argenteuil.' (Baert, 2011, pp.320-323)

Making continues, much like
the never-ending process of self-making.
The period after finishing a garment
is also a transitional stage
that provides a much needed discontinuity for the maker.
Cut off from the work,
it is a 'breaking down' period for her
before rebuilding. During the finishing process
- when the garments are hemmed, snipped off,
steam-set, - much acts of cutting off, sealing,
and setting take place.
It seems the maker is 'setting them apart'
from herself provisionally.

There's something special about the actual sample being completed, with all the buttons sewn on, threads snipped off, steam-pressed ... in a very different level from the design process.

No atelier I have ever worked were tidy or organised.

It's a messy environment. I always walked around with threads on me somewhere, with the nostrils and eyes irritated by fabric dust.

When a sample is finished, it belongs to another space away from the hurly-burly of atelier.

It hangs somewhere more separate and guarded. People now hold it with fingertips, not hands.

A journal entry on Tuesday 25 October 2011

I did the work in patches making the most of whatever pockets of time available; When I did manage to sit down to work, I found it difficult to have a sense of continuation, and the whole process of making this dress leaves an impression of fragments. The resulting dress was physically connected but looked patched and awkward.

I needed a trigger, some kind of alchemical process to overcome this impression of patchiness and to see the dress in one complete seamless outfit. When is the moment in the making that the maker starts to feel that the pieces of cut cloths are coming together, and that they are in fact handling a garment?

A journal entry on Thursday 13 October 2011

When the process of putting together is kept intact in the resulting artefact, the visible and invisible traces reveal the way the maker repaired and negotiated the emerging contingencies. Richard Sennett stresses the importance of adaptation and improvisation, which allow the end result to be negotiated in the process rather than preconceived: 'the work process has to do something distasteful to the tidy mind, which is to dwell temporarily in mess—wrong moves, false starts, dead ends.' (Sennett, 2008, p.161) Artefacts clearly revealing their identity as constructed assembly—such as Japanese Kintsugi, patchwork quilts or mosaics, as well as nonmaterial human creations like musical rhapsody and epic poems - substantiate the fact that the clearly marked discontinuities can enhance the assembly, resulting in more than the simple summation of the initial parts. Benjamin thus justifies the irregular rhythm, the 'continual pausing for breath' in the thinking process by comparing it with mosaics: 'Just as mosaics preserve their majesty despite their fragmentation into capricious particles, so philosophical contemplation is not lacking in momentum. Both are made up of the distinct and the disparate.' Comparing the disruption or discontinuity in the process to the glass paste of mosaics, Benjamin suggests that 'the brilliance of the mosaic depends much on the quality of the glass paste.' (Benjamin, 1998a, pp.28-29)

In this sense, a finished work is the intact trace of the process in itself—the chaotic, emotional, non-linear movements, with irrational and speculative leaps, which are part of the making of both artefacts and the self.

An original body of work is thus not a flawless and complete whole. Having gone through a touch-full, or seam-full, adaptation, it is thus an accumulation of these touches, reborn as an enigmatic, newly-intact body. Connor suggests that intactness is therefore not the simple condition of the pristine or the primitive, prior to any kind of touch, but 'an intimate detachment, ... which has passed through touching and borrows its shape from it.' (Connor, 2011, p.15) The newly made object thus borrows its shape from the maker's touches that have put it together.

In the preface to *The Troubadour of Knowledge (Le Tiers-Instruit)*, Michel Serres portrays a Harlequin-like emperor with motley skin, which is a perfect likeness of his variegated coat. Here the Harlequin's skin and coat are the image of ambiguous human in-between-ness. The seam-full, patched outfit matches well with the motley, tattooed body, and then the body with the forgetting, inconsistent mind. These

The dress was left on the work table. ... suppose I was putting off finishing it; I was almost afraid. I needed to give it a final steam, needed to put it on the mannequin and photograph, and then try it on myself. But it was left there for two days, during which I glanced at it many times walking by, and also looked up-close (accidentally) because of my frequent trips to the recycle bin underneath the table. Each time it looked different. ... Last night, being tired of sitting and writing, I abruptly set up the ironing board and steam-pressed it. Looking at the dress on the ironing board, it felt as if something had happened to it while resting on the table ... rested like roasted meat or a freshly baked loaf of bread for the flavour to develop aided by residual heat. I savoured the unexpected change as I was pressing it. It went smoothly on the mannequin and looked ... finished. I'm relieved that I managed to finish it without getting it irrevocably wrong somewhere or ripping it apart out of frustration. The fact that it's done is meaningful in itself. I wanted to do more, especially the diagonal lines. Just three days earlier, I swore to myself that I'd never make another one like this.

A journal entry on Wednesday 26 October 2011

incongruous human aspects are perfectly calibrated in an utterly imperfect appearance.

Harlequin-hermaphrodite uses both hands; ... when the skin and flesh appeared, the whole world discovered his mixed origin: mulatto, half-caste, Eurasian, hybrid in general, ... What could the current, tattooed, ambidextrous monster, hermaphrodite and half-breed, make us see now under his skin? ... Combined, the mixed flesh and blood of the Harlequin are still quite likely to be taken for a harlequin coat. (Serres, 1997, p.xvi)

Like the Baudelairean artist, the Harlequin emperor is aware of its own protean self; its insight gained from the extensive travels. 'I' am not individual, but divisible, a collection of fragments in changing arrangements. 'I' am never distinct from my surroundings and never complete. The Harlequin, in its absolute ambiguity and multiplicity, embodies a whole 'that is not so much falling as coming to bits.'⁹⁷ In describing the modern condition, Marshall Berman suggests that 'in this world, stability can only mean entropy, slow death, … To say that our society is falling apart is only to say that it is alive and well.' (Berman, 1989, p.95) The Harlequin's later 'summation' into the incandescent white Pierrot'⁹⁸ is an allegory of 'seam-full seamlessness': a modern type of 'whole' achieved through constant mending and renewal.

_

⁹⁷ 'This world, a world deep as the skin, and as motley, is one in which, as William James put it, 'there is no bedding; it is as if the pieces clung together by their edges, the transitions between them forming their cement:' a spotty, turbulent, now-you-see-it, now-you-don't world, that is not so much falling as coming to bits.' (Connor, 2003, p.61)

⁹⁸ '... 'Pierrot! Pierrot!' the audience cried, 'Pierrot Lunaire!' In the very same spot where the Emperor of the Moon had stood was a dazzling, incandescent mass, more clear than pale, more transparent than wan, lily-like, snowy, candid, pure and virginal, all white. [... the audience] were asking: 'How can the thousand hues of an odd medley of colors be reduced to their white summation?' 'Just as the body,' the learned responded, 'assimilates and retains the various differences experienced during travel and returns home a half-breed of new gestures and other customs, dissolved in the body's attitudes and functions, to the point that it believes that as far as it is concerned nothing has changed, so the secular miracle of tolerance, of benevolent neutrality welcomes, in peace, just as many apprenticeships in order to make the liberty of invention, thus of thought, spring forth from them.' (Serres, 1997, p.xvii)

When converting a two-dimensional surface into three-dimensional shape by sewing, the more seams there are, the more defined is the shape. Seams define the shape, but a major drawback, both practically and aesthetically, is the seam allowances. Seam allowances complicate achieving smaller curves or sharp angles, and appear untidy requiring lining to hide behind. If the cut panels can be put together without seam allowances, I should be able to dissect the shape into unlimited number of panels ... matching the infinitely dissected surfaces will eventually simulate moulding method. It seems in hindsight, my attempts to make a seamless garment have always been about what to do with the seam-allowances; that 'shadow-surface' of the outer layer, which needs to be sniped or notched to support the outer shape. With the 'weaving-in' method, the woven-in part is in fact seam allowances in varying 'length' (which becomes 'depth' once woven-in), visible and invisible at the same time.

A journal entry on Wednesday 5 October 2011

Chapter Seven. The Toile Ego

Margiela's Seam

Martin Margiela is perhaps best known for his idiomatic use of the style that, inaugurated in Formalist criticism and developed by literary theorists such as Benjamin and Kristeva, has come to be known as 'deconstructivist'. Techniques deployed by Margiela within a Formalist approach to fashion include the 'play' with scale, to include the 'gargantuan' and grotesque dimensions of the 'carnivalesque'; the 'play' with both serious and infantile aspects of clothing, to invert the hierarchies of glamour; the 'play' with colour and adornment to 'estrange' the wearer from the 'good taste' of subdued colour palettes; the 'play' with unexpected materials, including recycled fabrics.

However, I suggest that of all Margiela's radical innovations, the exposed seams and fraying hems that his garments display represent his legacy most effectively. Tearing apart and reassembling garments at the seams, Margiela questioned and reversed everything that the fashion system stood for. His seams symbolise the deconstructive challenge, the mode of perception and production that pushed the solidity of the existing fashion system to the edge. These challenges disturbed key aspects of mainstream production during the 1980s and 1990s, and led the discerning consumer to really consider what they were wearing, the way it was made, and what it meant to them as subjects. Margiela's works departs from the idea of wearing a garment that promises to effect a transformation of the self from 'incomplete' or 'naked / vulnerable' into the transcendent and unified subject of illusion. They enable the subject to be seen to be self-reflective, thus liberating the viewer from the tyranny of being an 'admirer' or witness to the wearer's transformation. The viewer can then participate in the pleasure of the play of the garment and its system of deconstruction.

Margiela's garments accentuate the aspect of dressing as self-making by exposing the internal structure of the garment. Highlighted by this exposure is the process of putting together both a garment and a self. Our appearance and subjectivity are 'put



together', rather than emerging as an unchanging whole, and clothes play an indispensable role in compensating for the body's limitations in their calibration of the changing self. Owing to its materiality in contact with the body, the garment can reveal (defamiliarise) as well as conceal (calibrate) the seams of the self. By revealing the internal structure of garments, Margiela discloses 'a labor stitched inside as the secrets of a finished garment, a secret that is kept by the garment itself as it performs 'seamlessly'.' (Gill, 1998, p.27)

The role of the 'secretary' is traditionally as the keeper of secrets, who thereby allows the 'boss' to appear effortlessly in control. The garment can be considered as the 'secretary' to the wearer's ego agency, enabling the self to maintain the illusion of mastery and control. Margiela takes great delight in giving the garment the role of the rebellious secretary who refuses to 'keep secrets.' This can be seen as a protofeminist stance, which allies the fashion designer to the cause of the disempowered by a carnivalesque inversion of hierarchy in favour of a horizontal axis of affinity. The garment, the body and the self are all 'in progress', being seamed and constructed. The labour of the maker exhibited on the outside of the garment also shows the wearer's unceasing attempt to become a seamless self, and the trauma of the inevitable failure to do so. 'The skeleton of a structure by Margiela, seemingly partial and patched, is a violation only of our expectation of clothing's unbroken entity.' (Martin & Koda, 1993, pp.104-105)

What happens in the making of selves is reflected in the making things: looking around, collecting and digesting information, selecting material through intuition as well as informed decision, repeatedly making 'mock' samples, cutting, assembling, sewing, unpicking, adjusting, steaming, finishing... Although all human making reflects this process in varying degrees, the particular appeal of making a garment as making of self is its constant contact with the body, and the material quality of cloth which is so empathetic to the skin. Yet, inversely, its near-perfect affinity embedded in our lives also enables us to 'forget' this, just as the infant ego 'casts off' his facilitating environment in order to become a self-made hero, forgetting this process of seam-full construction. In the formation of identity, as well as in the fashion system, the routine of change appears as a constant. The exposed seams remind us of this seeming seamlessness. Not only does the materiality of making break the illusion of unity, it



also breaks the illusion that material – alive and nurturing yet taken for granted – is inert⁹⁹.

Kristeva says that 'all identities are ... 'subject[s] in process' ... Process in the sense of process but also in the sense of a legal proceeding¹⁰⁰ where the subject is committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, over-ruled.' (Kristeva, cited in Warwick and Cavallaro, 1998, p.35) It is as if Kristeva is saying that the self is mostly at the toile stage¹⁰¹, as a kind of 'mock' self, or a provisional self on trial.

Breward and Evans also point to the system's ability to analyse itself:

... fashion as a process comes in to play as a useful mechanism for interrogating the subjective experience of modern life. Fashion is a process in two senses: it is a market-driven cycle of consumer desire and demand; and it is a modern mechanism for the fabrication of the self. It is in this respect that fashion operates as a fulcrum for negotiating the meeting of internal and external worlds. ... If fashion is a paradigm of the capitalist processes which inform modern sensibilities, then it is also a vibrant metaphor for modernity itself. (Breward & Evans, 2005, pp.2-3)

Locating the Aura in Contemporary Fashion

Margiela's seam, representing both the trace of carefully making hands (tradition) and the trace of genuine design efforts (innovation) relocates the aura in contemporary fashion. The aura resides in the garment itself as it comes in contact with a discerning wearer. The real distinction lies in the process and mode of making at a material level, which cannot be replicated in industrial mass production, nor can it exist as an abstract image. Margiela has attempted to expel the spectral image of fashion which is aggrandised by media-driven glamour and designer idolatry; this is witnessed in the models with their faces covered in Margiela's catwalk shows, the unnamed garment labels, the hard-to-locate shops and the designer who refuses to take a bow. 'Margiela perpetuated a system of inconspicuous consumption.' (Walker, 2009) Yet

During the 90s when the 'deconstructed look' was becoming generalized, there were the trend of wearing toiles as ordinary garments among fashion students, which outwardly didn't look much different from the 'finished' garments in retail shops.

Material, as implied in its etymology: the trunk of a tree which produces the shoots, bodily or earthly matter, mother, matrix, is alive and nurturing rather than being inert and unorganised stuff.

This is based on a pun, as in French 'le procès' means trial and the 'le processus' means process.



the company has been in majority-owned by the Italian Diesel group since 2002: since then, the group has aggressively expanded the brand, investing significantly in marketing, which is an obvious contradiction of Margiela's approach. The designer's resignation from his eponymous label in 2009 came as no surprise. The fashion house continues to operate with the creative staff that Margiela had developed over 20 years, with no appointment of a new creative director. Suzy Menkes of *The New York Times* writes that this may become a 21st-century template for other brands, 'as the design appointments become a revolving door ... If the team could operate without a named designer, then the departure of Mr. Margiela, whose personal image has so rarely been seen, may leave a lasting imprint on the business.' (Menkes, 2009) This diffusion of authority may deflate the excessive added value of fashion, leaving its aura intact.

Deconstruction in fashion, contrary to initial interpretations of it as 'anti-fashion' or as a satire on couture values, consolidated high fashion against its mass-produced counterpart, emphasising the skilful and attentive labour and constant reflexivity of designers which is absent in mass-market versions of the garments:

Margiela's garments indicate an implicit care for the material object and sartorial techniques, and therefore they would suggest the impossibility of a simple destruction or anarchy; for instance, the look of distressed or unfinished tacking around an arm hole is executed by the tailor's hand with, paradoxically, a quality 'finish'. (Gill, 1998, p.31)

It is often mistakenly thought that the aura of high fashion is based purely on an abstract image created by the authority of designers. One such example is Bourdieu's view expressed in 'Haute Couture and Haute Culture' (1993). Grounding his argument in the structural homology between high culture (music, poetry, philosophy), religion, and high fashion, Bourdieu argues that:

The couturier performs an operation of transubstantiation. ... The mystery is the same with Duchamp's urinal, which is constituted as an *objet d'art*, both because it is marked by a painter who has signed it and because it is exhibited in a consecrated place which, in receiving it, makes it a work of art, now transmuted economically and symbolically. The creator's signature is a mark that changes not the material nature but the social nature of the object. (Bourdieu,1993, p.137)



This view may partly reflect the fashion context of today as much as that of the 1970s, however, the fundamental material aspect, not the signature of the designer alone, must be considered as the foundation and marker of distinction in fashion. To disregard the mode and quality of production: the craftsmanship and working conditions, the meaning of maker's labour, to disregard the value of this trace, is to dissipate the only remaining solidity 'into thin air', into immaterial exchange value. What Bourdieu forgets in this particular argument is the fact that fashion produces tangible products that are touched, handled, and moulded in the life of their users. It thus is a transubstantiation of a very different sort—the individual makers' hands turn the raw material into something that can wrap around and transform the bodily ego, which in time becomes its identity, memory, and living space. A well-designed and well-made garment reveals the effort and drive to achieve this man-made version of seamlessness. Mauss was right in implying that techniques can create gods, and the human bodies behind this creation must not be forgotten. Returning, now, to Benjamin's concept of aura as deriving less from the optics of the 'halo' and more from the materiality of 'breath and wind', we can think of the auratic in fashion as the movement and 'passage, or transition of the subject-in-process', which cannot be reduced to the static icon but which represents the endless movement of newness and change. Like a sigh of desire or satisfaction, the aura in fashion is the materiality of speech itself. It is the material of the phoneme. It is matter which has liberated itself from the burden of being merely a substrate of meaning and signification.

Deconstruction in Fashion

Change in fashion is generated by constant de-familiarisation. At an individual level, through the everyday ritual of dressing, we see the reflection of ourselves looking 'unfamiliar' in the mirror. The moment of getting dressed is the second awakening of the day, to begin to exist socially. Thus dressing is ongoing practice of self-making in relation to others. As a system, fashion takes advantage of the discontinuity brought on by the fundamental social desire for both assimilation with, and distinction from, others. Not only does fashion bring back the outmoded, but more importantly it questions the very system itself. The philosophy of deconstruction in fashion accentuates this fundamentally modern attitude by taking apart the familiar, thus 'invisible', garment details and re-assembling them in an unfamiliar way, proving that the real innovation arises from within through reflexivity, and is not imposed by



external forces.

Deconstruction is simultaneously a global culture of modernism and an entirely personal realization. Alison Gill argues that fashion, as an ontological domain, arrived at deconstruction autonomously, meaning that it wasn't an passive adaptation of the deconstructive movements which happened in other domains:

A dialogue [between fashion and philosophy] has always existed within clothing and the lived relations of making and wearing clothes—involving technical skills, habits, movement, thinking, ...—have always had to account for a dialogue between the different modes of Being contained by these positions. (Gill, 1998, p.42)

Richard Martin and Harold Koda locate the origins of the deconstruction movement in the 1980s, explored by designers such as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, Karl Lagerfeld and Helmut Lang, and, yet tracing even further back, to Vionnet's radical exposure of the garment's technical aspects. (Martin & Koda, 1993) The fundamental difference between these examples and the 'routine' defamiliarisation of fashion is that rather than looking into the past, they looked inside the garment: how it is made, how it washes, how it wears out.

Deconstruction rethinks 'the formal logic of dress itself', (Evans, 2003, p.250) what it does and what it means to us. It perhaps is the most 'original' form of garment, in the sense that it is independent of the past in terms of style while remaining faithful to its tradition and principle by acknowledging the anonymously handed-down skills which quietly sustain the integrity of the domain. The philosophy of deconstruction in fashion became 'a gentle undercurrent, whose influence works its way from high-end catwalks to high-street pavements by an almost unnoticeable process of diffusion.' (Walker, 2009) For many *discerning* modern designers the philosophy of deconstruction has become the basis of their practice, and 'high fashion', as a result, strives to be more poetic than ever, by appealing to the innate yet unconscious goal of wearers—the search for the self.

The fact that the deconstruction movement firmly consolidated the fashion system, ensuring the authority of high fashion by taking it apart and rebuilding it, reminds me of the workings of the trickster, not only as a figure of anti-structure but also that of



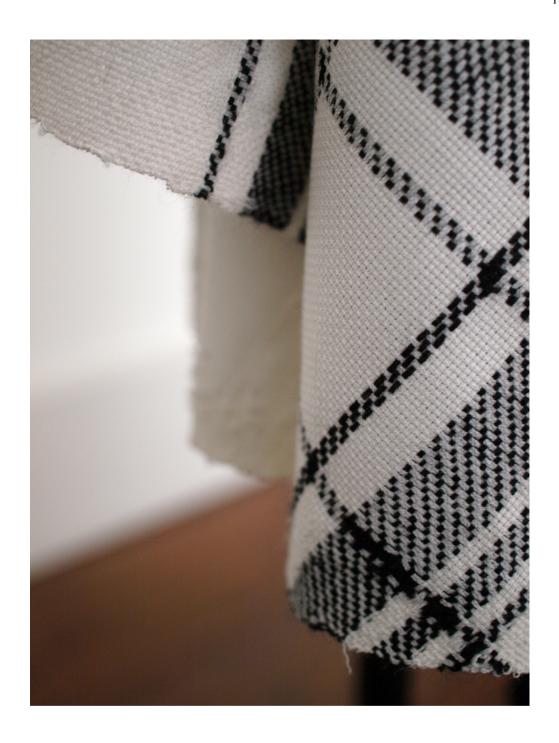
renewal. The meaning of the word 'deconstruction' includes the taking apart of machines to move them somewhere else and build them again. Rebuilding under new conditions with the same elements implies a certain conservative character. (Mella, 2002) In discussing the structure of high culture through that of high fashion. Bourdieu observes that 'there are invariants that are the product of variation,' and asks, 'how can the continuous be made out of the discontinuous?' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.136) As our subjectivity maintains the impression of continuity despite its constant renewal through interaction with others, the reflexive nature of the fashion system repeatedly reinvents itself, making change appear as seamless and constant. Therefore Bourdieu considers that any change that happens in fashion is 'integrative: it is a change that tends to ensure permanence. 103' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.136)

It is now possible to discuss the meaning of 'original', drawing on the concepts explored earlier—the aura, defamiliarisation, the authentic, and the unique. An original work in fashion, as well as in any other domain, does not appear in isolation but results from a dialectic process; between the self and the otherness of self; between the explicit and the implicit; between maker and user. In fashion, as a global industry and as a system based on the opposition between 'high fashion' and its massproduced reproductions, this process is particularly stimulating. Mass-produced and widely distributed copies are the trigger that motivates the original to re-assess itself and to further distinguish its status by self-renewing, much as photography functioned as the philosophical enlightenment of painting. 104 Therefore 'origin', like

 $^{^{102}}$ '... the Heideggerian word Destruktion or Abbau. Each signified in this context an operation bearing on the structure or traditional architecture of the fundamental concepts of ontology or of Western metaphysics. But in French 'destruction' too obviously implied an annihilation or a negative reduction much closer perhaps to Nietzschean 'demolition' than to the Heideggerian interpretation or to the type of reading that I proposed. So I ruled that out. ... the word 'deconstruction'... The grammatical, linguistic, or rhetorical senses [portées] were found bound up with a 'mechanical' sense [portée 'machinique']. This association ... fortunately adapted to what I wanted to at least suggest... (In a *Letter to a Japanese Friend* (1983) Derrida).' (Gill, 1998, p.36) ¹⁰³ The remarks of new creative directors taking up the positions in traditional fashion brands,

invariably focus on the continuity of tradition and at the same time their forward-looking attitude: 'A conscious effort is made to marry the past and present as the house look to the future: at this productive juncture, the two eras meld seamlessly.' (on Alber Elbaz for Lanvin) (Merceron, Elbaz, & Koda, 2007, p.311); 'Ultimately, for any heritage brand, it's crucial for them to be of the now, to be culturally and artistically relevant yet there's a need to preserve and feel part of its past sartorial ancestry. As for the newly rebranded Saint Laurent Paris, 'I'm very happy' claims Pierre Bergé, the late couturier's partner. 'Anything that makes the house more Saint Laurent is welcome.' (on the appointment of Hedi Slimane as the new creative director of Yves Saint Laurent.) (Jones, 2012)

[[]Painting] began, in reaction to photography, firstly to emphasize the coloured elements of the image. As Impressionism gave way to Cubism, painting created for itself a broader domain, into which for the time being photography could not follow it. Photography in its turn, from the middle of the century onwards, extended enormously the sphere of the market-society; for it offered on the



tradition, is not an initial beginning of something, but a continuous process of revision and renewal to stay original, as Benjamin suggests:

The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existence came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. ... That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual: its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand it needs to be recognised as a process of restoration and reestablishment, but on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. ... Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development. ... the dialectic which is inherent in origin... shows singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials. (Benjamin, 1998a, pp.45-46)

High fashion's effort to distinguish itself from the mass market, by marking its edge, can only be effective when the marker of distinction is anchored at the material level of the garments produced. This points to the defining aspect of deconstruction philosophy in fashion—it provides high fashion with a formula to set itself apart, not via the fabricated image but via reflexivity and materiality.

The Poetic Function of the Weaving-in Technique.

The term 'origin' and 'the original' defined in this way are pertinent to the making and using of the 'poetic garment'. My method of seaming can generate a complex perceptual experience beyond simple seeing and touching, for both the maker and the viewer.

For instance, it invites the viewer to enter into a game of seeing and noticing the differences between the handmade stitch and the machine-made weave. In so doing, it asks the viewer to consider the touch of the hand and its meaning and appeal today, and the touch of the machine as a new energy, efficiency, or indicator of globalisation. The monochrome contrast of my weave may draw attention to the parallels between making and writing: the thread running in and out of the weave, with gaps and trailing ends, resembles a thread of thoughts emerging and being lost, or it may look like written words, ellipses, commas, and brackets. The stitches give the woven fabric the appearance of a pixelated surface, which invites comparison with the digital screen that is ubiquitous today. Or this may remind the viewer of the history of the Jacquard loom as a forerunner of digital systems. It may also awaken



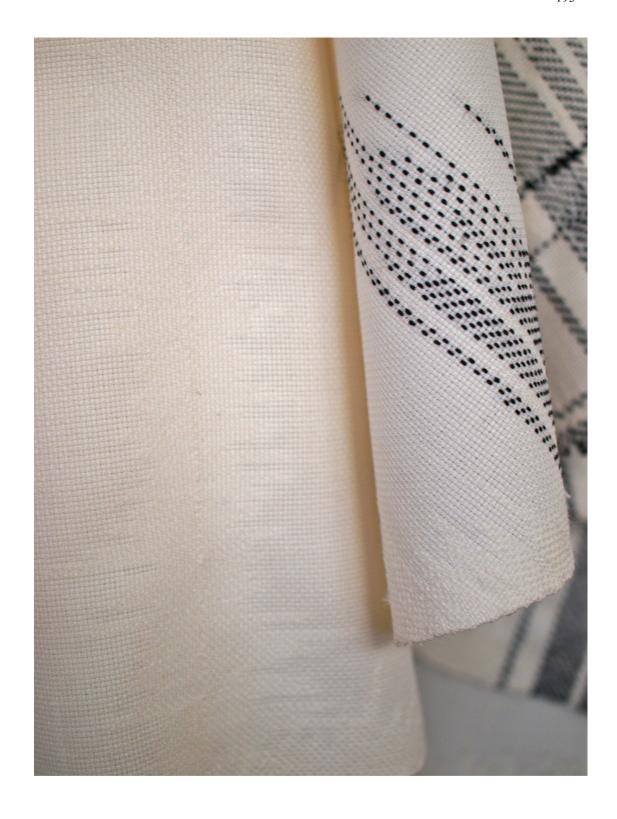
the forgotten, man-made origins of the objects and fetishised maker's touch, perhaps similar to that which Alfred Gell explores in 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology' (1992).

Simply put, the viewer is invited to read and decode the garment: the seams and hems interrupt the viewer's automatic perception, so that they do not stop at simply looking, but wonder, interpret and analyse. The garment thus involves the viewer in its conceptual finalisation, providing them with the chance to participate in the 'making' of the object. This finalising process is also a reminder of new clothes becoming personalised by being owned and used, completing the 'making' of an auratic object—as the maker's touch meets the user's touch.

For me, as the maker, the seaming and hemming stand for the act of making as a defamiliarising, thus contemplative and sensuous, process that is not always apparent in conventional ways of making. This is accentuated by the simplicity of the patterns, which is a result of technical restrictions: in order to create a semblance of seamlessness by minimising the scar-like 'threshold', I only employ seams which are straight grain (horizontal or vertical) and true bias grain (diagonal). If sewn by machine, this type of design minimises production time and cost, maximising its reproducibility as a result. Yet my garments refuse this reproducibility by complicating the very assembly of these simplest shapes. Each garment is the product of a detour, a structure of purposeful delay. The weaving-in method is thus a device to refuse the simple closure of a circle, to be able to move helically, to delay explicit meaning. The act of seaming represents the process of reflective practice.

In the imagination of the beholder the uniqueness of the phenomena which hold sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the creator or of his creative achievement. To be sure, never completely so; the concept of authenticity always transcends mere genuineness. (This is particularly apparent in the collector who always retains some traces of the fetishist and who, by owning the work of art, shares in its ritual power.) (Benjamin, 2007b, p.244)

In the passage above, Benjamin implies that the maker's touch alone, 'mere genuineness', cannot generate the aura. The truly authentic also requires the user's touch, interpreted and personalized. As noted in Chapters Three and Four, the implicit, disruptive and multi-layered aspects enhance the poetic quality of perception, and the auratic effect is proportional to this distance. My handwoven seaming method



is a device that accentuates this point. Applied to actuality, whether a garment is machine-produced or handmade, the possibility of authenticity is present, contingent on the maker's and the user's attitude. The poetic garment, then, is the garment that is not taken for granted, as it displaces us, as it reminds us of what we take for granted.

Conclusion

It is not possible to conclude a research project which is based on process. The nature of process, as distinct from method and methodology, is that it is endless, iterative and self-generating, not instrumental. The PhD research project, however, must be given a provisional ending at this point, and some conclusions drawn from the process 'so far'. This discontinuity will provide me with a reflexive distance which, as I have learned from my experience of doing this research, will be invaluable for continuation.

In this practice-led research, I have examined fashion at a material, personal, and social level, drawing on the similarities discovered between the process of making garments, the process of their embodiment and process of research. Integrating practical and theoretical methods, this study suggests that the process of making and using garments can be a threshold experience, as well as a transitional device that creates an ambiguity of subjectivity, and in turn promotes its reflexivity and readjustment. This analysis informed, and was informed by, the making of a series of garments which reveal their own construction, drawing attention to themselves as forms in process and representing the liminality and reflexivity of modern subjects. Any deeply-engaged mode of making via sustained interaction between maker and material is a mutual making. Applied to garments at a personal and social level, the act of making and using garments is a dialectical process of modification between maker and garment, wearer and garment, maker and wearer, wearer and viewer, by their interactions. As a garment-maker, I have metaphorically located this aspect of the garment at the seams, edges and openings.

The originality of this research lies in the fact that it is carried out in the liminal space between experiential/ practical and theoretical investigation, between fashion and many other disciplines. In this liminal space, I took the role of the passage, or the seam, constantly experiencing displacement, and examined the knowledge this 'crisis'—approaching critical edges and crossing boundaries—can generate.

The need to articulate my practice, making a seamless garment, led me beyond the discipline of 'fashion studies' to explore a number of different specialist discourses

and to derive a series of perspectives, in the fields of psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology and art, literary and cultural theory. From these different points of view, making and consuming fashion seem to have different meanings. Each of these is, to some extent, explored in the chapters of the thesis.

The process has demonstrated to me that fashion, rather than being a unified field or discipline, is polycentric and heterogeneous. As it exists simultaneously as a creative investigation within ateliers and solitary bespoke production, as well as industrial manufacture, global commerce, and mass culture, fashion is a complex discourse that cannot be reduced to a single description by sociologists as a culture of appearances and identities, nor as an object of investigation in cultural studies, nor as a field of design history, nor as a set of techniques and professional skills to be documented in manuals. The complexity of fashion for wearers of garments is, here, doubly articulated with the complexity of what it means to make garments.

I understand, as a maker, what it takes to be a specialist. Whichever field it may be, the challenge, dedication and satisfaction involved in gaining an expert skill, knowledge and insight is, I believe, universal. When I ventured beyond my own field of fashion to find a satisfying explanation of my practice, I was aware that the specialisms of knowledge in other fields must be respected, if not feared. Interdisciplinary approaches, however, awakened me to the advantages of 'speculation' arising in the moments of crossing between uncertainty and certainty. Benjamin, pondering on the notion of the aura, writes in his notebook: 'Treading in two different ways: to touch one point of the earth—to touch the earth at one point. The first type is ours. When one sees Gothic decoration, one knows that older epochs possessed the second form.' (Marx, U. et al., 2007, p.207) The 'real' earth that I know from satellite pictures does not lessen the 'reality' of the particular spot on which I stand, that my feet touch, and the view that I perceive. Insofar as I am aware that my views are partial and incomprehensive, the particularity of my position can create an 'authentic reality'. I would like to think that specialist and non-specialist views can co-exist, especially in the fields of art and design, where ideas can be relatively safely explored, as Winnicott suggests.

The mutual influence between practice and theory also characterises this research. The studio practice, experimenting with techniques and processes of seamless garment construction, stimulated the theoretical enquiries into the meaning of the

seam, the cut, the edge, and the opening. This enquiry, in turn, radically altered my approach to the practice. The initial decision to construct garments entirely by hand was also made as a result of background research into pre-existing seamless woven garments: the main purpose of these was revealed to be associated with the complete mechanisation of the process, aiming to minimise the labour cost. This knowledge prompted me to choose an opposite approach, in order to gain a dialectic viewpoint in enquiring about the implication of the seam and seamlessness in relation to the mode of making and using. This decision introduced another unexpected turn in the research. The long process of making by hand encouraged me to reflect on the effect it has on the maker and the material. I therefore recorded and analysed myself as a maker and my relationship with the objects being made and completed. In such a way, practice and theory informed each other in a reciprocal way throughout the process.

Much was revealed in the moments of my role-reversals between maker and researcher. The oscillation between the two different types of attention required meant that the uncertainty experienced during the transition was more pronounced. This fertile transitional space let me experience that which would not have been possible through either practice or theory on their own. Rather than applying preconceived ideas to practice, my practice generated theory, which altered and augmented the originally intended meaning and effect of practice.

The passage from inside to outside, i.e. starting from the initial technical investigations and then exploring a wider scope of references, also opened up to me a return passage, to 'turn inside' and experience my own field with a renewed outlook. The view from the outside, a displacement of the angle of vision, revealed many previously unnoticed aspects.

This process demonstrated to me that what we make makes us. Making seems to be innately a self-portrayal. Some consider that prehistoric humans' cave drawings may have been inspired by the moving shadows of themselves reflected on the wall by torchlight. Making as such is a displacing experience that generates a reflexive value. In this respect, fashion is a particularly effective defamiliarising device, as it not only shows ourselves to us but also touches us. Our beliefs, wishes, intentions and illusions are particularly invested in this making—of the selves through our dressed self-image—and for this reason it has a strong hold upon us, albeit unrecognised. If we accept that the body image that constitutes one's ego is 'a reality in the order of

phantasy', there is nothing so unusual about the influence our dressed self-image has on us. It is a representation or fantasy that acts upon the reality, that actually transforms the reality, the effect of which is self-generated. The wearer's ability to become self-generating is the desired effect of the perfect 'tenue'. The garment's ability to generate ambiguity and reflexivity by shifting us between reality and fantasy means that dressing practice is a type of reality-testing through wearing and interacting with others. The threshold experience awakens us to what we are:

For what is illusion when seen from outside is not best described as illusion when seen from inside; for that fusion which occurs when the object is felt to be one with the dream, ... is, when seen from inside, a psychical reality for which the word illusion is inappropriate. For this is the process by which the inner becomes actualised in external form and as such becomes the basis, not only of internal perception, but also of all true perception of environment. Thus perception itself is seen as a creative process. (Winnicott, 2000, p.119)

In spite of all, for many it's just fashion. It is about mere garments that we can simply take off. If, however, fashion is inconsistent, superficial, and material, then so are we. It is our own reality magnified and accelerated. Like many things that are close to us yet taken for granted, we need to take a closer look at it, because it resembles us. I am fascinated by etymology, as this dissertation clearly shows. Words, like fashion, constantly change through our use of them; derivations occur and become origins; 'wrong' words become standard if enough people use them; static, unused words die out; constant change sustains their continuation. Just as the poetic is found in the disrupted rhythm of plain prose, in the unacknowledged, tacit and silent things we can discover 'the aura of the habitual'. If we pay attention, words return our gaze, as do garments, seams and our selves.

The way we dress is a reflection of our values: even total indifference is an unconscious statement of one's fundamental belief through what one wears. Studying fashion, an innately modern phenomenon, is essential in understanding us as modern subjects, as both personal and social beings who strive to adapt to change.

My overall conclusion concerns the impossibility of generating a seamless join between multiple 'critical edges'. This 'failure', in fact, is the only consistent thread of this seam-full thesis: I failed in constructing a seamless three-dimensional woven garment, as I originally set out to do, and instead developed the two-dimensional

'weaving-in' method; I failed to seamlessly translate the experiential knowledge into words; I failed to analyse myself with a cool and distanced objectivity. These apparent failures are evidence of my approach to seamlessness—through seaming, through acknowledging the seam: the task is an ongoing, possibly endless process.

Fashion research is a previously marginalised area, even more so when it is practice-led. The rarity of previous examples means that this research, as well as other current research will function as data for case-studies to test the effectiveness of the methods. As noted earlier, my research is based on an analysis of my own practice, and therefore remains partial, subjective, and speculative. Although this was the way that suited my circumstances as a maker-researcher for a PhD degree, I realise that there are other possible approaches. In this respect, this research may generate further study employing coherent scientific methods within the field of fashion and beyond.

For instance, the resemblance between the hand-stitched weave and a pixelated surface could be a fascinating subject of investigation: the history of the Jacquard loom as a forerunner of digital systems is explored within textile history, but the text of the textile surface can be read in many ways, especially in the form of a garment. How are textiles as garment surfaces to be compared to the now ubiquitous digital screen and new technologies of virtual display?

The argument which I adopted from Alison Gill's paper, that the philosophy of deconstruction in fashion was autonomously generated, rather than being a simple application of what was happening in other disciplines, is worthy of further analysis. The time constraint has meant that it was beyond the scope of this thesis, but a systematic study of 'deconstructive fashion' in relation to other fields, through an enquiry into the linguistic or philosophical foundations, will constitute an exciting avenue of research.

This is relevant to the most significant question which must be ongoing: how is fashion a practice that extends beyond the disciplines of design, the technical concerns of garment construction, or commerce and industry, into disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, that ask questions about what it means to be human? The question of the 'seams' between the disciplines of theory and the disciplines of art and design, between explicit and tacit knowledge, remains a contested and troubled field that will hopefully attract further research. I hope my

research will contribute an original perspective to this new and exciting field of knowledge.

I must acknowledge, at this point where I provisionally conclude the research, that the seam appears even more ambiguous and problematic than when I first started. There seems to be no resolution, only process. As far as there is no certainty of self, it seems that fashion, as a particular way of being within transitional passages, will occupy a core, yet unacknowledged, significance for any modern person.

List of References

Anzieu, D., 1989. *The Skin Ego.* Translated from French by C. Turner. Yale University Press.

Arendt, H., 1999. Introduction: Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940. In W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico, pp.7–60.

Augé, M., 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Translated from French by J. Howe. London and New York: Verso.

Baert, B., 2011. Touching the Hem: The Thread between Garment and Blood in the Story of the Woman with the Haemorrhage (Mark 5:24b–34parr). *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 9(3), pp.308–351.

Barthes, R. 1984. Writing Degree Zero & Elements of Semiology. London: Jonathan Cape.

Barthes, R., 1993. The New Citroen. In Mythologies. London: Random House, pp. 88-90

Baudelaire, C., 2010a. On the Essence of Laughter. In *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Translated from French by J. Mayne. New York; London: Phaidon, pp. 147-165.

Baudelaire, C., 2010b. The Painter of Modern Life. In *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Translated from French by J. Mayne. New York; London: Phaidon, pp. 1–41.

Benjamin, W., 1980. Reply. In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated from German by R. Taylor. London: Verso, pp. 134–141.

Benjamin, W., 1998a. Epistemo-Critical Prologue. In W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London; New York: Verso, pp. 27–56.

Benjamin, W., 1999a, Little History of Photography. In: M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland & G. Smith eds. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, volume 2, 1927-1934*. Translated from German by Rodney Livingstone [et al.]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 507-531

Benjamin, W., 1999b. On Some Motifs in Baudelaire. In W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*. London: Random House, pp. 152–196.

Benjamin, W., 1999c. On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress. In: R. Tiedemann ed. *The Arcades Project*. Translated from German by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, pp. 456–488.

Benjamin, W., 1999d. Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century <Exposé of 1935> In R. Tiedemann, ed. *The Arcades Project*. Translated from German by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, pp. 3–13.

Benjamin, W. 1999e. Short Shadows II. in M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland & G. Smith eds. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, volume 2, 1927-1934*. Translated from German by Rodney Livingstone [et al.]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, p699

Benjamin, W., 1999f. The Flâneur. In: R. Tiedemann, ed. *The Arcades Project*. Translated from German by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, pp. 416-449.

Benjamin, W., 1999g. The Image of Proust. In W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*. London: Random House, pp. 197–210.

Benjamin, W., 1999h. Unpacking My Library: A talk about book collecting. In W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico, pp. 61–69.

Benjamin, W., 2005a. Excavation and Memory. in M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland & G. Smith eds. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, volume 2, 1927-1934*. Translated from German by Rodney Livingstone [et al.]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, p576.

Benjamin, W., 2005b. Hashish, Beginning of March 1930. In: M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland & G. Smith, eds. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Volume2, Part1, 1927-1930.* Translated from German by Rodney Livingstone [et al.]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, pp. 327–330.

Benjamin, W., 2005c. On Astrology. In: M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland & G. Smith, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2 Part 2 1931-1934*. Translated from German by Rodney Livingstone [et al]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, pp. 684–685.

Benjamin, W., 2007a. A Berlin Chronicle. In: W. Benjamin, *Reflections*. New York: Schocken, pp. 3–60.

Benjamin, W., 2007b. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In: W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken, pp. 226–260.

Berman, M., 1989. All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity, London; New York: Verso

Bettelheim, B., 1955. Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male. London: Thames & Hudson.

Bigger, S., 2008. *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. by Graham St. John, New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Bois, Y.-A. and Krauss, R., 1997. Formless: A User's Guide, New York: Zone Books.

Bourdieu, P., 1993. Haute Couture and Haute Culture. In *Sociology in Question*. London, California, New Delhi: Sage, pp. 132–138.

Brett, D., 2005. Rethinking Decoration, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Breward, C. and Evans, C., 2005. Fashion and Modernity, Oxford; New York: Berg.

Buatois, L.A. & Mángano, M.G., 2011. *Ichnology: Organism-Substrate Interactions in Space and Time*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Caillois, R., 1984. Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia. October, 31, pp.16–32.

Connor, S., 2003. Maculate Conceptions. *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 1(1), pp. 49–63.

Connor, S., 2004. Exposition. In *The Book of Skin*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Connor, S., 2011. *Intact*. In: Embodied Values: Bringing the Senses back to the Environment, the John E. Sawyer Seminar Series at The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. Edinburgh. 20 May 2011. Available at: http://www.stevenconnor.com/intact/

de Waal. E., 2005. The John Tusa Interview with Edmund de Waal. In *The John Tusa Interviews*. BBC Radio 3. 25/07/2005. [Radio programme recording] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00ncysg.

Didi-Huberman, G., 1989. The Paradox of the Phasmid. *Tympanum, Journal of Comparative Literary Studies,* (3). Available at: http://www.usc.edu/dept/complit/tympanum/3/

Didi-Huberman, G., 1997. L'Empreinte - La Ressemblance par Contact: Archéologie, anachronisme et modernité de l'empreinte, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, pp. 181-190

Didi-Huberman, G., 2005. The Supposition of the Aura: the now, the then, and modernity. In: A. Benjamin, ed. *Walter Benjamin and History*, London; New York: Continuum, pp. 3–18.

Douglas, M., 2008. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York, Abingdon Oxon: Routledge.

Düttlinger, C., 2008. Imaginary Encounters: Walter Benjamin and the Aura of Photography. *Poetics Today*, 29(1), pp. 79–101.

Edensor, T., 2005. Waste Matter – The Debris Of Industrial Ruins And The Disordering Of The Material World. *Journal of Material Culture*, 10(3), pp. 311–332.

Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. [online] Available at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/212748/fool [Accessed 28 August, 2011]

Evans, C., 2003. Fashion on the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, & Deathliness. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Foster, H., 1993. Compulsive Beauty. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.

Frayling, C., 1993. Research in Art and Design. *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, 1(1), pp.1–5.

Freud, S., 1953-74. The Ego and the Id. In: James Strachey, ed., *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Standard Edition, vol. XIX., translated by James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, p26.

Freud, S., 2003. The Uncanny. In *The Uncanny*, Translated from German by D. McLintock. London: Penguin. pp. 121-162.

Gell, A., 1992. The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology. In *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 40–66.

Gell, A., 2006. Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps. In: H. Morphy and M. Perkins, eds. *The Anthropology Of Art: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 219-236.

Giddens, A., 1990. The Consequences of Modernity. Oxford: Polity Press

Gill, A., 1998. Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Reassembled Clothes. *Fashion Theory*, 2(1), pp.25–50.

Goffman, E.,1963. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. London: Penguin.

Gross, E., 1991. The Body of Signification. In: J. Fletcher and A. E. Benjamin, eds. *Abject, Melancholia, and Love: the work of Julia Kristeva*. London: Routledge. pp.80-103.

Grosz, E.,1994. Refiguring Bodies. In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 3-26.

Harrod, T., 2007. Technological Enchantment. In: B. Newell ed., *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft*, London: V&A Publications and the Crafts Council, pp. 29–37.

Hauser, K., 2005. The Fingerprint of the Second Skin. In: eds. C. Breward and C. Evans, *Fashion and Modernity*. Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 153–170.

Hawkins, G. & Muecke, S., 2003. Introduction: Cultural Economics of Waste. In *Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Lanham; Boulder; New York; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hollier, D., 1992. The Use-Value of the Impossible. Translated from French by Liesl Ollman, *October*, 60, pp.3–24.

Ingold, T., 2010a. Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials. *Realities Working Papers* (15)

Ingold, T., 2010b. *The Textility of Making*. Cambridge Journal of Economics, 34(1), pp.91–102.

Jones, E.G., 2012. The Creative Director. *Not Just A Label*. [online] Available at: http://www.notjustalabel.com/editorial/the creative director

Jung, C., 1969. On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure. In P. Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology,* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 195-211.

Kristeva, J., 1982a. Semiotics Of Biblical Abomination. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 90–111.

Kristeva, J., 1982b. Approaching Abjection. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1–31.

Koepping, K.P., 1985. Absurdity and Hidden Truth: Cunning Intelligence and Grotesque Body Images as Manifestations of the Trickster. *History of Religions*, 24(3), pp. 191-214.

Kostof, S., 1995. A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leiris, M., 2006. Alberto Giacometti. In D. Ades, ed. *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents*. London; Cambridge, MA: Hayward Gallery Publishing; The MIT Press, pp. 209, 249–251.

Longo, M., 2011. Personal Space. In *All in the Mind* [Radio programme recording] BBC Radio 4, 03/05/2011. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b010t6l9

Martin, R. & Koda, H., 1993. Analytical Apparel: Deconstruction and Discovery in Contemporary Costume. In *Infra-Apparel*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp. 94–105.

Marx, K., and Engels, F., 2009. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), New York: Cosimo Inc.

Marx, U. et al., 2007. Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs, London; New York: Verso.

Mauss, M., 2006. Techniques of the Body (1935). In: N. Schlanger ed., *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*. Translated from French by B. Brewster. London; New York: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books, pp. 77–96.

Mauss, M. and Hubert, H., 2010. *A General Theory of Magic.* Translated from French by R. Brain. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.

McEwen, I.K., 1993. Socrates' Ancestor: an essay on architectural beginnings, Cambridge, MA. London: MIT Press.

Mella, B., 2002. Derrida's Detour. *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture*, 2(4). Available at: http://reconstruction.eserver.org/024/mella.htm.

Menkes, S., 2009. Martin Margiela to Leave Fashion House He Founded. *The New York Times* [online] 8 December. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/business/global/09diesel.html >

Merceron, D., Elbaz, A. & Koda, H., 2007. Lanvin, Rizzoli International Publications.

Milner, M., 2010. On Not Being Able to Paint. London: Routledge

Montgomery, B., 2012. Contemporary Craft. In: *Added Value?* Crafts Council, London. 20–23 September 2012. London: The Crafts Council

Morris, R., 1993. Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated. In *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge, MA. London: MIT Press, pp. 71 – 93.

Munier, J., 2010. Le Renouveau du Grotesque dans le Roman du Xxe Siècle : essai d'anthropologie littéraire. *A Plus d'un Titre*. Available at: http://www.franceculture.fr/oeuvre-le-renouveau-du-grotesque-dans-le-roman-du-xxe-siecle-essai-d-anthropologie-litteraire-de-rem.

Naji, M. & Douny, L., 2009. Editorial. Journal of Material Culture, 14(4), pp.411-432.

Nieland, J., 2006. Editor's Introduction: Modernism's Laughter. *Modernist Cultures, 2(2)*, pp.80-86.

Pajaczkowska, C. & Curtis, B., 2008. Looking Sharp: the icon of the turned up collar. In: M. Uhlirova ed. *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Images of Fashion, Crime and Violence*. London; New York: Koenig Books, pp.63-65.

Partridge, E., 2006. *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* [e-book]. Taylor and Francis e-Library.

Phillips, A., 1988. Winnicott, London: Fontana.

Pietz, W., 1985. The Problem of the Fetish, I. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 9, pp. 5–17

Pietz, W., 1987. The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 13, pp.23–45.

Pietz, W., 1988. The Problem of the Fetish, Illa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 16, pp.105–124

Pietz, W., 2003. Fetish. In: R. Nelson, & R. Shiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Plath, S., 1977. Ocean 1212-W. In: Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams. London: Faber.

Pollak, S., 2007. The Rolling Pin. In: S. Turkle ed. *Evocative Objects: things we think with*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 224–231.

Rabe, A.M. and Düttmann, A.G., 2012. *Walter Benjamin and the Challenge of Disappearance*, Royal College of Art, London, May 2012: Image & Language Research.

Relaxnews, 2010. Design a custom Burberry trench coat. *The Independent*. [online] 10 November. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/design-a-custom-burberry-trench-coat-2130443.html

Richter, G., 2001. Adorno and the Excessive Politics of Aura. In: L. Patt and M. Gantman, eds. *Benjamin's Blind Spot*, CA: The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, pp. 25–36.

Schneider, J., 2006. Cloth and Clothing. In: C. Tilley [et al.] eds. *Handbook of Material Culture*. London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage, pp. 203-220.

Sedofsky, L., Krauss, R. & Bois, Y.-A., 1996. Down and Dirty. ArtForum, 34(10), pp. 90-95

Sennett, R., 2008. The Craftsman, London: Allen Lane.

Sennett, R., 2011. The Foreigner: Two Essays on Exile, London: Notting Hill Editions.

Serres, M., 1997. *The Troubadour of Knowledge (Le Tiers-Instruit)*. Translated from French by S. F. Glaser and W. Paulson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Shanks, M., 1992. Experiencing the Past. London; New York: Routledge.

Shiff, R., 1997. 'L'Empreinte' - Various Artists, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. *Artforum*, 35(10)

Shklovsky, V., 1991. Art as Device. In *Theory of Prose*. Translated from Russian by B. Sher. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, pp. 1–14.

Silverman, K., 1996. The Threshold of the Visible World, New York; London: Routledge.

Simmel, G., 1950. The Stranger. In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Translated from German by Kurt H. Wolff. New York: Free Press, pp. 402–408.

Spindler, A.M., 1993. Coming Apart. *The New York Times.* [online] 25 July. Available at: < http://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/25/style/coming-apart.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm >

Spyer, P., 1998. *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, New York; London: Routledge.

Stallabrass, J., 1996. Trash. In *Gargantua: Manufactured Mass Culture*. London; New York: Verso, pp. 171–188.

Stallybrass, P., 1993. Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things. *The Yale Review*, 81(2), pp.35–50.

Stallybrass, P., 1998. Marx's Coat. In: P. Spyer, ed. *Border Fetishisms: material objects in unstable spaces*. London: New York: Routledge, pp. 183–208.

Strathausen, C., 2001. Benjamin's Aura and the Broken Heart of Modernity. In *Benjamin's Blind Spot*, Topanga, CA: The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, pp.1–15.

The Future Laboratory. 2012. The Objects Of Tomorrow. In: *Added Value?* Crafts Council, London, 20–23 September 2012. London: The Crafts Council.

Turner, V., 1970. Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press

van Gennep, A., 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. Translated from French by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Walker, H., 2009. Out of Sight, Not out of Mind: Celebrating two decades of Martin Margiela magic. *The Independent*. [online] 6 December. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/out-of-sight-not-out-of-mind-celebrating-two-decades-of-martin-margiela-magic-1832810.html

Warnier, J.-P., 2001. A Praxeological Approach to Subjectivation in a Material World. In *Journal of Material Culture*. 6(1), pp.5–24.

Warnier, J.-P., 2006. Inside and Outside: Surfaces and Containers. In: C. Tilley [et al.], eds., *Handbook of Material Culture*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 186-195.

Warnier, J.-P., 2009. Technology As Efficacious Action On Objects . . . And Subjects. *Journal of Material Culture*, 14(4), pp.459–470.

Warwick, A. & Cavallaro, D., 1998. Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress, and the Body. Oxford; New York: Berg

Wilson, E., 2008. Fashion's Invisible Man. *The New York Times*. [online] 1 October. Available at:

Wilson, E., 2010. Gone and Even More Collectible. *The New York Times*, [online] 27 January. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/28/fashion/28ROW.html

Winnicott, D., 2000. Critical Notice of On Not Being Able to Paint. In L. Caldwell ed., *Art, Creativity, Living*. London; New York: Karnac Books for The Squiggle Foundation, pp. 117–119.

Winnicott, D., 2005. Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena. In *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–34.